

Martin luther king analysis assignment

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Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" In April of 1963 Martin Luther King was arrested during a nonviolent demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama. While incarcerated, he came across a public statement, "A Call for Unity" made by eight white clergymen in attempt to criticize his work and ideas. It was then that Martin Luther King wrote his rebuttal "Letter from Birmingham Jail", using rhetorical appeals to not only undermine the clergyman's statement, but their moral sense and obligation in the eyes of God.

Upon doing so; Dr. King quotes St. Augustine when he said, "I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal, but moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust law." (Bloom, Smith 499) As we analyze Dr. King's letter we observe the way he conveyed his message by using what the clergymen said to present his counter argument. In the clergyman's statement, they distinguished Martin Luther King as an outsider and called his actions unwise and untimely. Dr.

King then sets the foundation of his letter and identifies what was said by saying, "I came across your recent statement calling my present activities 'unwise and untimely', and I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against outsiders coming (Smith 495) By using an ethical appeal Dr. King begins to justify his presence by assuring the clergymen that he was invited because of his organizational ties with the Southern Christian Leadership, in which he serves as president.

He also goes on to say, "but more basically, I am here in Birmingham because injustice is here." (Bloom, Smith 495) It was important for Martin Luther King to say this because it supported the fact that he was not an outsider coming in at the wrong time, but he was welcomed in where he felt it was time. Dr. King also argues with one of their basic points of nonviolent demonstrations. He addresses this by saying, "You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. You may well ask: Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" (Bloom, Smith 496 – 497) He expresses the reason for any nonviolent demonstration by first listing the four basic steps: collection of the facts, negotiation, self-purification, and direct action. Dr. King then uses a logical appeal by stating the brutal fact that Birmingham has had more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches than any other city in the nation. It was important for Dr. King to use facts to show the audience that even after Negro leaders sought out to negotiate promises were not met and the Negro community was left with no other alternative.

By Dr. King advocating direct action; it forced the issue of segregation to be confronted. Dr. King then begins to argue the assumption of Negroes breaking laws. He does this by saying, "You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern." (Bloom, Smith 498) Then using a logical and ethical appeal he makes his point by stating, "We so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in public schools."

How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" (Bloom, Smith 498) Dr. King and unjust. He then goes on to explain the difference
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between the two types of laws; giving examples so the audience has a better understanding of why he obeyed just laws and disobeyed unjust laws. He uses how the early Christians practiced civil disobedience rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire and stated how many people viewed it as just. This was important for Dr. King.

Dr. King to say because he created a connection with the audience through religion. The audience has a better comprehension of how the Negro community came to their last alternative by Dr. King identifying with how he felt the circumstances came too far. He felt though it was necessary to create a situation so crisis packed that it could open the door to negotiation. Making his message more clear Dr. King says, "This wait has almost always meant never." (Bloom, Smith 498) Dr. King.

Dr. King also gives a perfect understanding of why he and his followers participated in nonviolent demonstrations by using an emotional appeal when he said, "We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that justice too long delayed is justice denied." (Bloom, Smith 498) By Dr. King using this statement it shows the audience that the time to act on segregation was now. No longer could the Negro community hope for justice; they had to fight for it. Through out Dr. King.