A Metaphorical Analysis of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" Speech

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I have a dream. What do these four words mean to you? Do they inspire you to take action? "I Have a Dream" would be delivered and coined in a historic speech by Martin Luther King Jr. on August 28, 1963 at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In the speech, King would call upon Americans to recognize the injustices of the nation and the discrimination that colored people faced. Not only would he speak about problems that existed in America, he would call upon all citizens to enact change and correct these injustices. He would use the opportunity to inspire Americans to work for a fair and equal society for all people.

Carolyn Calloway-Thomas and John Louis Lucaites write that "few speeches have so excited the public and moved so quickly into our national consciousness as Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream'" (Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites 66). However, they continue to write, "despite its immediate effectiveness, it's clear significance as a cultural artifact, and its key position in King's oeuvre, King's speech has received little attention from rhetorical scholars" (Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites 66). The piece itself is an outstanding example of use of metaphors to influence an audience. Not only is King phenomenal in his use of metaphors, but his vocal variety, tone, pace, and overall delivery are simply dazzling. Many elements of the speech are worth the study of notable scholars. It is possible to learn so much from just this one speech. Whether an audience wants to assess the speech at face value, or delve into literary analysis with King's use of metaphor, the piece can teach the reader a great deal.

In this paper, I will begin with an overview of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life as well as provide the background for the speech. I will then define metaphoric criticism and apply the method to "I Have a Dream." I will then conclude with findings of the analysis and final thoughts. Ultimately, "I Have a Dream," viewed with an understanding of metaphor and through

the method of metaphoric criticism, is an ideal example of how a rhetor, Martin Luther King Jr., compels his audience to think and challenges Americans to act to achieve an equal America in which he envisions.

Context

The artifact itself is one of the most influential pieces of literature ever produced. From his enthusiastic delivery, to switching from reading a manuscript to speaking extemporaneously half way through the speech, to his extensive use of metaphors, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered "I Have a Dream" in brilliant fashion. Ironically, the speech was not crafted well ahead of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Drew D. Hansen writes about the composition of the speech: "when King arrived in Washington, D.C., on the night before the march, he did not yet have a speech that he considered satisfactory. After a meeting with the other march leaders, he gathered several aides together in the lobby of the Willard Hotel and convened another roundtable discussion about what he should say" (Hansen 68). After a while, King would put an end to the meeting saying, "'My brothers, I understand. I appreciate all the suggestions. Now let me go and counsel with the Lord'" (Hansen 68). This is a perfect example of King's spiritual roots and connection with God.

King then retreated to the Willard Hotel to work on the speech. Hansen provides a detailed description of how the speech ultimately came together for King:

> King finished outlining the speech at around midnight. He then began to write a draft in longhand, revising it as he went along. King occasionally called out to those who were with him for

> suggestions on word choice, often as not supplying the missing word himself. When Andrew Young stopped by King's suite that night, he noticed King had crossed out words three and four times, looking for not only the right meaning, but also the right rhythm. Young thought that King was composing the Washington speech as if he were writing poetry. King finished writing the speech at about four in the morning and gave the prepared text to his aides for typing, duplication, and distribution to the press. This meticulous process of composition, beginning with the solicitation of drafts from several advisers and culminating in a complete manuscript of a speech, was highly unusual for King at this stage of his career. (Hansen 69 - 70)

As Hansen states, this intense process proves how much King dedicated to just this one speech. Not only would the entire process of creating and crafting the speech be unusual, so would the delivery itself.

Michael King Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia on January 15, 1929 to Michael King Sr. and Alberta Williams King. After King Sr. returned from a trip to Germany in 1934, he changed his and his son's names from Michael King, to Martin Luther King, Sr. and Jr. respectively. The name changes were adopted after Martin Luther, a religious icon who started the Lutheran denomination. (GALE Cengage Learning)

King Jr. began his higher education at Morehouse College in September 1944. He was only fifteen years of age upon entrance to Morehouse. Just before this in 1943, racial tensions

led to major riots in Harlem, New York and Detroit, Michigan. On June 8, 1948 he graduated and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Morehouse College. Also in 1948, King was ordained as his father's assistant at Ebenezer Baptist Church (Ling 24). Following this, he enrolled at Crozer Theological Seminary, located close to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. On May 8, 1951, he graduated from Crozer with a Bachelor of Divinity degree and high academic honors (Carson 17). Soon thereafter King began doctoral study at Boston University. He eventually received a doctorate in systematic theology from Boston University on June 5, 1955 (Carson 30). While in graduate school, King had memories of housing bias. In the Boston Globe on April 23, 1965, he was quoted as saying "'I remember very well trying to find a place to live. I went into place after place where there were signs that rooms were for rent. They were for rent until they found out I was a Negro, and suddenly they had just been rented'" (Carson 31).

