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FOR THE SOUL OF AMERICA

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Martin Luther King's challenge to the racial
status quo in the United States during the Cold War

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Introduction

“I have a dream 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”.¹ These words, in which Martin Luther King, Jr. expressed hope for a society in which racial and social equality would be the norm, are part of one of the most famous speeches in United States’ history. Etched in public memory, this speech, along with images of King leading marchers during the Selma to Montgomery March and King going to jail in Birmingham voluntarily, have become well known throughout the United States and abroad.² Thereupon, a narrative has arisen in which King has become an almost saint-like figure who, regardless of personal safety, acted as a moral guide leading the United States down the path to equality. However, in recent years, scholars have come to question this sanitized narrative, as it mutes King’s passionate protests against an unjust legal system, his questioning of American militarism and consumerism, and his calls for structural change in American society and institutions.³ King’s legacy, these scholars argue, must be discussed as a whole, since it holds significant lessons for both the past and the present.⁴

In addition to discussing the full legacy of King’s narrative, scholars have increasingly sought to place the Civil Rights Movement and its actors in the context of the Cold War and the United States’ foreign policy. As Frederik Sunnemark explains, King was “part of and in certain ways a product of [...] several historical contexts of the 1950s and 1960s”.⁵ So, to truly understand the persona of Martin Luther King, it is crucial to understand his relationship to this context. To do so, this study will examine King’s rhetoric in relation to one of the defining international events of this period: The Cold War.

During the fifties and sixties, when Martin Luther King was active in the Civil Rights Movement, the Cold War was at its peak.⁶ The Cold War was an ideological clash at its core.⁷ Therefore, the image of the U.S. as the leader of the free world was of the utmost importance.

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., ‘I Have a Dream’, in: James M. Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco 1986) 217-220, 219.

² Frederik Sunnemark, *Ring Out Freedom!: The Voice of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington 2004) 1; Jennifer J. Yanco, *Misremembering Dr. King: Revisiting the Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.* (Bloomington 2014) 14.

³ Michael E. Dyson, *I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York 2001) 1-8; Yanco, *Misremembering Dr. King*, 11-15; Sunnemark, *Ring Out Freedom!*, 2-4.

⁴ Dyson, *I May Not Get There With You*, 3-5; Yanco, *Misremembering Dr. King*, 13-14.

⁵ Sunnemark, *Ring Out Freedom!*, 2.

⁶ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton 2002) 8-11.

⁷ Daniel Sargent, ‘The Cold War’, in: J. McNeill and K. Pomeranz (eds.), *The Cambridge World History* (Cambridge 2015) 321-346, 329-333; Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 8-11.

At the same time, the oppression and exclusion of nearly a fifth of its population negatively affected this image and provided the Soviet Union ample ammunition for anti-U.S. propaganda. The images of police forces beating peaceful protesters were shown all over the world and were used in communist propaganda as proof of the conflicting nature of these events to the ideological message the United States was spreading.⁸ This international context also provided the civil rights protesters bargaining power.⁹ Government officials increasingly realised that improving the racial relations and civil rights in the United States was in the interest of the United States' efforts abroad.¹⁰ At the same time, however, the civil rights activists had to tread carefully. Due to the lasting effects of McCarthyism and the red scare, it was seen as a breach of loyalty to openly criticise the nation which could be followed with charges of communism or friendly feelings towards communism, a dangerous position to be in.¹¹

As a civil rights leader, seeking socio-economic reform, Martin Luther King had to navigate this fine line between protest and patriotism. This thesis will focus on the tactics and strategies King applied to navigate the Cold War climate in order to voice his criticism and set out plans for systemic change within the confines of Cold War patriotism. Through an analysis of King's discourse, this research will look at King's speeches and sermons in the United States' Cold War climate between 1963 and 1968, a period often overlooked in the discussion of Cold War civil rights. This converges into the following research question: *What discursive strategies did Martin Luther King, Jr. adopt in order to push for racial equality within the boundaries of the domestic Cold War climate in the United States between 1963-1968?*

This chapter will unpack this research question, starting by explaining the current debates on the topic of the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King's rhetoric, and Cold War civil rights. It will also formulate the position this research will take in the debate on King's evolving attitude towards American ideological and moral discrepancies. The next section will discuss the methods used to analyse King's speeches and sermons and the second chapter will explain the historical context of racial relations, black resistance, and Cold War civil rights. This chapter will clarify the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement, the domestic situation in the United States when Martin Luther King arrived on the stage, and the effects the Cold War already had on the civil rights struggle in the United States. It will also explain the

⁸ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 3-6.

⁹ Claudette E. Bennet, 'We the Americans: Blacks', *U.S. Department of Commerce* (1993) 2; John D. Skrentny, 'The Effects of the Cold War on African-American Civil Rights: America and the World Audience, 1945-1968', *Theory and Society* 27:2 (1998) 237-385, 238-239; Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 3-6.

¹⁰ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 12-13.

¹¹ Manfred Berg, 'Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism: The NAACP in the Early Cold War', *The Journal of American History* 94:1 (2007) 75-96, 75.

significance of the period this research focuses on to both the evolution of King's rhetoric and Cold War civil rights.

