

# Political speech

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



How to define a political speech? A challenging task indeed as such a speech may not be easily classified. To examine the rationale or purpose of the speech would be a good place to start. A political speech may be a powerful vehicle used to effect change, inspiring and arousing feelings of great passion, motivating individuals to fight for a cause, to unite in a common purpose. A memorable speech lives on in the hearts and minds long after it has been delivered . Two speeches which altered the course of history were “ I have a dream” by Martin Luther King and “ We shall fight on the beaches” by Winston Churchill. Martin Luther King delivered his most famous speech in 1963, on the Lincoln Memorial Steps to over 200, 000 avid listeners as well as a national television audience. This speech was delivered in a climate of political unrest during a year of instability and violence with ever increasing racial tensions. The civil rights movement was gathering momentum and the purpose of the speech was to gain support for this cause. Abraham Lincoln had freed the black slaves over a hundred years ago - so the location was very symbolic. In terms of delivery, it was, in the end, a moving and inspirationally powerful speech, boosting the morale of the British army, but in terms of vocal skill specifically, Churchill was born with speech impairment, so the tone might not have been its full potential of strength. Nonetheless, it is amazing how despite Churchill’s speech impairment, he was still able to give one of the most inspirational speeches of all time. To inspire the crowd, king utilized the delivery style of the black folk pulpit. This vocal style of call and response had been finely honed to accomplish exactly what king had in mind for “ Dream” connecting with the crowd, stirring their emotions and confirming their belief in the cause. he began his speech

slowly and calmly before slowly starts to build up his passion and emotion and by the time he reaches " i have a dream" segment he is impassioned employing the rich, ringing tones he would have used for a Sunday sermon. Martin Luther King closes his speech from the old Negro Bible. These words " Free at last, free at last " also deal with his deliverance. Referring to the scripture and using the delivery style of the pulpit, King imbues his speech with spiritual quality and has managed to merge his voice with the prophets, infusing it with the spiritual authority of the Bible. This style of delivery inspired his audience in their pursuit to justice as they believed they had God on their side and that they were doing his work. Rhetorical devices are abundant in the " I Have A Dream" speech. Most noticeable, and frequently used, is anaphora, which is the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses " I have a dream" creates a stirring vision of hope. Its a dream that the years of black suffering will soon be over. This intensifying device was a black oral tradition, used to imprint the thesis statement into the mind of the reader. King uses metaphors that are abstract and contrast the racial situation in the country in the past and present to the situation in the future. King uses the metaphor, " a desert state" to refer to the state of Mississippi to show that it is the most affected with racial injustice. On the other hand he uses positive metaphors like, " table of brotherhood" to refer to the unity between the African-Americans and the Whites in future. King's use of the metaphor " the crooked places will be made straight" means that there will be equality in the future of the American nation. The metaphor, " an oasis of freedom and justice" is used to show that there will come a time when there will be no racial injustice in the

state of Mississippi. These places are not chosen at random. They represent locations that were filled with racism at the time. For instance, the KKK had just resurged in Stone Mountain. This is called Metonymy " But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. " he is naming different mountains showing that his message is inclusive and that freedom should ring out loud and high in America. it show that america is a split nation at is at war to an enemy with in - itself. King's delivery is slow and deliberate, probably partly because he is used to preaching in big churches with lots of echo, or to large crowds with patchy sound systems. But you can hear, even feel, the energy he creates just with that slow, southern drawl. One of the most distinctive voices you will ever hear." I have a dream that one day my four little children will live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. " Colour of their skin/ content of their character... impeccable symmetry. There is a great juxtaposition between the words " interposition and nullification" and " little black boys and little black girls" joining hands with " little white boys and little white girls. " And it's all tied together with the most famous line ever delivered, " I have a dream. " We are right at the crest of the wave now, and King rides it out with his audience until the quote from what was essentially the American national anthem that gives him his next rhythm, " Let freedom ring. "So he goes again, his voice is totally unconstrained and he is as near to extemporising as he'll get in a speech of this importance: he's in the zone and there's now not a nerve in his body." Let freedom ring" becomes the next peak and is King's peroration. He starts his list, and at about " Stone Mountain of

Georgia" the crowd really gets into his rhythm, helping him out along the way to the end.