

# Martin luther kings i have a dream

Literature



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Today Martin Luther King is recognized as perhaps the central leader of the mid-20th century Civil Rights Movement. His policy of non-violent action has a profound impact on social policies that sought to oppress African-Americans. His existence continues to be felt today in the lives of millions of Americans who live in a more equitable America. One of King's greatest strengths was his eloquence as a speaker and his most renowned speech is the 'I Have a Dream' speech. This essay examines King's 'I Have a Dream' speech in terms of its rhetorical implementation of ethos, logos, and pathos. In terms of rhetorical theory, ethos represents the implementation of ethics and morals as a rhetorical tool. One of King's most powerful implementations of logos appears when he states, "One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination" ('I Have a Dream Speech'). Here King is comparing the oppression of the modern African-American with the same oppression that was experienced during slavery. This is a powerful implementation of ethos as its Logos is understood as the rhetorical implementation of logic and reason as primary argumentative techniques. King's speech makes great use of logos. One of the most powerful implementations of this occurs when King references the Declaration of Independence. He states, "It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned" ('I Have a Dream Speech'). Of course, King is referencing the nature of the Declaration of Independence as proclaiming the inalienable rights of all citizens. The logical implication of such a reference is that in continuing to oppress African Americans, the United States is neglecting its very foundational elements. Ultimately, this is a highly effective use of logos.

Pathos is understood as the rhetorical appeal to emotions. Perhaps King's appeal to emotions is the most powerful aspect of his speech. From the very beginning of the speech, King appeals to the enormity of the event to create emotional involvement and excitement. In these regards, he states that the speech "will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation" ('I Have a Dream Speech'). Such large-scale pronouncements situate the speech in terms of power and immediacy. Indeed, nearly all elements of the speech implement pathos to demonstrate the emotional importance of the event and to inspire individuals to take action.

In conclusion, this essay has considered Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech for its rhetorical implementation of ethos, logos, and pathos. In terms of ethos, it's demonstrated that King appeals to morals through comparison of slavery and modern oppression. Logos is implemented in equating African American oppression to neglecting the very foundational principles that America is established upon. Finally, pathos is implemented through the speech through the demonstration of the importance and immediacy of the speech. Ultimately, these rhetorical strategies combine in one of the most inspirational speeches of the 20th century.