Literature review

Cold War civil rights

Gunnar Myrdal laid the foundation for a broader understanding of foreign relations with his work *An American Dilemma*. His work helped scholars of United States foreign relations realise that a broad connection of social, economic, cultural, and political factors of domestic and foreign origin influence and constitute foreign relations.¹² This realisation led to a broadened field of study on race relations in which social and cultural aspects were included. Most importantly for this study, this prompted the inclusion of race relations and race itself in the study of international relations.¹³ Mary Dudziak was one of the first to extend this development to civil rights studies in her article discussing the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in which she researched the effects the international political climate had on civil rights.¹⁴ She effectively showed that upholding the United States' narrative of progress through the democratic process and thereby disproving Soviet propaganda was an important incentive for the Justice Department to push for a positive ruling in *Brown* and similar cases.¹⁵ Since the beginning of this century, scholars have picked up Dudziak's call for further research on the correlation between international relations and the struggle for civil rights.¹⁶ Several works have been published discussing the subject.¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, most of these studies have focused on the Cold War. All these authors have accepted the connection between the Cold War and the civil rights struggle. Their interpretations of the consequences of this connection on the civil rights struggle do not agree, however.

In her pioneering paper, Dudziak depicted an overall positive situation for civil rights progress, stating that the interest of the United States government in painting a positive

¹² Brenda G. Plummer, 'Introduction', in: Brenda G. Plummer (ed.), *Windows on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill 2003) 1-20, 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

¹⁴ Mary L. Dudziak, 'Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative', *Stanford Law Review* 14:1 (1988) 61-120. It should be noted that Dudziak was inspired by comments made by Derrick Bell in his work *Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma*.

¹⁵ Dudziak, 'Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative', 117-119.

¹⁶ Berg, 'Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism', 75-76.

¹⁷ E.g.: Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Berg, 'Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism'; Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge 2001); Plummer (ed.), *Windows on Freedom*; Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York 2001); Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1982* (Hong Kong 1984).

international image raised its commitment to implement, or at the least support, social change.¹⁸ A position supported by Meier and Rudwick, who stated that the Soviet Union's anti-American propaganda "holding American democratic pretensions up to ridicule before the uncommitted peoples of the world" was embarrassing the United States and raised its commitment to social change.¹⁹ Dudziak's main caveat being that the government's interest could dwindle when "Cold War motives were satisfied".²⁰ The following decade, John Skrentny continued this positive influence argument, using a combination of the political-process theory and neo-institutional theory to show that a combination of opportunity, agency, and legitimacy helped in the success of the Civil Rights Movement because, unlike previous era's, in the era of the Cold War the international audience became part of the institutional environment of the United States' government, thus creating opportunity for civil rights leaders to communicate their grievances in an international arena and to an international audience that supported equal rights.²¹ Although his focus lay on demonstrating the positive influence of the Cold War on civil rights, Skrentny also mentions another side of the relation between the two, namely, the active surveillance of civil rights activists by the FBI. These surveillance actions consciously violated civil liberties in the name of state security and installed a sense of caution among civil rights protesters.²² With this observation, Skrentny initiated another perspective on the Cold War-civil rights nexus.

In the twenty-first century, the interpretations of academics studying the Civil Rights Movement in an international context have come to lay more emphasis on the negative effects of operating in the international arena for civil rights leaders.²³ Scholars do agree that the Cold War created opportunities for civil rights protesters, however, that same Cold War climate also hindered the movement in several ways. Especially McCarthyism and the red scare limited protesters since any accusation of anti-American sentiment could have serious consequences. In his analysis of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) handling of this situation, Manfred Berg concludes that the "anti-Communist hysteria" was a threat to the very existence of the organisation, thus painting a very different picture from earlier

¹⁸ Dudziak, 'Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative', 118-119.

¹⁹ August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto* (New York 1976) 273.

²⁰ Dudziak, 'Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative', 119.

²¹ Skrentny, 'The Effects of the Cold War on African-American Civil Rights', 237-239; 270-272.

²² *Ibid*, 267-270.

²³ E.g.: Berg, 'Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism'; Carol Anderson, 'Bleached Souls and Red Negroes. The NAACP and Black Communists in the Early Cold War, 1948-1952' in: Brenda G. Plummer (ed.), *Windows on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill 2003) 93-113; Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Mary Dudziak, 'Birmingham, Addis Ababa, and the Image of America. International Influence on U.S. Civil Rights Politics in the Kennedy Administration', in: Brenda G. Plummer (ed.), *Windows on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill 2003) 181-199.

research.²⁴ However, Berg also concludes that the NAACP's strategy of joining the liberal anti-Communists helped them not only to survive this era but gain important steps towards its goals.²⁵ Thus, while the international focus on the United States during the Cold War was not solely beneficial for civil rights advocates, it did create opportunities for them, as long as they would tread within the boundaries of Cold War politics.

It is on this premise this research will continue, showing that the Cold War provided opportunities and boundaries for King. However, it will research a lesser-known period, the sixties, when the national red scare was in decline. The national example provided during the forties and fifties led to a new version of McCarthyism in the South, dubbed by Jeff Woods as the southern red scare.²⁶ Here, the history of white supremacy would merge with the fear of Communism. The southern red scare only began to take hold of the South when the status quo came under threat with the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement. Consequently, its goal was to discredit the Movement as a Communist plot and thereby keep segregation in place.²⁷ So although often overlooked, this period was crucial in understanding the Cold war civil rights nexus.

Montgomery to Memphis

Since the turn of the century, scholars have begun to question the way King is remembered.²⁸ Early works on the Civil Rights Movement put Martin Luther King at the centre of the Movement and the Movement as the central theme in King's career, creating the Montgomery to Memphis narrative.²⁹ In this narrative, the Civil Rights Movement begins with the emergence of Martin Luther King to the forefront during the Montgomery bus boycott in Alabama and ends when King is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee in 1968.³⁰ However, as later scholars (re)discovered, the struggle for civil rights cannot be framed within these boundaries.³¹ Instead, the fight for civil rights had to be moved within a much broader framework, starting years

²⁴ Berg, 'Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism', 95.

