

Doc 100d essay

[Countries, United States](#)



Analysing Promises and Contradictions

After watching the video about the analogues promissory note that Dr Martin Luther king explained in his speech, I could not help but relate his dreams with our contemporary life so as to ascertain indeed whether his “ dream” came true. Dr King had noticed that the people of America had been given a promissory note in the form of the declaration of Independence, unfortunately, they could not cash on this cheque because it contained “ insufficient funds.” The insufficient funds represent how the life of the African American was still not free even to the point of finding himself in exile in his own land. King dreamed of a Utopia where everybody, irrespective of their racial background, would be treated equally. He eloquently charged all the American citizens to go out and create a perfect place to live. This paper will expound on the notion of the promissory note and how it reveals contradictions of American history. In addition, the persistence of ideologies that have threatened the founding promise of equal opportunity will also be further discussed.

It was the ‘ dream’ of Martin Luther for all American people to attain their American dream. Most Americans have tried to fulfil this dream, but as long as the antique moral values remain, the new America will never detach itself from the nightmare of racism and enter the world of equality (King, 1997). Of course, it is not all race relations today that can be said to be nightmares, people have made great strides by rising above petty biases and prejudices unlike in the mid-20th century when Luther was most active in his activism. When considering the post-slavery period in America, the cardinal principle of reconstruction which is based on equality before the law (duly enshrined

in the 14th amendment of 1866, that conveyed citizenship to all the people born in the United States regardless of race). It became apparent that most African Americans still lacked the basic needs in the course of attaining their American dream. David Harvey (2005) Points out that, the northern states were equally blameworthy as their southern counterparts especially through their discriminatory policies that prohibited further immigration of Africans. Arguably, the most unresolved issue in the history of America is the aspect of race. I am of the opinion that, despite the fact that most modern American are particularly sure that they are aware of 'race' when they see it, but very few of them can give a definition to this term. The state of affairs of native-Americans and the African-Americans, together with the rapid increase of dominance of Latin-America vividly shows that America still has a very long way to go in order to resolve its historical contradictions. Nonetheless, this issue of promises and contradictions should come as no surprise especially to the people who are aware of the history of racial antagonism that has for very long characterised America. This antagonism was largely castigated by the people of colour who perceived and discriminated against any citizen who appeared to be 'different' from them. The unresolved contradictions that the promissory note represent clearly depicts a sad nation which is built on high ideals and the belief that all the people were created equally but, unfortunately, has found it extremely hard for it to reconcile these contradictions so as to be able to fulfil its potentiality for a genuinely equal citizenship.

When analysing promises and contradictions in our modern life, renowned author Milton Friedman in his essay The Social Responsibility of Business is

to Increase its Profits claims that, one of the promises that business people and corporations nowadays normally contradicts is that of being socially responsible. Nonetheless, he claims that, these businesses that shout loudly that they are not only based on profits but the desire to promote ‘ social’ wellbeing and are ‘ social conscience’ are simply a group of intellectual forces which undermine the fundamentals of a free society (Friedman, 1970). The idea of social responsibilities simply shows the analytical looseness and lack of rigor (Friedman, 1970). Milton explains that, this is because although a corporation can be perceived to being an artificial person who is bestowed with responsibilities. On the other hand, a business cannot be said to possess responsibilities even in vague sense.

Milton perceives the issue of social responsibility as sheer rhetoric that only deliver numerous promises filled with contradictions. He argues that, after all, the corporate executive ends up spending someone else’s money, such as the shareholders capital of the employee’s benefits for them to achieve a certain social interest. This is because, provided his action towards the social responsibility endeavour involves a reduction in the shareholders capital or returns, then he is obviously using the people’s resources to fund for their social interest (Friedman, 1970). This is the example that greatly shows contradictions in most American corporations because the stockholders or the employees or even the customers would be at liberty to spend their money separately on the particular action if they desired to so. Therefore, it is Milton’s assertions that, whether it is blameworthy or not for prestigious corporations and influential businesses to use the issue of social responsibility and the contradictions involved in it, clearly injures the basic

foundations of a free society.

The unresolved contradictions of the American history are further explained through an article authored by Noy Thrupkaew. Thrupkaew narrates the story of Mali Keo an immigrant who fled Cambodia in 1992 with her four children and husband after the forced labour “ the killing fields” where millions of Cambodians died. Her life as an uneducated, little English speaking ability, traumatized and unskilled clearly shows that most promises that are enshrined in the constitution are not yet enjoyed by all the people in the US. For instance, just because Mali Keo is an immigrant in the United States, she is not promised of public assistance just like any other American because the welfare reform Act of 1996 cut of most federal benefits that were meant for immigrants. Even the subsequent amendments to the welfare Act has not entirely restored these benefits to the immigrants. This is a classic example that strongly affirms both the substantive egalitarianism and moral universalism as an integral part to thinking and analysis of promises by Luther King in his speech. The only difference with Luther’s time is only that, nowadays, the issue of race and discrimination is milder that it was in early and mid-20th century. In his dream, King had a broader egalitarian vision as part of the fulfilment of his moral universalism (Thrupkaew, 39). The author of this article claims that, despite Mali Keo making it to the US, with the thought that it would be her land of salvation, it turns out that indeed, she is living today as a severely impoverished citizen in Philadelphia.

Conclusively, this paper will comment on why my argument is particularly significant for college students and other people in the 21st century. This

argument is vital because it has managed to explain some of the promises and problems that are, as a result of unresolved historical contradictions. Since the college students will be the scholars of the future, they will be the people bestowed with the roles of formulating policies and amending the existing one. Therefore, if they become enlightened that there are various issues that tend to create inequality amongst citizens of different colours and origin, they will be in a better position to handle such situations. They will indiscriminately push for the equality as Martin Luther dreamed of during his fight for equality before the law. In addition, it is also worth noting that, if the real origin of discriminatory activities such as slavery were simply economic aspects, then the people of America have been tackling this issue from the wrong angle. It would be imperative for the 21st populace to shift its focus to the very real question of economic deprivation and exploitation as much as we do to the issue of a race factor (Harvey, 217). In general, Martin Luther King's concept of a promissory note still needs to be worked on so that, as it was promised, all the people irrespective of their racial background would be guaranteed their right to happiness as unalienable American citizens.

Works Cited

Friedman, Milton. The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. The New York Times Magazine, 1970.

Harvey, David. A Brief History of Neoliberalism. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Print.

King, Martin Luther. I have a dream. Ed. James Melvin Washington.

<https://assignbuster.com/doc-100d-essay/>

Scholastic, 1997

Thrupkaew, Noy. " The myth of the model minority." American Prospect 13. 7 (2002): 38-41.