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Rhetorical Analysis

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A Rhetorical Analysis of Dr. Martin Luther King

“I Have a Dream”

Being a social activist during a period where equal opportunity was not given, is intimidating. However, this was no apprehension for one individual name Martin. Within his speech “I Have a Dream,” Martin Luther King battled for the equality of many African American men and women during the civil rights era. On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King delivered his “I Have a Dream Speech” in front of hundreds, if not thousands, African Americans, and media outlets. Martin Luther King was as big on social justice and equality as much as he was without causing violence. King was such a peacemaker, although, he did fight for what he believed in, which was equality. Throughout the article composed of Martins’ speech, he attempted to get listeners to understand the hurt, frustration, as well as inequality African Americans went through.

Within this speech, there are several key factors to intake, from the main subject, the literary appeal, as well as the audience. Nonetheless, Martin specifies all this important information within his speech to the public. Being that Martin Luther the King was one of the biggest advocates during a time people were too afraid to speak out made him conquer much more for African Americans.

Beginning with the purpose, and asking questions such as: “who is Marin Luther King,” “what was his purpose of this speech,” and “did his speech help?” Well, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a “social activist and Baptist minister” who defended and took on an enormous leadership role until he was assassinated in 1968. Martin Luther King stood up and spoke out for the African American community and one of the ways he did, was with his speech. The now-famous and most recognizable speech there is, “I Have a Dream,” written and spoken by Martin in front of tons of individuals. His purpose in this speech was to “direct and persuade” his people of color to stand united and don’t give up, as he “had a dream” things will soon, get better.

The literary appeals within Martin Luther King's speech had the power of the word to each literary appeal. Starting with the emotions of ethos. King began his speech off by thanking the people who were there and tuned in through news outlets stating, “I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.” These words provided a purpose to take a stand against discrimination and a call for unity. Constantly referring to moments in the past in American history, of leaders who have shaped and helped freed America. Adding lots of ethical appeals, as his phrases are so vivid, they could “paint the picture of a beautiful dream-like nation where peace and prosperity abound.”

As King's speech continued to grow more “dramatic and engaging” Martin intended on making the frustration clear after the years of torment African Americans have experienced. More and more, the logic of pathos continues to splurge through his speech as he spells out “the freedom and rights the African Americans have been being denied is a debt on the nation.” Speaking with a passionate and energetic tone of voice, Martin Luther King's hope is not dead for justice and equality. King also used imagery within his phrases such as, “quicksands of racial injustice” and “seared in the flames of withering injustice.”

In addition to that, Martin's expectation and dream for the “perfect equality, unity, and brotherhood” was at an all-time high. Speaking on the many losses within the Black community was devastating to King. He even questioned himself and stated, “if there is a peaceful method of ending the misery in people’s lives, then it is the path of nonviolence.” As much as Martin Luther King wanted equality and peace, he wanted it in a nonviolent form. King stated later throughout his speech “the Black community can gain control through nonviolent and peaceful methods and not through recklessness or violence.” Using much imagery and high emotion in his tone, King did not want African Americans to lose sight of “the dream.”

This speech has grasped the attention of all Americans across several states. Martin Luther King Speech not only targeted African Americans but white supremacies as well. He wanted everyone to know how justice and peace could be served and not cause any harm. Being that the Civil Rights era was progressing it was hard to be heard, but King made his voice become heard. As the main targeted audience were the African Americans, they stood up and stood forth with everything Martin Luther King had to say. Many of those African Americans just wanted peace and justice.

As bright as the vision and intention were that Martin Luther King Jr. had for the African American community, it is sad to say we are still fighting the urge of this dream. Although there are no longer separated and degraded facilities in the world. Even though we still encounter police brutality against African Americans and racism. I hope one day we can dream as big as Martin, that it will all come true.

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