Martin Luther King Jr. met his wife, Coretta Scott, in January 1952 in Boston, Massachusetts. The two were married by Martin Luther King Sr. in Marion, Alabama on June 18, 1953. King said that Coretta was "a constant source of consolation to me [him] through all the difficulties," (Carson 37) even saying his wife "was always stronger than I [he] was through the struggle" (Carson 37). The couple would have a total of four children together: Martin Luther III, Dexter Scott, Yolanda Denise, and Bernice Albertine (Carson 38).

Martin Luther King Jr. became official pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama on October 31, 1954. He was elected to the executive committee of the Montgomery chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP) in August 1955. Rosa Parks, who at the time was the secretary of the NAACP, would inform King of this election (Carson 64).

On January 30, 1956 King's home was bombed. Carson quotes King as saying, "strangely enough, I accepted the word of the bombing calmly. My religious experience a few nights before had given me strength to face it. I urged each person to go straight home after the meeting and adhere strictly to our philosophy of nonviolence" (Carson 79). This exemplifies King's commitment to a firm policy of nonviolence, rather than expressing aggression outwardly, a theme kept consistent in the "I Have a Dream" speech.

The start of 1957 proved to fare much better for Martin Luther King Jr. In January, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was founded in Atlanta, Georgia and he was chosen as President (Ling 94). Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites discuss King's rapid development. "What began as the desire to lead a relatively serene professional life thus quickly dissipated as King responded to the swirl of events and readily moved to the forefront of political leadership in the burgeoning civil rights movement" (Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites 7). King was certainly never one to shy away from leadership opportunities.

The year of 1958 was probably the most difficult of King's life. He dealt with "the brutality of police officers, an unwarranted arrest, and a near fatal stab wound by a mentally deranged woman. These things poured upon me [him] like staggering torrents on a cold, wintry day" (Carson 117). In 1959, King resigned from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church to return to Atlanta. He was arrested again in 1960 in Alabama for tax evasion. Later that same year he was imprisoned for his role in Atlanta sit-in demonstrations (Ling 101).

On August 28, 1963 Martin Luther King Jr. would deliver the "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in Washington, D.C. In 1964, King would receive a Nobel Prize for Peace in Oslo, Sweden. King was at first stunned to hear the news, but soon realized:

> This was no mere recognition of the contribution of one man on the stage of history. It was a testimony to the magnificent drama of the civil rights movement and the thousands of actors who had played their roles extremely well. In truth, it is these 'noble' people who had won this Nobel Prize. (Carson 256)

Martin Luther King Jr.'s life came to an end on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee at the hands of James Earl Ray. King was 39 years old. He had just delivered another one of his very famous speeches, "I Have Been to the Mountain-Top." Ray assassinated King while he was standing on the second floor of the Lorraine Motel following the speech. He was buried in Atlanta on April 9, 1968 (Ling 108).

Another important detail is that Martin Luther King Jr. was proud to hold the title of "preacher" because "he believed that his religious vocation was essential to the healing of the nation" (Lischer Prologue). In his book titled, The Preacher King, Richard Lischer describes that "nowadays the word preacher does not attract much admiration. The word is associated with parochial morality or televised quackery, but in either case the preacher is a rather narrowly defined figure" (Lischer Prologue). Martin Luther King Jr. was *anything* but a narrowly defined figure. Rather, he was a man who captivated audiences everywhere he went and inspired hope for thousands of colored people. Lischer very fittingly states, "King's self-proclaimed mission to

‘redeem the soul of America’ cannot be understood apart from his self-designated identity as a preacher of the gospel” (Lischer Prologue).

It is vitally important to understand the context of Martin Luther King Jr.’s life. Not only was it one filled with constant ups and downs, his life represents the struggle that colored people endured in America leading up to and through the Civil Rights movement. For his life to be symbolic of what colored people experienced, King had an indirect, yet powerful effect on his audience. King’s life is one to be looked at and measured against. How have *we* made an impact in our society? What have we done today to make the world a better place? Have we done anything at all?

