
The Expression of the Need for the End of Racism in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Speech I Have a Dream

Doctor and Reverend, Martin Luther King Jr., in his public speech, "I Have a Dream", illuminates the need for the end of racism in America. King's purpose is to express the essentiality of equality between African-Americans and Whites and to illustrate the ways that racism negatively affects its receivers. He adopts a confident and motivational tone in order to inspire hope in his listeners.

King opens his speech by creating an analogy juxtaposing what America's forefathers promised and what the people actually received. He compares the Declaration's promise of, "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness," to a, "bad check." King's oration builds in intensity until reaching climax when he calls the check, "marked insufficient funds." He uses these two strategies in order to evoke the listeners anger at America for not fulfilling the promise. This not only gets the audience's attention, but also triggers a strong sense that the African-Americans truly deserve better than what they are currently getting.

King then moves to reminding the world of the urgent need for change, and the importance of peaceful protests. He states that a lack of urgency would be, "fatal", that the activists and Negro population will not rest until there is an, "invigorating autumn of freedom and equality," and that they "must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force." King uses these statements in order to clarify that change is coming, and it is coming rapidly. However, he is also appealing to the audience's pride by calling the act of pacifism "majestic." These proclamations from King give the oppressed Negroes a direction to follow, a way to act, and a timeframe within which the tyranny will end.

King closes his speech by verbally painting a picture of his harmonious vision for the lives of the Negro and White communities. King says what is now one of the most echoed and most hallowed lines of any modern speech, as he begins each statement with, "I have a dream. . ." He uses parallelism, topicalization, and orates with a grandiose tone in order to move and give hope to all the oppressed people in the nation. This outpouring of emotion allows King to connect with the audience and put into their minds the image of the day that "little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers."

Altogether King uses compelling oration, charged language, and analogies to inspire the oppressed masses and to give them a voice for change. He effectively administers this variety

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of rhetorical techniques while using this speech as a catalyst for change.

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