

I has a dream

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



The “ I has a dream” Ad Campaign “ I has a dream” was an ad that came out in the late 90s produced by the company Austin Kelly advertising that caused a wave of controversy around the country regarding the subject of proper language versus heritage within the African American population.

The ad was designed to speak out against Ebonics which can be described as the colloquial language that was developed by the African American population and was made up of what can be termed as broken up English or ill constructed sentences (Rickford 83). This was a big issue at this point in time with two groups developing different stances on the matter with one advocating for its promotion while the other side was against. The “ I has a dream” ad was a picture of a man with his back turned facing the opposite direction and the words “ I has a dream” written in bold letters below the picture. To the bottom on one side was a small extract added to the picture that spoke out against Ebonics.

The use of this historical appeal made famous by Martin Luther King was meant to gain the attention of those who saw the ad and needless to say, it did just that (Rickford 82). The argument behind the ad was that the African American race had fought so hard to get where it was, and the use of Ebonics by the children would only serve to undermine this achievement. The ad meant to theorize the question “ What if Dr. King had not been as articulate as he was? Would his message still have the same impact that it did?” This was shown by the screwed up version “ I has a dream”. The man in the picture was also dressed in regalia that looked similar to Dr. King so as to bring this point across.

The ad was meant to illustrate the immense impact that type of language

used could have on an audience and convince them to encourage their children to speak proper English and reject Ebonics (Rickford 82). The phrase "I have a dream." Can be considered to one of the most popular catch terms in the world and Martin Luther King is a man who generated a lot of respect especially from the black community and thus the use of his message was meant to bring the point across about the need for proper speech.

There are other parts of the ad apart from the phrase and the depiction of a man similar looking to Martin Luther King that was used to bring the message across as well. One of these is the fact that the man in the ad has his back facing the audience (Rickford 89). This can be seen as a symbol of progression (or lack of it) as it brings out the message that Ebonics was a language that was used in the past by individuals who were not privileged to get the kind of education that was available today and through the use of Ebonics, the African American population would only be traveling backwards instead of forward.

Work Cited

Russell John Rickford. In Praise of Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English.

New

Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2002. Print.