

I have a dream
(martin luther king, jr.)
essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

King's speech creates several vivid mental pictures. One of these is the picture created in paragraph two where he refers to the Emancipation Proclamation as " a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice" (King, 1963).

Reading these words, the reader could not help but think of a wooden boat in a state of disrepair, blackened in some portions as if burned but not entirely, seemingly lost in high seas on a dark night. The boat is overloaded with emaciated Negroes who, although too weak to stand on their feet, are all extending their hands to point to the blinking red light of a lighthouse. Hope is registered in every face because they all know that a lighthouse could mean land, respite from the viciousness of the sea, and hopefully, food.

Paragraph three provides the readers with another mental picture. Here, King writes that the " Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination" and that he " lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity" (King, 1963). What comes to mind is a lone Negro, emaciated and chained, and whose movement is limited by the length of his chain. Surrounding him, albeit out of his reach, are tables laden with mouth-watering foods where white people who seem unaware of his existence, indulge themselves. The foods appear to be *gratis* , because the Whites help themselves to their heart's content and nobody charges them anything. The Negro, however, could not partake of the foods for the simple reason that he is chained and could not reach the table. Of course, the Negro looks helplessly frustrated.

Paragraph four, on the other hand, depicts smiling Negroes entering a bank and holding on to their checks on which were written the words " Life,

Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” They are happy because they expect to cash their checks. In the next frame of this scenario, they are coming out of the same bank with anger painted on their faces because the bank told them that their checks could not be cashed for reason of “insufficiency of funds.” They are angry not only because their checks were not cashed. They are angry because the founding fathers who wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America did not honor their promise of equality to the Negro people.

King’s speech is so compelling in its honesty, in its accurate description of the plight of the Negroes, and in its confident manner of conveying its message of hope. King tells the Negroes in simple, easy to understand words that they are suffering from deprivation because the founding fathers who promised them equality have not honored their words. According to him, this inequality is the underlying reason why Blacks are not welcome to spend the night in the hotels of their choice and eat in restaurants of their fancy. He tells them that because of this insincerity of the founding fathers, White Americans are neither interested in sharing with them the bounties of their country, nor in treating them as fellow Americans because of the color of their skin. This discrimination is the reason why they see “For Whites Only” signs everywhere; the same reason why they are not granted equal opportunity to do honest work or make use of the country’s natural resources in order to improve their lot and altogether leave the ghetto behind. But all is not lost, according to King. In spite of the injustices that the Negroes are suffering, King appeals to them to be patient while being persistent and avoid hating every White man. He explains that many of the

White Americans have already realized the fact that “ their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom,” assuring his fellow Blacks that the end to their suffering is just around the corner (King, 1963).

King’s speech has every reason to attract others to his vision because it is rooted in the original belief of the founding fathers. For instance, he believes that the realization of the equality among Whites and Blacks is imminent; that time will surely come when the Black and the White children would be playing together in the same park and would go to the same school together. King tells his listeners that his vision is not an impossible dream because of what the founding fathers declared in the beginning that “ We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

Reference

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963). *I Have a Dream*. Retrieved April 12, 2008 from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm>