

Name of Student

Instructor's Name

Course Title

Date

Rhetorical Analysis

Out of some of the most impactful or memorable speech in American history is the “I Have a Dream” speech delivered by Martin Luther King Jr. This stirring oration marked the beginning of a new era in black history where, through his moving oratory, Mr Luther King Jr. conveyed a new vision to his followers and inspired them to work together toward the achievement of their civil rights and equal status in the African American community. He saw a better future for the people of colour and an atmosphere in which white people could coexist alongside African Americans without feeling threatened and where people of colour might experience greater levels of freedom and success. The King's speech was impactful, and millions of people found inspiration and hope in his remarks. This t famous speeches of the African American Civil Rights Movement's history occurred on August 28, 1963, when the preacher Martin Luther King Jr. began to speak at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. His stirring oration was named “I Have a Dream” which delivered hope to African Americans during the difficult period in which they needed to organise and organise an effective resistance to attain their rights.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born into a society that enforced segregation. There was nothing more for him to do; it was as if he could instantly see how individuals in authority abused their social clout. It was due to his having completed multiple years of training to acquire his PhD in systematic theology that he became a scholar of the Bible and the theological ramifications. Roughly five years into his career as a reverend, he became convinced that

following his Biblical convictions, something needed to be done about the dearth of community amongst other races. When it came to race relations, throughout the 1960s and 70s, the country was ripped apart because of racial tensions. Martin Luther King Jr. did not want to see division among the races; rather, he hoped for their reconciliation. To realise his dream of American land as an inclusive space for all races, ethnicities, and classes where every individual has equal socio-political and economic rights, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his speech "I Have a Dream." In that speech, which was replete with numerous rhetorical strategies, he intended to instigate a strong emotional and intellectual response from his audience to propel the momentum of the Civil Rights Movement.

The use of imagery which is defined as "visually descriptive or figurative language is the most evident rhetorical device in Martin Luther Junior's speech. For instance, the words of Dr Martin Luther King Jr. sketch a detailed image of the treatment and condition of the Blacks in the American society and the oppression they had to endure because of their subdued status. The imagery of "the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood" beautifully sketches Luther's desire for unification (King). The use of the word "former slaves" and "former slave owners" rather than black men and white men demonstrates that he was not merely referring to individuals by their colour, but to how these people were being treated. While Dr Martin Luther King Jr. had wanted to see unity across all races over a meal, he also hoped for unity between white and black Americans, like his brother Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. In the previous lines, Martin Luther Junior has discussed the mistreatment of coloured people, using the state of Mississippi as an example of a place sweltering with the heat of injustice and tyranny. Here, the word choice was employed to call up fond memories of being trapped in blistering heat and making use of people's recollections. While "sons of former slaves" connect with these words in a variety of ways, for example: how hot it may have been, how the heat may have affected their

body, and how their minds might have felt, they do so by feeling linked to “former slaves” through what it may have felt like, how it impacted their body, and how their minds felt. The brutal hot summer days when the body is exhausted from overwork and the mind is empty are compared to such a scene in a movie in which the characters stand on top of buildings covered in tar, unable to move. The line above from Martin Luther Jr. continues and he goes on to say that he believes that injustice and tyranny might eventually “transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice” (King). There is nothing the citizens of these two towns would want more than for their towns to be transformed into a place that provides equal and inclusive space for individuals of all ethnicities. Luther states that he dreams of a world where instead of White people discriminating against the Blacks by stating “You cannot drink from this fountain. You cannot eat here. You cannot work here because of your colour”, they would rather be welcoming towards all races and ethnicities by stating that, “You are welcome here, and you are welcome to drink from either fountain. You are welcome to dine with us regardless of your colour. You are welcome to apply for a job here” (King). With the abundance of imagery provided by Martin Luther Junior, these are noteworthy thoughts for race unity and racial healing that Martin Luther King was striving for.

It may be noted that during the address, Martin Luther King Jr.'s tone of voice dramatically changes as he shares his thoughts, emotions, goals, and goals. The future has untold promise for him; when he speaks about it, his words are infused with a great deal of certainty. It is an example of King's sometimes brashness, in which he asserts that “knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair” (King). The statement encourages the listeners to stay in a positive mindset even when everything seems bleak. This little fragment of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech is vital to the objective of racial reconciliation since an otherwise dismal society is not driven to make things different. Martin Luther Junior served as a pastor, and as such, he brought hope, guidance,

sound teaching, and encouragement to his congregation. This is why, in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, he felt it important to share this part of his message with a diverse audience of 250,000 men, women, and children of all races (King). The objective of writing this down and disseminating it to the public was to serve as a personal catharsis for him, but it was also meant to influence how others saw the country, particularly those who hadn't personally experienced prejudice. If one is not hopeful, then there can be no resolution to a conflict.

Inclusiveness is another prominent rhetorical device used by Martin Luther King Jr.'s in his speech "I Have a Dream" speech where King regularly uses the pronouns "We" and "Our" to convey his message. His intent in choosing these words was to bring as many people together as possible in hopes of uniting whites and blacks by encouraging integration. Martin Luther Junior can connect on a personal level with those of colour because of the mistreatment he has experienced. When he mentions that he is mindful of the fact that some of the audiences have come "out of great trials and tribulations," he is channelling his personal experiences of being locked up in a jail cell, suffering at the hands of the police, or having faced other sorts of torturous ordeals (King). As he goes on to speak, Martin Luther Junior can connect with all Americans as he repeats a passage from a famous lecture by Benjamin Franklin. An integral part of our founding is the Declaration of Independence, which weaves truths from mankind's constant search for knowledge and integrity into our belief in equal human rights "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal" (King). He is utilising a legal document to illustrate his goal of racial reconciliation in reciting the Declaration of Independence, a text with which all Americans can identify.