²⁵ Ibid, 95-96.

²⁶ Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge 2004) 4-5.

²⁷ Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 5.

²⁸ John A. Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr.* (London 2014) 14-15; Yanco, *Misremembering Dr. King*, 12-13; Sunnemark, *Ring Out Freedom!*, 2.

²⁹ E.g.: Adam Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens 1995); Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* (New York 1988); Richard, H. King, *Civil Rights and the Idea of Freedom* (New York 1992).

³⁰ Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 14.

³¹ Jacquelyn D. Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past', *The Journal of American History* 91:4 (2005) 1233-1263, 1233-1235; Tomiko Brown-Nagin, *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York 1970) 9-10.

earlier and reaching beyond the borders of the United States. The civil rights struggle existed in communities King never visited and continued after his death.³² Likewise, studies on Martin Luther King have also begun to show that he should be understood in a broader context. As John Kirk stated “King did not create or control the civil rights movement and [...] neither did the civil rights movement create or control him. Rather, I maintain that movement leaders and the movement that they led continually shape each other, and it is precisely that dialectical process that needs to be explored further”.³³ King and his rhetoric were not only shaped by the struggle for civil rights, but also by the “historical context of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States and the international climate of those decades”.³⁴

To truly understand King and his rhetoric, we must understand his relationship with this context. This study aims at creating a broader understanding of King’s relationship with the Cold War climate present in the United States during the Johnson administration and as a result, intends to place him in the international context of the 1960s. During his years as a political figure, King became one of the most important moral voices of the past century, questioning existing social, economic, and judicial inequality and preaching nonviolent action.³⁵ However, this prominent position also invoked the attention of anti-Communists and eventually Edgar Hoover, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), himself.³⁶ During the sixties, the FBI increasingly followed King’s actions, placing wiretaps and microphones, leaking information about alleged communist infiltrations in King’s inner circle to the press, and even warning President Kennedy and foreign heads of state against welcoming King to their respective residencies and countries.³⁷ These campaigns to besmirch King’s reputation were a danger to his work as an activist and minister and to his safety. To study this delicate balance of being able to voice critique on inequality and injustice in the United States while avoiding to fuel the allegations is the main focus of this study, the fourth chapter will focus on one particular infamous speech in this regard: the Riverside Speech. In this speech, King criticised President Johnson’s actions in Vietnam and publicly condones the war.

The Riverside speech is important for another reason, in the current literature on Martin Luther King’s rhetorical evolution, it is seen as a key moment in which King breaks with the

³² Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Martin Luther King Jr., and the Struggle for Economic Justice* (2007) 1-2; Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 14.

³³ Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 14.

³⁴ Sunnemark, *Ring out Freedom!*, 176

³⁵ Yanco, *Misremembering Dr. King*, 12.

³⁶ Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 95-102.

³⁷ Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 159-168; Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 97-100.

political establishment.³⁸ In his article, Daniel Lucks outlines how King defies his advisors and chooses to condemn the Vietnam War and American Cold War policy in this speech.³⁹ Crucially, Lucks demonstrates that the reluctance to speak out against Vietnam was linked to the “lingering legacy of the red scare and McCarthyism”, hereby demonstrating the overlooked link between the domestic Cold War climate and civil rights activists’ reluctance to speak out against the Vietnam War.⁴⁰ The analyses in the fourth chapter will discuss the strategies King applied to minimise the outfall from this speech. This study, thus, agrees with the dominant framing of this speech as a momentous occasion in which King directly condemned the United States foreign policy for the first time. However, the third chapter will discuss how the foundation of King’s critique was already laid in the early years of the Johnson administration, showing that the broader context needs to be further incorporated into the discussion. King’s use of the United States’ liberal history and how he positions himself as a patriot through that history will be discussed in this chapter as well.

Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis

Lene Hansen explains why language is so important to scholars, “language is how we make sense of the world. [Without language] we cannot make our thoughts understandable”.⁴¹ This applies to politicians and political actors too. Since everyone’s view of the world is shaped by the place and manner in which they were raised, everyone’s language holds hidden meaning, showing their ideals and values. Additionally, the language used is shaped by the context of the time, social and political structures, and the particular discursive event.⁴² By using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the goal is to find the ideology and tactics behind the seemingly neutral spoken and written words, thus “denaturalising” the language to reveal the hidden connections between language, power, and ideology.⁴³ In this research, that means unveiling the hidden power structure in the interrelationship between Martin Luther King as a public

³⁸ Daniel S. Lucks, ‘Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Riverside Speech and Cold War Civil Rights’, *Peace & Change* 40:3 (2015) 395-421, 395-360; Sunnemark, *Ring out freedom!*, 184-186; Taylor Branch, *At Canaan’s Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-68* (New York 2006) 581-604.

³⁹ Sunnemark, *Ring out Freedom!*, 186-187.

⁴⁰ Lucks, ‘Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Riverside Speech and Cold War Civil Rights’, 399.

⁴¹ Lene Hansen, ‘Poststructuralism’, in: John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens, *The globalization of world politics* (Oxford 2014) 170-183, 172.

⁴² Muhammad A. Sipra and Athar Rashid, ‘Critical Discourse Analysis of Martin Luther King’s Speech in Socio-Political Perspective’, *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* 4:1 (2013) 27-33, 27.

⁴³ David Machin and Andrea Mayr, *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction* (London 2012) 4-5.

figure, the international climate of the Cold War, and the political establishment.

It is important to highlight that the discourse of the public figure Martin Luther King will be discussed in this research, deliberately leaving out his private discussions and statements as this is not a biographical study of Martin Luther King but a study on the intersection of international conflict and domestic social movements and the boundaries of criticism. King described his public role as being the middleman between the worlds of the white community and the black community. As Frederik Sunnemark explains, this metaphor can be drawn-out to one in which King is the middleman between political, social, religious, and academic cultures.⁴⁴ In this role, King strove to make the “border area” between these cultures and communities as common as possible in order to reach as many people as possible.⁴⁵ How King uses his narrative to communicate between these communities and cultures, what hidden meanings and critiques can be found in this narrative, and to whom his message is directly and indirectly aimed are what the CDA aims to uncover.

For this purpose, several written and spoken texts will be reviewed. Between 1963 and 1968 King published 3 books: a collections of sermons called *Strength to Love* in 1963, *Why We Can't Wait* in 1964 which is an extension of the famous *Letter From Birmingham Jail* in which King sets out the reasoning behind the Birmingham campaign, and in 1967 *Where Do We Go From Here* in which the Chicago campaign and the future of the Civil Rights Movement is discussed. Additionally, the speeches and sermons of King have been published in several collections. *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, and *A Knock at Midnight: Inspiration from the Great Sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.* have been reviewed for this research. The written material will serve to provide context and a deeper understanding of King's strategies, goals, and beliefs. Ghost-writers and speechwriters have helped in the writing process of most of this material, leaving some scholars to argue that solely his unpublished works represent the true Martin Luther King, that argument does not apply to this research because the public persona Martin Luther King is studied.⁴⁶ The question here is not what his personal beliefs and motives were but what the message in his public narrative was and how that message balanced the domestic and international climate of the time.

⁴⁴ Sunnemark, *Ring Out Freedom!*, 3-4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 6.

Chapter 2 Historical Background

Racial relations before segregation

To truly understand the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement, one must understand the history of black oppression and racial relations in the United States. Black oppression has been a part of the United States' society since its foundation, even after the abolishment of slavery. W.E.B. Du Bois famously described the struggle this oppression brought onto the African-Americans in the United States: "an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings".⁴⁷ Although their presence was recognised, legally African Americans did not hold the same rights as other citizens and were even counted as 3/5th of a person by ruling of the infamous Three-Fifths Compromise.⁴⁸ After the formal abolishment of slavery, the promise of freedom and equality was not transmitted to American blacks.⁴⁹ It is this strife for acceptance in a world that might never accept them that Du Bois spoke of and the Civil Rights Movement finds its basis in.

During slavery, exclusion was the norm. Slaves, along with free blacks, women, and landless agricultural labourers were excluded from or limited in their civil rights.⁵⁰ However, interracial contact was the standard. Slaves often worked on the fields of white landowners alongside poor white agricultural workers or in the houses of white families.⁵¹ Racism, violence, and oppression were part of slaves' daily lives. They faced physical and psychological violence and were prohibited from free movement and development.⁵² This racial division was justified through biblical references. In the run-up to the Civil War, supporters of slavery used new contemporary scientific research to defend slavery and promote the expansion of slavery on the argument that differences between the races united "all white men in their superiority over blacks".⁵³ New biological, historical, and theological theories on race supported the claims of white dominance over the other races of the world.⁵⁴ Lake and Reynolds call this theoretical development the "drawing of the global colour line", an indication of the global scale of these

⁴⁷ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge 2012) 1.

⁴⁸ Garry Wills, "Negro President": *Jefferson and the Slave Power* (Boston 2003) 52-53.

⁴⁹ David Brown and Clive Webb, *Race in the American South: From Slavery to Civil Rights* (Edinburgh 2007) 2.

⁵⁰ Catherine M. Lewis and Richard J. Lewis, *Jim Crow America: A Documentary History* (Fayetteville 2009) xi-xiii; Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York 1999) 4-5; Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 54.

⁵¹ Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 3-4.

⁵² Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 4-5; Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 58-59.

⁵³ Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 88.

⁵⁴ Thomas C. Holt and Laurie B. Green, *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 24: Race* (Chapel Hill 2013) 147; Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 1-2; Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 88-89; Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 4-5.

new racial perceptions and an expression of the solid division created by these ideas that legitimised racial segregation legislation around the world throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century.⁵⁵

At the turn of the century, white men around the world began to realise that the racial hierarchy, which they now deemed natural and right, was threatened. The zealously read work of Charles Pearson underscored this fear. He wrote about the way “cheap races” would break away from Anglo-Saxon dominion and establish independent states in the example of Haiti.⁵⁶ In the south of the United States, as emancipation had taken away control over the black population and that same population became politically and commercially active, his prediction served as a confirmation of the imposing threat of free blacks.⁵⁷ This idea of “the rising tide of color” added another dimension to the racial relations in the South, one of mistrust and rivalry.⁵⁸

The birth of Jim Crow

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, Democrats took back their hold on Southern politics, a development that led to the implementation of racial segregation. The “redemption” of the South by the Democratic Party meant the end of Reconstruction.⁵⁹ As their dominion on Southern politics was challenged, the Democrats took an increasingly harsh stance against their challengers, who were mostly poor and black. Using the academic theories on white superiority, the Democrats argued that black participation in elections posed a threat to their white constituency.⁶⁰ Thus, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the disfranchisement of blacks was started.⁶¹ Simultaneously, building on racial tensions that regularly resulted in riots and lynching, and myths such as the “black rapist”, the argument was made that participation of the black community in society and the resulting racial mixing threatened Southern society.⁶² Northern Republicans often also accepted these racist doctrines and doubted the justness of integration, thus, contributing to the end of the

⁵⁵ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 2-5; Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 190.

