

MLK and Chaym Smith  
in the novel  
"Dreamer" by Charles  
Johnson  
essay  
sample

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Martin Luther King crosses paths with a man named Chaym Smith. Smith resembles King so much that King thinks he is staring into a mirror when he addresses Smith. Heck, they even chew the same type of gum. Not only does Smith resemble King, but he also shares his intellectual voracity, widely read in both Eastern and Western philosophy, proficient in Sanskrit and martial arts, and a talented painter. But where King is deeply spiritual, Smith is a cynic; Where King has the full force of his strong beliefs and his strong family heritage, Smith has nothing but a life time of misfortune to shape his attitudes. Although they do share a lot of the same similarities with one another, they are completely opposite from each other, such as black and white and good and evil. These are some of the examples why I think that Chaym Smith would not have been capable of giving the speech that King gave at the Calvary AME Church.

King was a very spiritual person and took the Bible very seriously. He paid close attention to its scriptures and the translation of them, in his every day life. Unlike King Smith's interpretation of the Bible was completely different. For example when Smith was sitting in the backseat of the Chevelle talking to Matthew Bishop, Smith replied " See, if you check that Bible of yours, you'll find the world didn't begin with love. It kicked off with killing and righteous hatred and resentment. Envy, I'm saying, is the Negro disease. We got the stain, the mark. Nothing else really explains our situation, as far as I can see... They make me sick, every one of 'em. See, I ain't never been good at group-think. You ever notice how safe and dull and correct they all are? How timid! And unoriginal?"

How vulgar and materialistic? Call 'em what you want, Christians or Communists or Cultural Nationalists, but I call 'em sheep" (pg. 66-67). In the first quote Smith thinks that coloreds are a tribe that has descended down from the first of two brothers whose best just couldn't hack it, he also believes that hatred is healthy and even holy. And in the second quote Smith believes that most people are conformists or as Smith calls them sheep. Nobody is an individual or a risk taker, and if so " the nail that sticks up gets hammered down". These examples are two of the reasons why I think Smith would have not been capable of making that speech at the Calvary AME Church because it's obvious that he has so much hatred built up inside of him and cannot relate to most people and what they have gone through in their lives.

The last evidence I have, comes at the end of King's Speech, at Calvary AME Church, when Bishop walks over to console King's double as if he was undergoing a kind of living death in the great man's presence. " Smith dropped his eyes, staring at his feet, almost as if he was ashamed of -and depised-his own being. " How does he do that? He was not, I saw, talking to me. " Some of the things he said... That was my stuff. Not things I've ever said, butt stuff I've felt. Like my spirit is trapped in his, which is so much clearer and bigger and cleaner. His voice ... It feels when he's preaching like his words come from inside me, not outside-like he gives my soul a voice. It doesn't make sense" (pg. 142). In this evidence it's clear why Smith never could have given that speech King gave. Smith was absolutely amazed by the way the speech had affected him. Smith claims that it was if King was

reading my mind and knew my every thought. The speech made Smith really look at himself on the outside instead of just on the inside, it also changed a lot of Smith's outlooks on life.

I don't think Smith could have given that speech that King gave that night at the Calvary AME Church, because he had so much hatred, animosity, racism, fear, mixed beliefs, and a weak family heritage built up inside of him. The conviction of that speech would not have been the same if Smith had given it, and he knows that. Unlike Smith King meant everything he talked about in his speech. It meant the world to him in fact he died for his beliefs. Overall I think if Smith would have spent a little more time with King, Smith would have found that good soul that King knew lived inside him break free from its shell and release all that hatred and animosity he had built up for so many years. Then maybe Smith could have given that speech King gave that night at the Calvary AME Church.