

Martin Luther King and the March on Washington Essay

[History](#), [American History](#)



Martin Luther King was a prominent political activist who advocated non-violent resistance of African-American people against segregation and discrimination. His books such as *Stride toward Freedom* or *Strength to Love* tell the readers about the injustice committed to black people and their aspirations for freedom.

His famous *I Have a Dream* speech was delivered in 1963 during the rally near the Lincoln Memorial. Later it was published by in various magazines, newspapers, books, and anthologies. In it, Luther expresses hope that American society will not be indifferent about the suffering of black people and that economic and political discrimination against them will be ended.

At the beginning of his speech, King refers to the Emancipation Proclamation which granted freedom to former slaves. However, he also emphasizes the point that one hundred years later African-Americans were still “crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination” (King).

He argues that America democracy failed to address the needs of colored people. To elaborate his point of view he refers to the Constitution which stated that people were equal in terms of their political rights, and shows how African-Americans were disfranchised by the government.

Additionally, Martin Luther King emphasizes the point that African-American community became more active and unanimous. In particular, he says, “those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content, will have a rude awakening” (King). This phrase means that these people will be content only with real changes rather than promises.

He points out that these protesters came to cash the promissory note given to every American citizen. In this speech, he demonstrates that African-American people were determined to struggle for their rights. To some extent, his major argument is that American society will not come to rest until political discrimination of black people is stopped. This is one of the main messages of his speech.

Finally, Martin Luther King expresses hope that sometime white and black people will be able to live in harmony. Namely, he hankers after the time when “ sons of former slaves and sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood” (King). At the end, he urges listeners to forget about their racial, ethnic, or religious differences and join efforts in an attempt to achieve peace and liberty.

At this point, it is necessary to compare I Have a Dream with the article The March on Washington written by James Murray Kempton. It should be noted that Kempton was a famous American journalist and a writer who worked with such periodicals as the New Republic, the New Yorker or Newsday.

He wrote articles about various social, political, and cultural issues. His article The March on Washington was published in the New Republic in 1963. In it, he argued that political activism of African American people took an unexpected form of pilgrimage. Moreover, he believes that such demonstrations can eventually change the political landscape of the United States.

First, Kempton points out that many people believed that the March on Washington would not be peaceful. In particular, he says that “ Washington waited for the avenging Negro” but this march turned to be the largest religious pilgrimage in the history of the country. In his article, James Kempton focuses primarily on the experiences of those white people who witnessed or joined the March.

Both authors agree that this event was bound to raise people’s awareness about the problems of segregation and discrimination in America. Moreover, one can say that Kempton and King believe that racial inequality can be ended only if people representing different religions and races work hand in hand.

They share the belief in the ability and willingness of American people to fight against injustice. In his article, James Kempton asks the reader if white people could accept “ the duty to march” in order to protect the rights of African-Americans. Overall, he seems to give a positive answer to this question as does Martin Luther King.

The main difference between the two authors lies in their perception of the march. To describe it, Kempton frequently uses words like “ revolt”, “ revolution” or “ revolutionaries” (Kempton). These words imply the idea of violence. This rhetoric is absent from King’s speech; at least he tries to avoid such words.

He emphasizes political activism and unity rather than aggression. Secondly, Kempton believes that in some ways the March on Washington was “ a

demonstration of power” (Kempton). However, for Martin Luther King it was an attempt to attract other people’s attention to the hardships of African-American people. Finally, it is quite noticeable that James Murray Kempton avoids speaking about the actual difficulties that black people had to face. In contrast, King vividly explains how African-Americans were victimized.

The comparison and contrast of these works shows how different people could perceive the same event. Moreover, in this way, one can better understand the feelings and emotions of people who represented different races and classes of society. Finally such an examination enables the readers to understand what kind of expectations people set for political and social change.