⁵⁶ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 75.

⁵⁷ Marcie Cohen Ferris, *The Edible South: The Power of Food in the Making of an American Region* (Chapel Hill 2014) 247-248; Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 93-94.

⁵⁸ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 93.

⁵⁹ Michael Perman, *Pursuit of Unity: A Political History of the American South* (Chapel Hill 2009) 140-141.

⁶⁰ Meier and Rudwich, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, 190-192; Perman, *Pursuit of Unity*, 143-144; 155-156; Nancy Shute, ‘Cooking up change: how food helped fuel the Civil Rights Movement’, *NPR* 16 January 2012 <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2012/01/16/145179885/cooking-up-change-how-food-helped-fuel-the-civil-rights-movement> 31-5-2019.

⁶¹ Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888-1908* (Chapel Hill 2001) 1.

⁶² Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 175-176.

efforts of Reconstruction to create an equal society.⁶³

Seeking a way to prevent further racial mixing and to reinforce the power of the white patriarchy, a new system of racial segregation was implemented in the southern states: Jim Crow.⁶⁴ These Jim Crow laws, although different per state, in essence, segregated the white community from the black community “from the cradle to the grave”, establishing separate public facilities, segregated neighbourhoods, schools, churches, and even graveyards.⁶⁵ In the decisive ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the United States Supreme Court upheld Jim Crow segregation, ruling that separate accommodations were legal as long as they were of equal quality.⁶⁶ However, the facilities erected for the coloured community were most often inferior from the white facilities, undermining this separate-but-equal directive.⁶⁷ It was this unequal treatment that the black community resented, resisted, and protested.

It is important to understand that blacks never gave up the battle for their constitutional rights.⁶⁸ The pre-Civil Rights Movement struggles for equality, are the subject of renewed interest among scholars of black resistance. It is often wrongfully presumed that blacks in the South resigned to segregation and their inferior status. When directly resisting segregation and white supremacy, they would face violent repercussions. This threat meant that large-scale, direct confrontation was uncommon, although certainly present.⁶⁹ Instead, blacks found other ways to resist Jim Crow within and outside its boundaries. Most notably were the parallel structures founded within the black community, creating a separate economy, educational institutions, social, and spiritual systems organised by the church, cultural expressions through art, music, and the written word, and eventually the establishment of political organisations.⁷⁰ These efforts ironically led to a stronger black community.⁷¹

Mirroring the disagreements in the Civil Rights Movement in the sixties, the black community in the early twentieth century did not agree on what tactic was best to confront and repeal segregation. Most well-known leaders of this era were Booker T. Washington and

⁶³ Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 175-176.

⁶⁴ Ferris, *The Edible South*, 247-248; Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 123-125; Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 180-181.

⁶⁵ Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 192.

⁶⁶ Meier and Rudwisch, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, 202-203; Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 192-193.

⁶⁷ Robert P. Green Jr. and Harold E. Cheatham, *The American Civil Rights Movement: A Documented History* (New York 2009) 4; Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 193-196.

⁶⁸ Meier and Rudwisch, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, 205.

⁶⁹ Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 208.

⁷⁰ Jeffrey A. Snyder, *Making Black History: The Color Line, Culture, and Race in the Age of Jim Crow* (Athens 2018) 10-11; Lewis and Lewis, *Jim Crow America*, xx-xxii; Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 208-210.

⁷¹ Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 208.

W.E.B. Du Bois. Washington, on the one hand, promoted the strategy of accommodation. He believed that accepting the realities of racial segregation was the best course of action. Hard work and the resulting economic upwards mobility would demonstrate the black people's worth and their essential role in the economy. This, in turn, would lead to better relations between the races and eventually in the dismissal of Jim Crow.⁷² W.E.B. Du Bois, on the other hand, believed that the key to prosperity for the black community lay in education and a highly educated elite that would lead the black community. He dismissed the notion that racial equality would come naturally and instead actively protested segregation and racism, most notably through the NAACP.⁷³

The United States as the leader of the Free World

One important aspect of the Cold War was the ambition of the competing power blocs to incorporate the newly decolonised countries of Asia, Africa, and South America into their sphere of influence.⁷⁴ To do so, the image of the United States as the leader of the free world, was of vital importance.⁷⁵ It needed to showcase that its ideological framework of a democratic, multi-party system; a capitalist economic system with free markets and private ownership; and a liberal social vision in which all people enjoyed individual human rights, was superior to the Soviet Union's framework of a political system in which the Communist Party was the sole party; the economy was based on long-term planning and public ownership, and; economic and social egalitarianism was the eventual goal.⁷⁶

Consequently, the building racial tension within the United States became a threat to its foreign policy, especially when the international press began to write about the situation in the South and the apparent contradiction this presented with the United States' ideology.⁷⁷ Thus, managing the story on racial relations became integrated into the United States' foreign policy.⁷⁸ Its main argument against the critique on the racial segregation was the progress made by the black community and the United States' society as a whole, and to dedicate that progress to the redemptive nature of democracy.⁷⁹ On top of that, the openness in which the topic could

⁷² Meier and Rudwich, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, 221-222; Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, 209-210.

⁷³ Meier and Rudwich, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, 223-225.