The official event for which Martin Luther King Jr. and many others spoke was the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The date was August 28, 1963 and it took place in Washington, D.C. in front of the Lincoln Memorial. King even wore a pin that stated the event’s name on his jacket when he spoke. The event was organized by the National March on Washington Committee. (Carson 223)

The audience of the speech consisted of all races – blacks, whites and Latinos included. In a book titled, The Dream – Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation, Drew Hansen writes “D.C. police would estimate the crowd size at 210,000 people, but several reporters the next day would place the figure closer to a quarter million” (Hansen 41). Hansen continues to describe the situation: “the sun was high in the sky, but a cool breeze kept the temperature just above 80 degrees…” (Hansen 42). The bottom line: it was a hot, muggy, summer day in Washington D.C. For so many people to be present that day, it had to be a

significant event, which it absolutely was. Mark Vail from the University of Memphis writes that:

> the March on Washington was the largest single demonstration for civil rights in American history, drawing people from all walks of life and all parts of the country…the sheer visual impact of 250,000 people filling the vast expanse of the Mall under the stony yet benevolent gaze of Abraham Lincoln would undoubtedly augment the gravity of the speeches delivered that day. (Vail 62)

He also talks about other notable figures present that day. "Beyond the spectacular physical setting, the March on Washington had some Hollywood glamour attached to it. A roster of actors and singers, including Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier, Charlton Heston, Marlon Brando, Lena Horne, Bob Dylan, and Mahalia Jackson, injected the event with the feel of a Hollywood premier or Broadway opening" (Vail 62). Vail writes even further about the audience present that day: "in addition to the assemblage of marchers on the Mall, this spectacle was seen and heard by millions of people around the world who were able to listen to or watch the speech 'live' as the new Telstar satellite instantaneously beamed King's words and image around the globe. Consequently, King was undoubtedly speaking to his largest audience ever" (Vail 63). Many Americans that day feared that the march would turn violent due to the recent events in Birmingham, Alabama. However, when King was finished speaking, it was clear that this demonstration would be peaceful, proving a very powerful point: King's creed of nonviolence was validated. (Vail 63)

The event was covered by the national media and broadcast on television worldwide. William G. Thomas III writes for *Southern Spaces*, an interdisciplinary journal about "the regions, places, and cultures of the American South." He describes the impact of the media coverage for the event:

> Few civil rights events reached the national television audience as did the March on Washington…as the date for the March on Washington grew closer, the extent of television coverage became part of the story. Over five hundred cameramen, technicians, and correspondents from the major networks were set to cover the event. More cameras would be set up than had filmed the last Presidential inauguration. One camera was positioned high in the Washington Monument, to give dramatic vistas of the marchers. (Thomas III)

This clearly increased the overall audience for this speech by easily thousands and possibly even hundred thousands more. Thomas also writes how media ratings "recorded huge jumps in television viewing for the March on Washington. Europeans saw it as well, in coverage 'that rivaled that given astronaut landings.' The BBC devoted major evening programming to the march and broadcast live coverage as received from the Telestar satellite" (Thomas III). Ultimately, Thomas believes that while "television news coverage would get Americans off of the couch and into the streets was unlikely, it might reveal stories and perspectives most Americans had never before seen or heard" (Thomas III). This evidence further demonstrates the significance of the march and of the "I Have a Dream" speech itself. Heavy media coverage

was dedicated towards the event and Martin Luther King Jr., along with all with the other speakers at the event, did not disappoint. Many scholars argue this was an event that was to be *seen* rather than to be heard.

Description of Method / Origin

There is widespread support for metaphors and metaphoric criticism from a textbook titled Readings in Rhetorical Criticism, written by Carl R. Burgchardt. Burgchardt writes:

> Metaphoric criticism is not a unified method; rather, it is a perspective that places metaphors at the heart of rhetorical action. The metaphoric critic, however, believes metaphors are more than the superficial ornamentation: they are the means by which arguments are expressed. Moreover, metaphors may provide insight into a speaker's motives or an audience's social reality. (Burgchardt 305)

What Burgchardt explains here is that in metaphoric criticism, metaphors themselves are at the center of rhetoric. Looking at "I Have a Dream" from a metaphoric criticism standpoint allows the critic to see how the metaphors influence Martin Luther King Jr.'s rhetoric. Metaphors are often seen as simply ornamentation, flowery language or words used to "dress up" an argument. Yet within metaphoric criticism, metaphors *are* arguments. Instead of using a metaphor to supplement an argument, metaphoric critics argue that metaphors themselves are, and can be used, as influential arguments.

