



“I HAVE A DREAM”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

On Aug. 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a Baptist minister from Alabama, gave a speech to more than 250,000 people who had peacefully organized on the Mall in Washington, D.C., for a “March on Washington for Freedom and Jobs” to protest racial inequality.

King was the last in a line of speakers that included Civil Rights, religious and labor leaders, actors and musicians.

“I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, **I STILL HAVE A DREAM.** It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.”

“I HAVE A DREAM that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.’”



Major television networks carried his speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial where he reminded listeners that the American dream is one of freedom for all, referring to the Declaration of Independence and President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation.

King’s “I have a dream” speech is credited with mobilizing supporters of desegregation and leading to the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

“I HAVE A DREAM that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT DR. KING AND HIS SPEECH

- > The original title of King’s speech was “Normalcy — Never again.” He had worked with others on the speech and stayed up until 4 a.m. preparing it.
- > King had given “I have a dream” speeches before and was counseled by advisors not to use the theme, so it was not included in his prepared remarks.
- > After a friend, gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, called out to him, “Tell ‘em about the dream, Martin,” King extemporaneously began the “dream” section of his speech.
- > King’s “I have a dream” speech lasted 17-minutes.
- > Following the March, King was named Time magazine’s Man of the Year in 1963.
- > King, age 35, was the youngest man ever to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded to him in 1964.
- > Between 1957 and 1968, King traveled more than 6 million miles and gave 2,500 speeches.
- > On the evening of April 4, 1968, King was assassinated while standing on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tenn.

LEARN MORE

- 1 Find the script or a video of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech online. Pretend you are a newspaper reporter covering the speech. Write a news story about what you just witnessed.
- 2 King referenced the Emancipation Proclamation, Declaration of Independence and Constitution in his speech and said America had given a bad check. What did he mean by that? What kind of figure of speech is this?



“I HAVE A DREAM”

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The 1960s were the heart of this country’s Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered perhaps his most famous speech—“I Have a Dream”—in August of 1963.

In his speech, King reminded us that the American dream is one of freedom for all by referring to the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation. He asked that we move forward and work together to make sure that all Americans have the freedoms that our Founding Fathers dreamed about when they signed the Declaration of Independence and when they wrote the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

“... when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing the words of the Old Negro spiritual: **‘FREE AT LAST! FREE AT LAST! GREAT GOD A-MIGHTY, WE ARE FREE AT LAST.’**”

That speech moved millions of Americans to support the Civil Rights Movement, especially King’s ending words, which summed up his dream for the American people.

King used his First Amendment freedoms to advocate for change and for

getting rid of prejudices. In other words, he lived by the rule of law. We know he used his Freedom of Speech. He also used his Freedom of Press to write about making changes. His most famous writing is “Notes from Birmingham Jail.” He used his Freedom of Assembly to bring people together to peacefully march and to do sit-ins. As a minister, he used his Freedom of Religion to base the Civil Rights Movement on the Bible.

TIMELINE OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

1863	Emancipation Proclamation (freed slaves)
1865	Passage of the 13th Amendment (abolished slavery)
1868	Passage of the 14th Amendment (equal rights for all)
1870	Passage of the 15th Amendment (granted black men the right to vote)
1896	<i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> (U.S. Supreme Court holds that separate but equal is constitutional)
1909	The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded
1948	President Harry S. Truman orders integration of the military
1954	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> overturns <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i>
1955	Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus
1957	Integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas
1960	Sit-in at Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina
1962	James Meredith became the first black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi
1963	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s <i>I Have a Dream</i> speech
1964	Civil Rights Act passed and the 24th Amendment abolished the poll tax
1965	Voting Rights Act passed
1967	Thurgood Marshall becomes the first African-American U.S. Supreme Court Justice

LEARN MORE

Use the internet to learn more about the following.

- 1 Why was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Birmingham, Ala., jail?
- 2 What is a sit-in? Research the sit-in at a lunch counter in a Woolworth’s store in Greensboro, N.C.
- 3 Research some of the famous Civil Rights marches. One of the most famous took place in Selma, Ala.
- 4 What were the important parts of the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

The Emancipation Proclamation

ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL

January 1, 1863

The Emancipation Proclamation was an executive order issued by President Abraham Lincoln more than 150 years ago, during the Civil War.

The Proclamation freed the slaves in the Confederate states. It also ordered the federal government to do all it could to keep the ex-slaves free and the military to accept the free slaves as Union soldiers and pay them for their service.

Critics of the Proclamation say that Lincoln should have freed the slaves in all of the states. In states like Missouri and Kentucky, which were considered Border States because there was sympathy for both the Union and the Confederacy, the slaves were not freed.

Lincoln's critics then and today argue that this shows that the Emancipation Proclamation was more of a political maneuver than a sincere desire on Lincoln's part to free the slaves.

By the end of the war, however, The Proclamation had influenced Americans to advocate for and accept the abolition of all slavery in both the North and South. Less than two years later, the 13th Amendment was passed ending slavery in the United States.

Lincoln considered The Proclamation the most important aspect of his legacy. He said "If my name ever goes into history it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it."



AN IMPORTANT DOCUMENT FOR HUMAN FREEDOM

- Lincoln actually issued the Emancipation Proclamation twice. On Sept. 22, 1862, he issued a preliminary proclamation giving the southern states until Jan. 1 to cease the rebellion. When the Confederates did not yield, he issued the final Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863.
- Lincoln's Cabinet initially resisted his idea for The Proclamation. It was only after the Battle of Antietam, which gave the Union an advantage, that it was persuaded. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued five days later.
- The Emancipation Proclamation changed the Civil War from a war to save the Union to a war for freedom, adding a moral force to strengthen the Union effort.
- It was the first step toward freeing all slaves and the eventual passage of the 13th Amendment, which made slavery unconstitutional.
- Throughout his life, Lincoln spoke against the evils of slavery and the need to make the words in the Declaration of Independence about all men are created equal a true statement about our country. The Emancipation Proclamation turned his words into action.
- The Emancipation Proclamation gave great hope to slaves everywhere that there was freedom in their future.



USE THE NEWS!

- 1 What do the words *emancipation* and *proclamation* mean? Using the newspaper, find words that could be used as synonyms for these words.
- 2 What is an executive order? Search your local newspaper or an online newspaper for examples of the President's activities or speeches and brainstorm about what might be the topic of a future executive order.
- 3 Do you think that the phrase *all men are created equal* is true for all groups of people living in the United States in the 21st century? Using a newspaper, find examples that show both sides of this issue—that we, as a nation, are moving toward equality for all but that there is still need for improvement.