

Dr. martin luther king, jr's speech

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



The goal of Dr. King's speech is to unite his African American audience with the dominant culture thereby implementing cultural change' Q. What words(symbols/language) speak to the identity of his African-American audience? Explain.

In the 17 minutes speech delivered by the Nobel peace prize winner, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; he called for the end to racial segregation and discrimination. The word ' negro' in the second paragraph is associated with a history of slavery, discrimination and injustice.

When he refers to the state of Mississippi, which is the worst example of racism, he is identifying with his African-American audience. The South again is infamous as slavery was institutionalized there. When Dr. King says " I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia...", the word red creates the image of blood, implying pain, hurt and suppression.

" Quest for freedom"-again for the African American community to identify with- so that a new day/hope dawns.

" Battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality" and " Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one" are easily identified by the " America's citizens of color"

" The veterans of creative suffering" also refer to his African American audience.

Q. What words (symbols/language) do you think best reach the dominant cultures (who are also listening to his speech)? In other words, what words ring true to the dominant culture's identity?

The masterpiece speech is the best example of rhetoric in the twentieth century. Dr. King calls the dominant culture ' whites'.

”-signs stating ‘ For Whites only’..”

“-for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, ...we cannot walk alone.”

When Dr. King says “ This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off...” the word luxury is identifiable by the whites.

“-a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice”; and “ signing a promissory note to which every American to fall heir”. The whites were the heirs to the riches of freedom at the time.

Q. Do any of these symbols cross over to reach both cultures simultaneously? That is, do some of these symbols speak to (ring true to) both audiences and therefore serve to unite these cultures? Explain.

Martin Luther King refers to Abraham Lincoln’s speech by saying “ Five score years ago...”, both audiences identify with the great American leader.

Dr. King refers to the Bible when he says that the abolition of slavery came as a “ joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity” and “-justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream” and “-that every valley shall be exalted...”. Both factions identify with the Bible.

‘ Symphony of brotherhood’ used by Dr. King is an example of figurative language which appeals to both the cultures and speaks of harmonizing them.

The theme words in the great rhetoric have been repeated many times. The word ‘ Freedom’ has been used 20 times. ‘We’ used 30 times. ‘ Nation’ 10 times, ‘ America’ 5 times and ‘ American’ 4 times. ‘ Dream’ has been repeated 11 times. These words ring out the true spirit of the speech and appeal to both the cultures.