⁷⁴ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 47-48; Marek Thee, 'The Indochina Wars: Great power Involvement – Escalation and Disengagement', *Journal of Peace Research* 13:2 (1976) 117-129, 118-119.

⁷⁵ Plummer, 'Introduction', 1-2; Dudziak, 'Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative', 62-63.

⁷⁶ Sargent, 'The Cold War', 326-328.

⁷⁷ Dudziak, 'Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative', 62-63.

⁷⁸ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 250.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 49-50.

be discussed in the United States, showed the power of a liberal democratic society, according to American propaganda.

Another important aspect of the Cold War in terms of the Civil Rights Movement, was the fearmongering, partly instigated by senator McCarthy, of potential “communist infiltrators”.⁸⁰ This anti-Communist hysteria blurred the lines between dissent and treason, making it dangerous to openly protest.⁸¹ The danger posed by anti-Communism to civil rights leaders is proven by the story of Du Bois. Tried in 1951 for allegedly being a foreign agent, Du Bois was acquitted but his passport would be repeatedly confiscated by the United States authorities.⁸² Ultimately, Du Bois would spend the last years of his life in Ghana, unable to renew his passport. Southern anti-Communists were especially fierce and when civil rights protests took off, zealously worked to vilify the protests and its organisers as a Communist conspiracy.⁸³

The Johnson years

After the assassination of President Kennedy, the newly inaugurated President Johnson had to comfort the nation and the United States’ partners. He did so by reassuring his audience of the continuity and stability that his administration would maintain. He promised the country that the administration would continue on Kennedy’s liberal agenda, eradicating poverty and championing “equal rights for all Americans, whatever their race or color”.⁸⁴ In terms of civil rights, Johnson kept true to his promise. During his presidency, the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act were signed, with significant support of the President himself.⁸⁵ The Johnson administration, however, was also marked by the escalation of the Vietnam War, polarising the nation even further.

For Martin Luther King, these years were consequential in his development as a civil rights advocate and a national political actor. The implementation of the historic civil rights legislation and the simultaneous polarisation of the country urged him to alter his strategy and narrative.⁸⁶ This development during the Johnson administration can be divided into two periods, which will be the time frames of the two chapters of discussion that will follow. The first period starts with the 1963 Birmingham Campaign and ends with the signing of the Voting

⁸⁰ Dudziak, ‘Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative’, 61.

⁸¹ Berg, ‘Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism’, 75.

⁸² Holt and Green, *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, 211-212.

⁸³ Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 4-5; Berg, ‘Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism’, 75-76.

⁸⁴ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 204.

⁸⁵ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 179.

⁸⁶ Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 14-15.

Rights Act of 1965. The Birmingham Campaign instigated mass demonstrations and national and international public outcry against racial segregation due to violent resistance by segregationists. The events in the following two years are a continuation of this campaign and together they would ultimately lead to the signing of the 1965 Civil Rights Act. The second period is a profoundly lesser-known period of King's life and starts with the Chicago campaign in 1965-66 and ends with his death in 1968. A period in which King moves his fight for equality to a broader stage and came to take a more radical stance on domestic and international topics.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 14-15.

Chapter 3 An American Dream 1963-1965

True patriotism

The southern red scare was different in one important way from the national red scare: it was merged with ethnic nationalism.⁸⁸ That ethnic nationalism, based on the scientific theories on racial relations that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth century, considered the status quo of racial segregation and white dominance as the naturally preordained way of living. The emerging Civil Rights Movement, looking to systemically change that situation and abolish Jim Crow, was perceived by these ethnic nationalists as a threat to the southern way of living and, thus, should be stopped. A network of committees and institutions worked together to discredit the Movement and link its activists and actions to Communist influence.⁸⁹ This network reached from local and state level to congressional committees and after the intensification of the Civil Rights Movement in the fifties, the FBI became increasingly involved in the monitoring and eventual discrediting of the Movement's activists, in part because of its director J. Edgar Hoover's segregationist views.⁹⁰ King was especially targeted, with wiretaps, surveillance, and increasingly speculative stories about his Communist connections and private extramarital activities.⁹¹

During these developments, King became a recognised name in households throughout the country, crossing the boundary between the black community and the white community, and between the South and the North. Having been to college at Crozer in Pennsylvania and Boston University for his Ph.D., King was familiar with the Northern white community and had learned to communicate and translate between these worlds.⁹² One particular prominent strategy of King in communicating between these worlds, while critiquing segregation and racial relations in the United States is by positioning himself and his supporters as true patriots. He does this by calling upon the history of the United States and its liberal foundations. In doing so King appeals to the commonality of this historical tradition in which all Americans can come together. Moreover, by positioning himself in such a way, King dispels the accusations of Communists leanings. How could he be anti-American if his main goal is to rehabilitate these fundamentally American ideals?

This part will analyse the famous *I Have a Dream* speech and the sermon *The American*

⁸⁸ Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 4-5.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 563-573; Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 6-9.

⁹¹ Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 159-168; Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 566-571; Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 97-100.

⁹² Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 90-91.

Dream and discuss how King builds on the liberal tradition in the United States in his argumentation for desegregation and ending inequality. The next section will look at King's strategies in directing different audiences, analysing his *I Have a Dream* speech. The speech was given in 1963 in front of the Lincoln memorial, after the successful conclusion of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The Lincoln Memorial in itself held significant symbolic value. Whites viewed the Memorial as a symbol of unity as it was Lincoln who led the Unionist army and preserved the Union. For the black population, the Memorial represented Lincoln the Emancipator, who declared the slaves to be free and led the Unionists army in fighting to abolish slavery throughout the United States.