Robert Ivie, an author featured in the book written by Carl Burgchardt, classifies metaphors. Ivie writes that "metaphor is at the base of rhetorical invention. Elaborating a primary image into a well formed argument produces a motive or interpretation of reality, with which the intended audience is invited to identify" (Burgchardt 318). Inviting your audience to identify meaning forces them to think and take action upon your arguments. Producing motive will further help your audience identify and process your rhetoric. When an audience is pushed to identify and process your rhetoric, there is a higher chance of them accepting and acting upon your argument.

Riikka Kuusisto cites further support in a section of Burgchardt's book titled "Metaphors – Imaginative Reality." Kuusisto writes "that the human conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Burgchardt 336). What Kuusisto means in saying that the process of human conception is fundamentally metaphorical in nature, is that humans are inclined to process ideas metaphorically. Just as Robert Ivie believes elaborating a primary image into a well formed argument produces a motive, Kuusisto claims much the same idea. Presenting an audience with metaphors, or metaphoric language, is natural to humans. When something comes natural to a human it is much easier to process. Not only is the process easier, but your audience can then think, reflect and act on the arguments presented. This had to be a goal of Martin Luther King Jr.'s when delivering "I Have a Dream."

Kuusisto continues in another section titled "Perspectives from Other Spheres." She writes "three advocates for the restoration of rhetoric, Chaim Perelman, Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca and Kenneth Burke, join George Lakoff in picking out the metaphor as a device deserving special attention" (Burgchardt 336). Particularly in reference to Kenneth Burke, Kuusisto goes

on saying, “the metaphor is the first of the four master tropes, a perspective on reality, a point of view carried over from one realm to another. He [Burke] defines the metaphor as a tool for seeing something in terms of something else, as a dimension or angle that improves the picture of the whole” (Burgchardt 336). What Kuusisto argues here is that Burke sees the metaphor as a tool to see something else. Not only does a metaphor help an audience “see” something else, it improves the entire picture. As Ivie believes, the metaphor serves a very important purpose in helping the audience understand, in this particular case, Martin Luther King Jr.’s overall message.

Sonja K. Foss says “in criticism in which metaphors are used as units of analysis, a critic analyzes an artifact in four steps: one, examining the artifact for a general sense of its dimensions and context; two, isolating the metaphors in the artifact; three, sorting the metaphors into groups according to the vehicle or tenor; and four, discovering an explanation for the artifact” (Foss 303).

Foss expands upon her description of how to analyze an artifact. “The first step for a critic is to become familiar with the text or elements of the artifact and its context to gain a sense of the complete experience of the artifact” (Foss 303). Step number two of analyzing an artifact “in a metaphor analysis is to isolate the metaphors employed by the rhetor” (Foss 303). Foss even uses as her example the “I Have a Dream” speech because it is filled with metaphors. When classifying the metaphors, “the next step of the process involves sorting the metaphors you have identified into groups, looking for patterns in metaphor use. The metaphors are sorted or grouped according to either vehicle or tenor, depending on your interest and the kinds of insights that are emerging for each in the analysis” (Foss 304). Ultimately, “in this [final] step, the

groups of metaphors – metaphors organized around either tenors or vehicles – are analyzed to develop an explanation for your artifact" (Foss 304).

Application of Method to Artifact

Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites present the concept of a matrix metaphor and define it as "a comparison of two concepts or objects that at a minimum stimulates or generates other metaphors and, consequently, provides a unifying bond among those diverse figures" (Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites 68). They believe that a key to identifying a matrix within the speech is to look at the outstanding images and the relationships between them. They write:

> Within the speech King develops three extensive images: (1) the Constitution as a promissory note (about 170 words), (2) the dream of achieved racial justice (about 290 words), and (3) the 'ringing out' of freedom through the country (about 220 words). These images constitute a substantial portion of an address of about 1,600 words. Moreover, the three images are closely interrelated: the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence constitute for all citizens a metaphorical 'promissory note' that embodies the creed of this nation. Rising up and living out the 'true meaning' of this creed (honoring the check) will lead to the realization of King's dream and will let freedom ring throughout the land. (Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites 69)

Tying together these three images draws the contrast between promises made by the government to the citizens of America and the government's failure to fulfill these promises to colored people. Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites say that the three images looked at together "suggest the philosophical viewpoint underlying King's speech: full civil rights for colored people are inherent in these documents' (Declaration of Independence and Constitution) establishment of the United States as a legitimate government" (Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites 69). They continue to write that:

