

Martin luther king junior essay

[History](#), [American History](#)



Among the many speeches given by Martin Luther King Junior, this was his most quoted speech all over the world. This speech was given in the year 1963 during the reign of President Jeff Kennedy with its main theme freedom of the black Americans. The audience of this speech were the more than two hundred thousand supporters of civil rights. Martin Luther demanded for an end to racial segregation and discrimination.

His aim was to inform and make it known to the whole of America that the time of freedom had come. From the literature point of view, this speech is rhetoric in its own special way. This is because Martin Luther King uses many forms of styles of literature so as to effectively deliver a speech that will be of great impact.

Among the styles the King uses are metaphors, ethos and logos, repetition, quotations from written publications among other styles of literature. Some of his references of the quotations on his speech include; the bible, emancipation proclamation, the United States constitution as well as the United States Declaration of Independence.

To begin with is the use of anaphora to put emphasis on the theme and aim of the speech by making it easy for people to memorize hence the message of the speech is driven home. The clause " I have a dream" is repeated up to eight times in different sentences of the speech (Hansen 177). Other clauses repeated in the speech include;

' Now is the time' found in the sixth paragraph of the speech, where Martin was emphasizing that the time of freedom had come (Hansen 177).

'Let freedom ring' is another phrase used several times from the 27th paragraph running through the 41st paragraph of the speech (Hansen 177).

Other phrases repeated in the speech are 'we must', 'Go back to' and 'with this faith' among others (Hansen 177).

Another form of rhetoric is the frequency of words used in the speech. The repetition is also used to put emphasis on the main objectives that Martin Luther had when delivering the speech. For example the word freedom is used up to twenty times so as to put emphasis on the theme of the speech. This word has the highest frequency in the whole speech. This is to mean that Martin Luther just wanted freedom for his fellow black Americans.

The word dream is repeated about eleven times in this speech. This meant that, despite the fact that many people thought freedom was a dream it would come to be a reality at one point in time. According to Martin Luther King himself, he had foreseen freedom that is why he talked of having a dream. Other repeated words of the speech include; justice-eight times, our-seventeen times and nation-ten times.

In his speech, Martin Luther also borrowed phrases from credible speakers and publications. Some of his references of his speech include; the bible, emancipation proclamation, the United States constitution as well as the United States Declaration of Independence.

Borrowing from the United States Declaration of Independence, he talked of "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" (Hansen 58). Others of his phrases were biblical quotations, for example in the second paragraph he

picks a quote from Psalm 30: 5, " It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity" (Hansen 58).

Martin Luther goes further and picks another biblical quote from the book of Isaiah 40: 4-5 which states that " I have a dream that every valley shall be exalted"(Hansen 58). Another of his biblical quotations is from the book of Amos 5: 24 which goes by " No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream"(Hansen 58).

Not only were his quotations from the bible only, he also borrows from other renowned writers. For example, in one of the opening lines of the speech he talks of " this sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn" (Hansen 58). This is a quote from a renowned writer Shakespeare from his book Richard III.

The use of specific examples to illustrate his theoretical and logical statements is another style of literature that Martin Luther King applied in this speech. He for example uses many geographical cites so as to evoke emotions from his audience. He mentions towns like Mississippi, Georgia, New York just to mention but a few.

Last but not least, the use of metaphors to explain the contrasting circumstances is also depicted in this speech. Some of the metaphors used include; " rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice" and " sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice" (Hansen 107). This speech

also makes use of pathos technique because of the issues he addresses which are so emotional that they have an impact on the audience.

This speech was given four years later after the I have a dream speech by Martin Luther King Junior in 1967(Pach 1). He delivered the speech in the city of New York with his main theme being to call for an opposition to the Vietnam War by the Americans. The audience of this speech was a crowd of around three thousand people who had gathered outside a church in New York known as Riverside.

Despite the fact that some of his talk would even be offensive he still had the urge to talk about the war and imperialism in this speech. That is why he began by telling the crowd that at time people are forced to do things so as to satisfy their own conscience.

In this speech he talks about the war that according to him was to assault the poor people making them die early. However, most people and especially the leaders of America criticized this speech saying that there was a mixture of themes. This is because despite the fact that Martin Luther was talking about the war on Vietnam, he also included the issue of civil rights in this speech. Just like in the previous speech, he continues to use ethos, logos and pathos as elements of rhetoric (Pach 1).

As he begun this speech he questioned himself by asking with what authority was he speaking on Vietnam. This was a strategy of making him comfortably address the issue. In this he applied logos technique. He also made this speech very emotional in a bid to using the pathos technique which led to

many people listening and putting in mind what he said. For example Martin Luther talks of “passionate plea to my beloved nation” (Page 1).

As a matter of fact, the issue of war and violence is very touching in the hearts of people as it involves suffering and torture of innocent people. When Martin Luther addressed the issue of war and politics yet he was a civil rights activist, he evoked many questions in the minds of people. In this he applied rhetoric by contrasting the scenario. Since people objected what he was talking about, he used pathos to distract the objections from the people in the crowd who were shouting at him as he delivered the speech.

Ethos is also found in this speech when Martin Luther King Junior addresses the government to fulfil some of his demands. At the end of this speech, he concludes with a poem. The use of poetry in this speech is a style in literature that aims at evoking the attention of the audience. His rhetoric does not end there. He ends the speech by saying “Amen” which literally means let it be (Page 4)

Of the two speeches, I have a dream is more persuasive compared to the Time to break silence. This is because in this speech, Martin Luther was so compassionate to emphasize on the road to freedom of the black Americans. The style he used in the speech drove his point home as most of his requests and demands have been achieved up to date. However, both speeches had an exemplary use of different styles of literature which strengthened the themes that Martin Luther had.

Hansen, Daniel. *The Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*. New York, NY: Harper Collins. 2003

Pach, Chester. *Martin Luther King, Jr. Beyond Vietnam A Time to Break Silence*. 2011- January 26, 2011.