The first observation that can be made is that both texts use the history of the liberal ideological foundations of the United States as an armour for the rest of the texts. In the speech, King sums up the history of the United States' commitment to freedom and equality, citing the Founding Fathers in the *Declaration of Independence*: "all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness".⁹³ When this promise turned out unfulfilled for the slaves of the nation, Abraham Lincoln promised to right that wrong in the *Emancipation Proclamation*, a document King described as "a beacon light of hope".⁹⁴ However, as King was standing in the symbolic shadow of Lincoln, he had to conclude that that promise too had not been fulfilled, that "the Negro still is not free, [...] the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination".⁹⁵ He, therefore, urges the nation to cash the promised check, "a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice" and move on from the hypocrisy that exists in the nation.⁹⁶ He concludes with the dream he has for the future of the country and the future of his children growing up in that country. That dream is "rooted deeply in the American dream" and it entails that "one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed".⁹⁷ In other words, King urges the country to go back to those foundational promises and apply them to all citizens. Most importantly, this means that he uses the history of the evolving morality in the United States, based on its liberal ideology, as a reason why segregation should be abolished. He does not ask for a new system, because the vision he has for an equal and free society for all already exists in those foundational values.

Similarly, in the sermon *The American Dream*, given on the fourth of July, King begins

⁹³ King, Jr., 'I Have a Dream', 217.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 219.

by laying out those foundational beliefs the Founding Fathers built their vision for America on. He again highlights that their words state that *all* men have “certain inalienable rights”, not just white men and he stresses the unprecedented nature of such a declaration.⁹⁸ He goes on to introduce another dream. Not his own, but the dream the Founding Fathers envisioned for the newly independent country, the American Dream. As King explains, it is that dream’s vision of the “dignity and the worth of human personality” that sets the country apart from the rest of the world.⁹⁹ However, the United States had not lived up to its dream, thus far. On the contrary, the United States had “sadly practiced the very opposite of those principles”.¹⁰⁰ King, therefore, urges his audience to stand up for its promises and realize that American Dream the Founding Fathers envisioned. Here, again, King does not urge for a radical shift in ideology. He asks for the opposite, he wants the country to go back to its foundational beliefs and thereby presents himself and his goals as those of a true patriot, looking to protect from straying too far from its purpose and build up the nation to its maximum potential.

By opening with these idealistic visions, the Founding Fathers set out for the country, King sets up his defence against attacks and anti-American accusations. After the introductions on the United States’ history, King goes on to condemn segregation in the South, economic inequality in the North, the current “anemic democracy”, and enduring racism throughout the country and after every criticism he goes back to those founding principles, urging his audience not to discard them but to force the country to live up to them, to truly fulfil them.¹⁰¹ In his sermon for example, after comparing segregation to India’s caste system, King proclaims that “we hold these truths to be self-evident, if we are to be a great nation, that all men are created equal. God’s black children are as significant as his white children. [...] One day we will learn this”.¹⁰² Thus, by immersing his arguments in the liberal foundational ideology of the United States, King sought to position himself and his struggle as a fight for the soul of the country, a true quest of patriotism since it was out of love for that country and its ideology that King wanted to fulfil its promises.

If we go beyond these most overt uses of the American liberal tradition, another less apparent use of it is King’s reference to another historic speech, *The Gettysburg Address*, delivered by President Lincoln in 1863, hundred years before the *I Have a Dream Speech* at the

⁹⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., ‘The American Dream’, in: Clayborne Carson and Peter Holloran (eds.), *A Knock at Midnight: Inspiration From the Great Sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York 2000) 85-100, 86.

⁹⁹ King, Jr., ‘The American Dream’, 86.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 87.

¹⁰¹ King, Jr., ‘The American Dream’, 87; King, Jr., ‘I Have a Dream’, 217-220.

¹⁰² King, Jr., ‘The American Dream’, 91.

battlefield of Gettysburg. King's opening line is a direct reference to Lincoln's opening line.¹⁰³ Even more striking, however, is the resemblance to Lincoln's main argument. In his address, Lincoln argued that the brave men who fought at that battlefield could only be honoured in one way: to finish "the great task remaining before us", to truly live out the proposition set out by the Founding Fathers that "all men are created equal". This proposition, that the true vision that the Founding Fathers had for the new country was still to be accomplished is strikingly similar to King's main argument that the "promissory note" written by "the architects" of the republic was not yet honoured.¹⁰⁴ By directly referring to this famous address, King implicitly builds another defence. Those who do not want to listen to or accept King's arguments do not have to take his words for granted for he is building his argumentation on the words of one of the most respected presidents of the United States: Abraham Lincoln. Thus, by referencing Lincoln, King helps his audience to make the connection between his speech and Lincoln's and thereby indicates that he is not making a new, radical argument but that he is only continuing on that president's goal.

The audience

By the summer of 1963, the Birmingham campaign had ended after the violence shown by the police and segregationists against peaceful protesters had led to nationwide condemnation and support for the civil rights cause. The campaign had brought the acceptance of the city of Birmingham and its shop owners to desegregate its shops. The success bolstered the black community and in turn strengthened King in his beliefs, encouraging him to frame his goals broader, moving from a focus on desegregation to one on integration and from southern focused activism to nationwide action.¹⁰⁵ The success also led to an unprecedented number of protests during the summer and the rise of black extremism in groups such as the Nation of Islam who denounced King as too compliant.¹⁰⁶ These circumstances all played a role in the March on Washington and King's speech that day.