King's repetition focuses the audience's attention on a variety of subjects via his frequent use of "I have a dream." This statement was said eight times throughout the text, highlighting an entirely distinct component of Martin Luther Junior's statement each time. The first time that King mentions "I have a dream," he does it just a few lines later, and concerning

the Declaration of Independence. By doing this, he directs the audience's attention to the main logic of his argument, which is based on a well-known American legal text. When Martin Luther King Jr. utters the phrase, "I have a dream," in his next "I have a dream" speech, he accentuates the visual of his argument by asserting that the "sons of slaves" and "slave owners" would be allowed to eat together at the table of brotherhood (King). Luther Junior felt a unifying principle of racial reconciliation came with the total restoration of the Jews to the land of Israel. "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character" (King). These strong images and ideas not only invoke a great deal of imagery in the minds of the audience but also instil hope in the oppressed listeners. The next excerpt is where Martin Luther Junior talks about his "I have a dream" dream and includes his four children as a way to have everyone think about their children. He does this in such a manner that even people who do not have children may still be affected by his earnestness and urgency. The next time King declares, "I have a dream," he stresses the need for immediate action, making clear that he is not just referring to something that has already happened. Luther Junior once again says "I have a dream" to evoke an emotional reaction from his audience, and he continues, "I have a hope that one day young black boys and girls will be able to join hands with young white boys and girls" (King). "Today, I have a dream," Martin Luther Junior said as he quoted himself and repeated the sentence to drive home the need of his "I Have a Dream" speech. "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal'" (King). This was his last iteration of "I have a dream" as he turned his attention to the Lord and His glory, which would be revealed. After making the point over and over again about how vital his "I Have a Dream" speech is to the racial reconciliation movement, he finally gets around to sharing his dream. This sparks an interest in the viewers, encouraging them to explore the values he strives for and supports.

While King reiterates his ideal of racial harmony on eight separate occasions, there are other instances in which Martin Luther Junior effectively utilises repetition to make a case. Martin Luther Junior stated: “we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds” and “we must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence” (King). These words, along with the repeated phrase “we must not,” were designed to help the citizens of the United States to come together and recognise their role in advancing racial equality. In the words of Martin Luther Junior, when he led his congregation in prayer and spoke of the difficult times, they were all living through, he then asked that everyone involved in the next struggle not aggressively take part, to prevent any crimes from being committed. King used the phrase “we must not” several times in an attempt to create a standard of living for his subjects. He achieved this by making an effort to go about it thoughtfully, while also being conscious, organised, and purposeful, with the hopes of having a lasting impact on the community as well as the rest of the globe.

Unity stems from the sensation of people feeling as though they had all joined together as one. Emotion is a large part of Martin Luther Junior's “I Have a Dream” speech as he describes the concept of men being equal in his vivid and passionate storey. Other than that, he achieves this in a variety of ways. In addition, the king claims that African Americans will picture this idea of all men being equal. He does this in more ways than one; King states that African Americans will, “Never be satisfied, as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels” and “hotels” (King). Martin Luther King Jr. said again that the black community would not be content as long as the black community's fundamental mobility occurs from a smaller neighbourhood to a bigger one." “It is impossible for us to ever be fully pleased until our children lose their sense of self and their dignity is snatched from them by signs that say: ‘For Whites Only’” (King). When addressing these things, Martin Luther Junior was not only empathising with those who can connect, but he was also activating the sentiments of the whole audience and prompting them to consider their place in

the oppressed population. He dreams of a world where his youngsters did not have to worry about living in dread of criticism due to their skin tone, they might devote their time to building good character instead. Because the notion of anyone's children suffering in that way knowing that the Bible teaches that each person was wonderfully and fearfully fashioned seemed too terrible to bear, the viewer is drawn in by the sincerity with which he portrays that pain. While I am not a mother, I was a kid at one time, and I can state with confidence that I would never want to endure such existence or experience it in any form. With this stated, I'm only guessing that it must have been painful for those who had children to consider how their idea might affect others.

In conclusion, each of the many features included in Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, which spans a wide range of concepts, imagery, sentiments, emotions, and aspirations of racial healing, were all presented using different rhetorical strategies. He achieves this by uniting everyone as one regardless of skin colour, upbringings, or experiences, or anything individuals may wish. With his ability to build a logical and engaging case, while invoking emotions in the audience, King aims to convince each person to have faith in his desire for reconciliation. Martin Luther Junior kept working until he managed to get his "I Have an Ideal" speech accepted, making his nation a step closer to realising the dream of uniting the country that Dr Martin Luther King wished for. Additionally, because of the racial reconciliation of the Civil Rights struggle, and considering all of these other considerations, Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous monologue on racism is now widely regarded as the most significant speech in American history.

Works Cited

King, Martin Luther. "I Have a Dream." *Negro History Bulletin*, vol. 31, no. 5, Association for the Study of Negro Life and History., 1968, p. 16.

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