> King's surface metaphors suggest a metaphorical statement closer to the spirit of his analysis: that the instruments establishing the American state are a *covenant* between the state and all citizens. This implicit matrix metaphor, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as a covenant (with the Emancipation proclamation as a reaffirmation of them), provides both a unifying center and a generative framework for the address. (Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites 69)

According to Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites, if the speech evolves out of the covenant matrix, the check-bank image takes a critical position. Because it is the most direct expression of the speech's metaphoric matrix, King develops it carefully and at length. King develops an extended metaphor that leads to the deeper matrix metaphor. Some of the elements in the extended image are the following: "(1) tenor – Constitution and Declaration of Independence, with vehicle – promissory note, (2) tenor – contemporary American policy, with vehicle – defaulter, passer of bad checks, (3) tenor – Black demands, with vehicle – check, (4) tenor – nation, with vehicle –

vault of opportunity and finally (5) tenor – justice, with vehicle – bank" (Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites 70). Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites certainly provide a unique analysis of King's use of metaphor, seen best with their application of a matrix metaphor.

While the matrix metaphor can provide a thorough analysis of a combination of metaphors, the concept itself can be somewhat limiting. What one may notice is that while they identify and analyze a couple of the major metaphors implemented within the speech, they leave out all of the other types of metaphors that King utilizes. All of these other types of metaphors are discussed after this section about the concept of a matrix metaphor. Another way of saying this is that the matrix metaphor is not the only, or best way, to analyze the metaphors within the "I Have a Dream" speech.

According to I.A. Richards, an influential literary critic and rhetorician, "the tenor is the main subject," while the vehicle "is that to which the tenor is compared." Richards warns though that one must not jump to the conclusion that the tenor is central and the other [vehicle] is peripheral. Ultimately for Richards, the metaphor is not flowery language or mere embellishment. Richards says, "with different metaphors the relative importance of the contributions of vehicle and tenor…varies immensely. He continues to write that "at one extreme the vehicle may become almost a mere decoration or coloring of the tenor, at the other extreme, the tenor may become almost a mere excuse for the introduction of the vehicle and so no longer be 'the principal subject'" (Bilsky 133).

Martin Luther King Jr. uses a variety of metaphors, particularly in the first half of his "I Have a Dream" speech. Using the method of metaphoric criticism, the procedure to analyze the artifact and differentiate between metaphors, as stated by Foss, is to first isolate and then sort the

metaphors into groups. Sorting the metaphors into groups and identifying the contrasting characteristics of each metaphor helps each metaphor take on individual significance.

Martin Luther King Jr. contrasts light and dark metaphors when he states, "this momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves, who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity" (Ryan 214). In this line, "a great beacon light of hope" is contrasted with "long night of captivity." Here, King is using the contrast to stress the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation for Negro slaves. Another example of King using light and dark metaphors is when he states "now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice" (Ryan 215). Here, "dark and desolate valley" is contrasted with "sunlit path of racial justice." These contrasting images are used in an attempt to force the audience to think about which path they value more.

Michael Osborn presents an extensive analysis of light and dark metaphors in his article "Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light-Dark Family." Osborn asks "What happens, therefore, when a speaker uses light and dark metaphors?" (Burgchardt 307). He argues:

> Because of their strong positive and negative associations with survival and developmental motives, such metaphors express intense value judgments and may thus be expected to elicit significant value responses from an audience. When light and dark images are used together in a speech, they indicate and perpetuate the simplistic, two-valued, black and white attitudes which

> rhetoricians and their audiences seem so often to prefer. (Burgchardt 307)

Osborn provides an even more thorough analysis of light and dark metaphors:

> The combination of light and dark metaphors is ideally suited to symbolize confidence and optimism, because light and dark are more than sharply contrasting environmental qualities. They are rooted in a fixed chronological process, the movement of day into night and night into day. Therefore, symbolic conceptions of the past as dark and the present as light or the present as dark and the future as light always carry with them a latent element of determinism, which the speaker can bring forth according to his purpose. (Burgchardt 307 - 308)

In summary, Osborn says that the use of light and dark metaphors is quite effective. The contrast between the two ideas can change the mindset of an audience. Do they want to continue to see the present in the dark? Or find the future in the light? For colored people at the time, do they wish to remain content with the current injustices they faced? Or do they want to take action and make progress? Osborn also says that light and dark metaphors can symbolize confidence and optimism. These two qualities are most likely what King wanted to translate unto his audience.

