

I've seen the promise
land



In accordance with the three speeches and one letter by Martin Luther King Jr. , there are many ways one can comprehend what he intended to accomplish with each. This, of course, means besides the obvious understanding that can be absorbed through a quick read through. The one speech that resonates even in today's society and still relates to things, even outside what King was speaking on, was his speech " I've Been to the Mountaintop" or also known as " I See the Promised Land". With any movement against injustice, a good leader must be present.

Through understanding of his speeches and similar past leaders such as Moses and Jesus, it is clear how Dr. King established himself as the leader of the civil rights movement and his vision and strength led many to a better life filled with the freedoms that they had yearned for. The opening of this speech is inspirational yet it is also somewhat unexpected when put in the context of his other more famous works. When asked by God what age he would like to live in, he describes some of the most famous and wondrous places of all time, such as Ancient Greece or the Renaissance.

Then, with a powerful swoop in his voice, he says: Strangely enough, I would turn to the Almighty, and say, ' If you allow me to live just a few years in the second half of the 20th century, I will be happy. ' Now that's a strange statement to make, because the world is all messed up. The nation is sick. Trouble is in the land; confusion all around. That's a strange statement. But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars. Martin Luther King Jr. knew that the time had come to finally address the issues that had been conflicted within him as well as countless others.

He states, " But now, no longer can they just talk about it. It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence in this world; it's nonviolence or nonexistence. " He continued his speech by delivering messages from Jesus and various biblical passages to show why it is so important that they continued to be pushed forth and not remain idle. Even after their protest in Memphis they needed to keep marching forward, literally and figuratively. This speech was not only inspiring for the civil rights movements, but can also be used as an inspiration and a guideline to overcome any injustice that can be inflicted onto someone. Dr.

King believed that when men and women had the mission of doing God's will and standing up for what is right, that this would allow them to no longer fear death. Once you have conquered those who had at one point unjustly conquered you, then you are free. In addition to all the things Dr. King believed were needed to reach the " Promised Land", the most important thing, though not directly stated by King, was the presence of an innate and inspirational leader who has a clear vision and the ability to express and correctly assert that vision onto those who want to quell injustice, along with the courage to fight against it himself.

When you look at the difference between successful and also failed campaigns against injustice, the one thing that is always remembered is that in successful ones there was a leader who rallied his people. Moses was determined to lead the slaves out of Egypt and accomplished it by uniting them with his cause. Another example is Abraham Lincoln when he organized those around him and passed the Emancipation Proclamation of

1963. King Jr. embodied everything that Moses and Abraham Lincoln did for their people, and then some.

Without him, the civil rights movement very well could have died down and the world would not be where it is at today. With this in mind, there are 3 key moments in Dr. King's life that made him into the visionary who took on all the arduous tasks that were placed before him. First is the time he spent in Birmingham Jail and the letter he wrote. " Human progress...it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be coworkers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. This showed that he was willing to fight alongside his people and endure anything that they did, and that he would go to the greatest of lengths to make his point. The second and his most famous speech, " I Have a Dream", delivered on August 28, 1963, not only sparked a fire under those who had already been involved, but additionally enlisted those who may not have had previously agreed with his beliefs or thought that change was not possible. It also gained global media attention and exposed his brilliance, showing what he truly envisioned for the future of his country.

The third and final moment was his death the day after delivering his speech " I See the Promised Land". His martyrdom was a symbol to all that things needed to, and were going to, change. From that very speech given in Memphis, he preached: Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that

now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain.

And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land! In his speech "I've Been to the Mountaintop", King delved into the current status of the civil rights movement and how he saw that the future was bright, as long as people continued to persevere in the face of adversity, and did not allow the opposition to deter them. He believed that they had come too far to let it slip away, and even without him as their leader he knows they can accomplish it.

As with all other successful movements, a leader who is extremely persuasive, motivational, and is willing to do anything for what he believes in is key. For Dr. King, there were three crucial moments in his life that shaped him to become such, and they are: his prison time and letter from Birmingham Jail, his "I Have a Dream" speech, and his martyrdom. These not only made him the face and leader of the civil rights movement, but arguably the greatest and most influential leader in history.

Bibliography

1. King, Martin Luther Jr. "I've Been to the Mountaintop. Speech, Memphis, Tennessee, April 3, 1968.
2. American Rhetoric. <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm>
3. King, Martin Luther Jr. "Letter From Birmingham Jail." (letter, Birmingham, Alabama, April 16, 1963. African Studies Center-

University of Pennsylvania, http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html