



On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech to thousands of people on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. In that speech he wrote, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

In that same year, Arthur Ashe, a tennis player, became the first African American selected to play on the United States Davis Cup team. In addition, he was featured in the “Faces in the Crowd” section of *Sports Illustrated*. It seemed as King’s dream was coming true for Ashe, and his accomplishments were the result of being judged by his character and talent.

Ashe was clearly breaking the color barriers in the world of tennis. However, he experienced the sting of racism before and after he received fame as an outstanding athlete. His first encounter was when he was twelve years old and lived in Richmond, Virginia. His trainer, Dr. Robert Walter Johnson, wanted to enter Ashe in a local tournament but was told he couldn’t play because he was black. Years later, when Ashe reflected on this incident, he said it taught him that people would judge him by what they saw first, and his skin color was not going to change.

Ashe realized that while he could not change his skin color or the acts of prejudice against him, he could control how he reacted. He knew that he could respond intelligently to alter the way he was treated and make a difference for others in the world. His fame as a tennis great took off when he became the first African American man to win a Grand Slam title in 1968. But more important, he used his fame to become an activist against racism in a manner that won the respect of like-minded people of his era.

Still, he faced many racial indignities. In 1971, when he was denied a visa to enter South Africa to play in the national tennis tournament there, he voiced his objections to racial prejudice and apartheid so he could make a global impact. He knew it was the right thing to do, and he did it with courage and composure. That is how he presented himself on the tennis court and in public. Perfecting a positive attitude, showing courage, and using his intelligence was the way Arthur Ashe dealt with his differences throughout his life.

Footnotes:

- 1) USTA, Arthur Ashe Timeline, United States Tennis Association, May/17/2015, May/17/2015, http://www.usta.com/About-USTA/Diversity/Black-History-Month/5795_Black_History_Month__Arthur_Ashe_Timeline/
- 2) AALC, Arthur Ashe Learning Center, Arthur Ashe - Biography, May/17/2015, May/17/2015, <http://www.arthurashe.org/>
- 3) Bio.com, Biography.com, Arthur Ashe Biography, May/17/2015, May/17/2015, <http://www.biography.com/people/arthur-ashe-9190544#younger-years>
- 4) Wikipedia.com, Wikipedia, Arthur Ashe, May/17/2015, May/17/2015, www.wikipedia.com

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Arthur-Ashe-s-Courage>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Arthur-Ashe-s-Courage>



Arthur Ashe

ABC NewsView this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Arthur-Ashe>



South Africa under Apartheid

Clip from "South Africa under Apartheid," from the CIA Film Library, online courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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