There is also evidence of hot and cold metaphors in the speech. Towards the middle of the speech King says “this sweltering summer of the Negro’s legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality” (Ryan 215). Here, freedom can be

seen as the tenor while “sweltering summer” and “invigorating autumn” are the vehicles. Another reference to hot and cold metaphors is when he declares “even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice” (Ryan 216). Again, freedom is the tenor while “heat of injustice,” “heat of oppression” and “oasis of freedom and justice” are the vehicles.

The use of hot and cold metaphors has similar effect to that of light and dark metaphors. The contrast between the two can often lead an audience to become empowered to take action. Hot and cold metaphors also offer the audience a choice - live with present or create a new future.

Two final types of metaphors utilized in the speech are soft and hard and thirst and satisfaction. King contrasts soft and hard metaphors when he says “now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood” (Ryan 215). In this example, the tenor is equality, where the vehicles are a soft “quicksand” and hard “solid rock of brotherhood.” Finally, “let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred” (Ryan 215). This is a metaphor that brings in ideas of both thirst and satisfaction. King wants his audience to realize freedom, the tenor, viewed through vehicles of “satisfy our thirst” and “cup of bitterness and hatred” *can* be attained. As in his other uses of metaphor, King is effective in these types as well because of the contrasting ideas he presents.

In review, Martin Luther King Jr. makes use of a variety of metaphors within the “I Have a Dream” speech. Some can be categorized as light and dark, monetary and even hot and cold. His use of metaphor was absolutely effective in making his audience think and pushing them to act upon the inadequacies of America at the time.

Findings of the Analysis / Final Remarks

If there is one thing to remember about "I Have a Dream," it is simply *how* Martin Luther King Jr. influences his audience. Can you imagine taking the time, or having the brilliancy to put together such an amazing collection of diction, and more importantly, metaphors? Martin Luther King Jr. makes his audience think. Sure, he probably could have stood at the podium, said just about anything and been glorified for it. King was not that type of figure. Yet, it is more meaningful and surely better, to analyze and admire Martin Luther King Jr. for the way he influenced his audience. Remember that his audience was quite possibly in the millions, counting the almost quarter million present in Washington D.C., in addition to all the people listening on the radio and watching on television.

James Echols provides a fitting tribute and recognizes the profound impact of Martin Luther King Jr. in his book, I Have a Dream – Martin Luther King Jr. and the Future of Multicultural America:

> Martin Luther King Jr. is recognized as one of the greatest United States citizens, not only in this country but around the world. He has become synonymous with faith, love, justice, compassion, sacrifice, and witnessing on behalf and with those who struggle to benefit from the opportunities of America. In a very interesting way, the social context in which he lived and died parallel this season of profound crisis and uncertainty both in the United States and on the global stage. King was deeply involved in the Civil Rights Movement, a valiant effort to provide basic guarantees of

> liberty for U.S. citizens. In particular, he stood for the civil rights of black Americans who for too long had been relegated to the ranks of second-class citizen in a land where they had helped produced the wealth for elite families during the period of slavery. (Echols 53)

Martin Luther King Jr. delivered a momentous, historic speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial that hot summer day in Washington D.C. He gave fuel to the Civil Rights movement, and even further, he gave the audience one of the best oral presentations seen in America to this day.

Ultimately, one must first understand Martin Luther King Jr.'s life. It is clearly one to be measured against, in its 39 short years. Next, one must understand the context of the speech itself. August 28, 1963 will be a day forever etched in American history. Next, analyzing the "I Have a Dream" speech with a clear understanding of metaphor and with the method of metaphoric criticism, it is seen just how effective King was in his arguments. Not only does he describe the many, at the time, current injustices, he also calls on his audience to take action to make changes.

What may be the best part of the "I Have a Dream" speech for Americans today is the actual dream itself. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke directly from his heart that afternoon. He reached out to millions of people around the world that day, and to this day. He says towards the end of the speech, "And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream." While the speech may be

complex, the dream is simple: freedom and equality for all. As Americans, it is our duty to work for and secure these rights for all people – “now is the time.”

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Appendix A

“I Have a Dream”

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. And those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. And there will be neither rest nor tranquility in America

until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice: In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.

The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom.

We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead.

We cannot turn back.

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their self-hood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating: "For Whites Only." We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."[1]

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. And some of you have come from areas where your quest -- quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends.

And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

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.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together."[2]

This is our hope, and this is the faith that I go back to the South with.

With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

And this will be the day -- this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning:

My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.

Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride,

From every mountainside, let freedom ring!

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that:

Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.

From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when *all* of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

> *Free at last! Free at last!*
>
> *Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!*