

THE TRAITS OF A LEADER

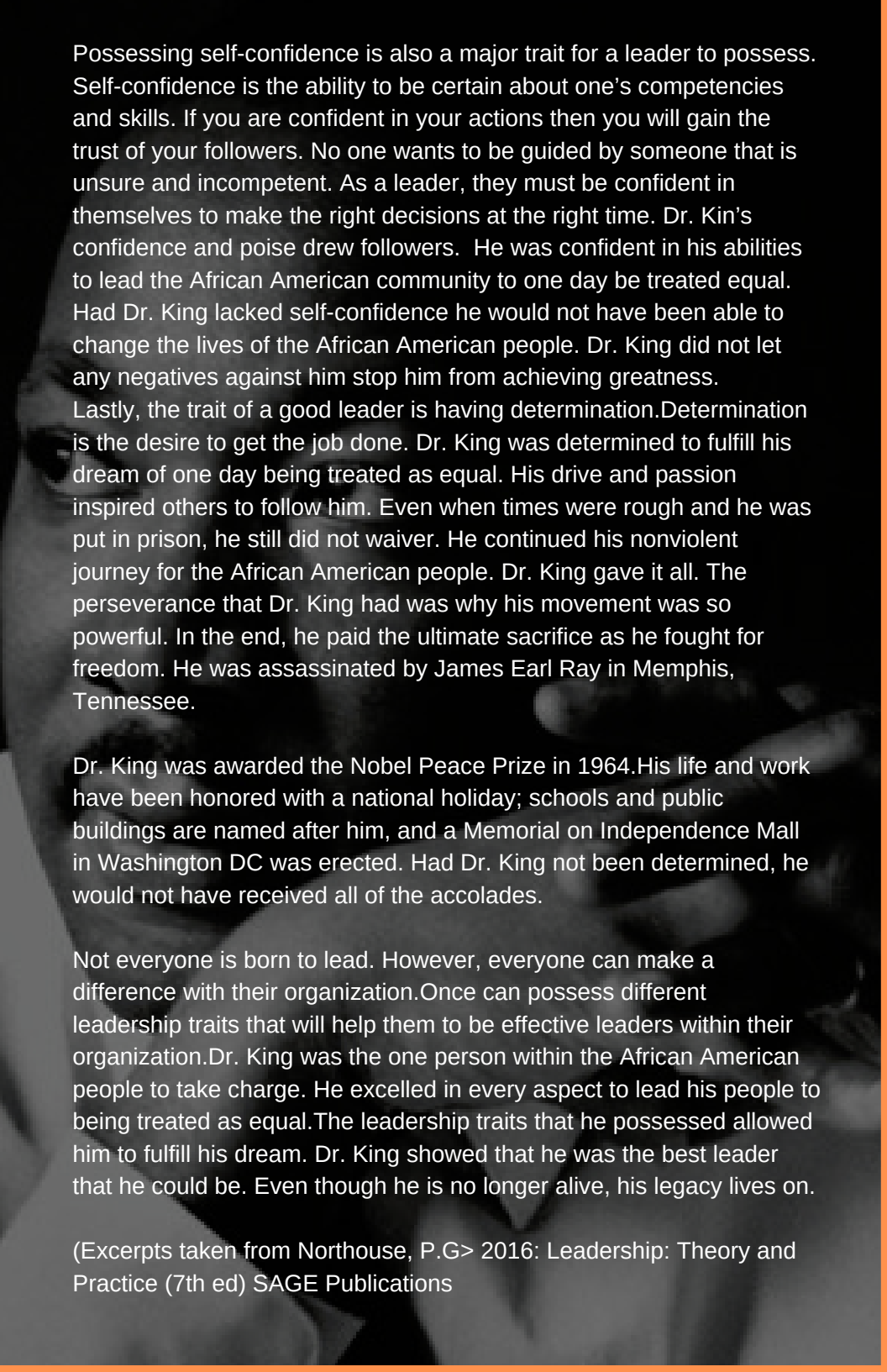
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

All people are not born to lead, but they can still have a positive affect within their organization. Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Leaders come from all types of backgrounds, with bring different aspects of leading into their organizations. Once can be a leader within a group, organization, or team. Usually there is one person within a group that is willing to take charge and lead. There are good leaders and there are bad leaders, but the keys to be the best leader you can be for your followers. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a phenomenal leader and some of the traits that he possessed were intelligence, self-confidence, and determination.

As a leader, being intelligent is very important within an organization because a leader is expected to know a lot. Continual learning both formally and informally can help to develop and maintain your intellectual skills. Formally, take different courses available within your organization to further improve your knowledge. Informally, read, read, read! Educate yourself so that you can, in turn, educate those that you lead. Being intelligent means being humble and smart! That is how you gain respect.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr was a successful leader of the civil right movement in the United States. He was intelligent in the fact that he was able to lead African Americans in a nonviolent way to the advancement of civil rights. He was powerful and he used his power to influence the believers. Dr. King was educated receiving his Doctorate of Philosophy in Systematic Theology from Boston University. Having strong verbal ability, perceptual ability, and reasoning appears to make one a better leader. Dr. King had those abilities. His powerful "I Have a Dream" speech was delivered during the March on Washington where he called for an end to racism. Over 40 years later, this powerful speech lives on. Dr. King inspired so many with his speech.





Possessing self-confidence is also a major trait for a leader to possess. Self-confidence is the ability to be certain about one's competencies and skills. If you are confident in your actions then you will gain the trust of your followers. No one wants to be guided by someone that is unsure and incompetent. As a leader, they must be confident in themselves to make the right decisions at the right time. Dr. King's confidence and poise drew followers. He was confident in his abilities to lead the African American community to one day be treated equal. Had Dr. King lacked self-confidence he would not have been able to change the lives of the African American people. Dr. King did not let any negatives against him stop him from achieving greatness. Lastly, the trait of a good leader is having determination. Determination is the desire to get the job done. Dr. King was determined to fulfill his dream of one day being treated as equal. His drive and passion inspired others to follow him. Even when times were rough and he was put in prison, he still did not waiver. He continued his nonviolent journey for the African American people. Dr. King gave it all. The perseverance that Dr. King had was why his movement was so powerful. In the end, he paid the ultimate sacrifice as he fought for freedom. He was assassinated by James Earl Ray in Memphis, Tennessee.

Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. His life and work have been honored with a national holiday; schools and public buildings are named after him, and a Memorial on Independence Mall in Washington DC was erected. Had Dr. King not been determined, he would not have received all of the accolades.

Not everyone is born to lead. However, everyone can make a difference with their organization. One can possess different leadership traits that will help them to be effective leaders within their organization. Dr. King was the one person within the African American people to take charge. He excelled in every aspect to lead his people to being treated as equal. The leadership traits that he possessed allowed him to fulfill his dream. Dr. King showed that he was the best leader that he could be. Even though he is no longer alive, his legacy lives on.

(Excerpts taken from Northouse, P.G. 2016: Leadership: Theory and Practice (7th ed) SAGE Publications)