

# Civil right movement the rise for social justice

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



Racial injustice has marked the United States' history by being the most captivating issue that persists even until today for African Americans. One of America's greatest speakers, Martin Luther King Jr. , became the leading voice for this group, enforcing a societal change by making public speeches and peacefully protests.

As a result, and in response to the white clergymen's published criticism of his actions, Dr. King writes the Letter from Birmingham Jail to show them the negative effects segregation has on the African American group in order to encourage a societal change. Thus, in his letter, Dr. King emotionally persuades religious leaders and the white moderates by employing various examples of allusion, imagery, and rhetorical questions, which stem out from ethos, pathos, and logos to, ultimately, correct the audience's mentality on segregation and to defend the nonviolent actions he takes in order to stand up against racial injustice.

In order to argue effectively about racial segregation, King relies on allusions and ethos not only to present himself knowledgeable and educated but also to appeal to different groups of people such as, but not limited to, the Christians, Jews, and activists. In other words, King writes to the clergymen but also attempts to speak to other groups of people to by attempting to relate to them. Furthermore, King uses biblical allusions to explain what he believes his role as a man of God is in the world and states, ...just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the macedonian call for aid (King 1). Furthermore, King

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references Paul in order to demonstrate that just like Paul left everything behind to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to a location where God was unspoken of and fulfill his mission, King states that he too is willing to leave everything behind in order to speak of freedom spreading from Birmingham.

Furthermore, King believes he should respond to the call for aid by preaching about nonviolence actions to conclude the era of racial discrimination. By referring to the biblical texts, King cannot only connect with the clergymen and the religious majority but he also lead them to recognize their identity as Christians. Not only did Dr. King intend to talk to Christians, but also the Jewish majority by stating, To use the words of Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher, segregation substitutes an " I-it" relationship for the " I-thou" relationship, and ends up relegating persons to the status of things (King 3). King relates to the Jewish community by referencing to the respected philosopher, Martin Buber, who understood segregation very well due to being treated as a subordinate himself.

However, King also intends to speak to the activists by presenting the philosopher, Socrates, and explaining ...just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal (King 2). In other words, Dr. King states that if Socrates was of good character and was correct in creating tension so individuals' minds could grow, then tension is good in order for the people to become stronger individuals such as the African Americans. Thus, Dr. King establishes a connection with not only the clergymen but a broader audience

by alluding to important figures in order to reason his presence in Birmingham and possibly lead the public to change their stance on racial injustice.

Branching out from the appeal of ethos and allusion, Dr. King uses imagery as well as pathos to affect the audiences' emotions with the intentions to spark the public audience's desire to take action and end racism and inequality with African Americans. Thus, King illustrates the negative effects segregation has on African Americans by stating, ...vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim... when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters (King 2). By depicting a violent scene, King successfully explains to the audience the daily struggles and obstacles individuals of color go through by calling for empathy, compassion, and, perhaps, guilt since these violent scenes took place in public areas, such as the streets where everyone could observe, and refrained from helping.

In other words, Dr. King's audience cannot argue otherwise with his statements that such things have happened. Not only does King intend to present the physical damage segregation has had on African Americans, but also states the emotional damage when he explains, You suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is close to colored children, (King 2).

In other words, although it is not physical abuse, having separate parks is also a form of emotional abuse. Thus, by presenting this specific situation between an African American parent and child, Dr. King explains his frustration as a parent having to take away his daughter's innocence by having to open up her eyes to demonstrate how colored individuals are treated in the world. In other words, those who are parents themselves can locate themselves into the situation. In addition, King also states, ...when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers something in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society (King 2). King further demonstrates the hate society has towards African Americans and rejects it by calling it an airtight cage giving the reader a sense of a suffocating area.

Thus, the image of a tight and closed area, trapped with other people and not being able to liberate oneself to join the those who are free, accurately explains to the audience the daily struggles of an African American individual. Overall, by using imagery and pathos, King gives an opportunity to the clergymen and the public audience to reconsider their stance in the society and justifies his nonviolent actions towards racial injustice with explanations illustrating images which evoke sympathy.

Martin Luther King Jr. continues to further persuade the audience by employing rhetorical questions as well as logos, to give logically justify his peaceful actions against racial injustice. Thus, King further explains his thoughts by presenting a question his audience could potentially have saying, You may well ask: " Why direct action? Why sit ins, marches and so

forth? Isn't negotiating a better path?" (King 2). In other words, by presenting a question his audience could potentially have, King allows his audience to gain an understanding on the logic behind the peaceful protests. Once the audience gains an understanding King further explains why such actions should be taken by stating, One may well ask: " How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. (King 3). In other words, while segregation was a just law for some individuals, African Americans saw them as unjust due to the unequal treatments they often obtained from others.

Thus, King encourages African Americans to protest and stand up for what is right. King further argues that an African American individual should not be blamed for evil acts due to the fact that they are the victims and further implies this questioning, Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? (King 3). Thus, with the use of rhetorical question and logical explanations, he is able to effectively justify peaceful protests that were taking place as a result of segregation.

In conclusion, although Martin Luther King Jr. wrote the Letter from Birmingham Jail in response to the clergymen's criticism towards his actions against racial injustice, as he uses allusions, imagery, and rhetorical questions makes it clear that he intended for the public to also read what he had to say. Thus, with the use of allusion and ethos, imagery and pathos,

and rhetorical questions and logos, Dr. King efficiently persuades the audience's mentality on taken against racial injustice.