Around 250,000 people participated in the March on Washington, coming from all over the country and both blacks and whites attended.¹⁰⁷ The speeches and performances were broadcasted nationwide, leading Taylor Branch to call it the first, and last, national mass

¹⁰³ King, Jr., 'I Have a Dream', 217; Abraham Lincoln, *The Gettysburg Address* (1963).

¹⁰⁴ King, Jr., 'I Have a Dream', 219.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York 1963) 112-113; Martin Luther King, Jr., 'The Ethical Demands for Integration', in: James M. Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco 1986) 117-125, 118-122; Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 84-85.

¹⁰⁶ Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 86-87.

¹⁰⁷ Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 878.

meeting, referring to the meetings organised during the civil rights campaigns in the South.¹⁰⁸ The broadness of the audience was unprecedented for King. Although he had spoken at other large and televised occasions, the reach and significance of this speech were new. Seeing and hearing a complete King speech would also be a new experience for a part of the audience, including the President.¹⁰⁹ In his speech, King, therefore, had to speak to all parties and convince them that his path, the path of nonviolent direct action, towards integration and equality was the right one.

Four notable groups of listeners can be distinguished. The most distinct being the black community eagerly looking to change the status quo in both the North and the South. The previously discussed opening paragraphs discuss the long road towards freedom their community had to take and how they were misled by false promises. The next section serves to provide more hope. King declares that it is time for change, “to make real the promise of democracy” and that they will not stop until “the Negro is granted his citizenship rights”.¹¹⁰ This declaration not only serves to instil optimism about the future, but it also sets the speech up to react to criticism from other civil rights groups. As King goes on, he reaffirms his commitment to rule out segregation, dismissing the critiques of younger activists who believed he would settle for small improvements rather than systemic change.¹¹¹ He promised them that “we cannot be satisfied” as long as segregation, disenfranchisement, and inequality still exists.¹¹² Going on, the following paragraphs are used to speak from one civil rights activist to another as King shows he understands the hardships protesters face when they go out and demand change. “Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality.”¹¹³ Hereby reminding them of his experience protesting and thereby reminding them of his commitment to the cause and the common ground they have in their shared goals.

In these same paragraphs, King also addresses another group of listeners and participants of the march, the white, northern audience. As protests grew and spread across the nation and as black militancy increased, the white population in the North, generally hesitantly in favour of desegregation, grew fearful that the situation might be spiralling out of control.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 876.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 883.

¹¹⁰ King, Jr., ‘I Have a Dream’, 218-219.

¹¹¹ Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 88.

¹¹² King, Jr., ‘I Have a Dream’, 218.

¹¹³ Ibid, 219.

¹¹⁴ Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 875.

So, as King directly turned to his black audience, he indirectly aimed to ease those concerns and reinstate white support of the cause. He urges those in the black community anxiously seeking change to “not allow [their] creative protests to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.”¹¹⁵

Additionally, in that same section, King points out the dangers of black militancy and isolationism, warning that “the marvellous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom”.¹¹⁶ Here he simultaneously praises the white participants and supporters of the cause and seeks to bring together both communities in the struggle for equality, arguing that everyone will benefit from a more equal and integrated society. The subsequent ending of the speech with his famous dream finishes the characterisation of the shared moral and ideological principals that should unite these groups in the path towards an equal and free society in which the “sons of former slaves and sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood”, “this is *our* hope”.¹¹⁷ Here, King shows the true strength that lies in his role as the translator between different communities, translating his message and the existing societal problems to all groups concerned and in doing so trying to bring those groups together in the struggle for civil rights by calling upon the shared moral and ideological principals.

The next audience members figure least prominently in King’s speech but were sure to carefully follow the events of the day and were indirectly part of King’s message. After the shocking images of police violence against peaceful protesters were spread during the Birmingham Campaign President Kennedy could no longer remain inactive. The Soviet Union had seized on the opportunity and released a string of reports on the situation and in several African countries the images of police dogs attacking protesters were shown repeatedly on television, eroding the progress made by the United States information campaigns.¹¹⁸ In the United States, support of civil rights legislation quickly grew and the pressure on the Kennedy Administration to take action increased. So, in June, Kennedy delivered a national address pledging to support the passage of civil rights reform. His proposals would ultimately become

¹¹⁵ King, Jr., ‘I Have a Dream’, 218.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 219.

¹¹⁸ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 169-170.

the 1964 Civil Rights Act, supported by President Johnson in the late President's name.

That summer, however, the Kennedy administration had grown increasingly concerned with the rise in protests and the open condemnation by the more radical protesters of the political reluctance to act on Kennedy's promises. King, therefore, had to tread carefully to prevent antagonising the administration and remain on good terms. He carefully avoids any political arguments and uses morality as the sole force in his discussion. However, he does put a warning for the President and Congress in his speech. As he paints the picture of the struggles the black American has gone through throughout the history of the United States, he states that the current movement cannot be stopped, "it would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality."¹¹⁹ Later in the year, in his book *Why We Can't Wait*, King further explains this position the black citizen in the United States was in, "if he is still saying not enough, it is because he does not feel that he should be expected to be grateful for the halting and inadequate attempts of his society to catch up with the basic rights he ought to have inherited automatically, centuries ago, by virtue of his membership in the human family and his American birth right".¹²⁰ They will keep going "to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges".¹²¹ In other words, now that the Movement had truly taken off and protesters had started to experience the power they had as demonstrators they would no longer accept small victories or empty promises, they demanded real change and it was up to the administration to deliver. Thus, although King does show support of the Kennedy administration by urging his audience to refrain from violence, he does inform the administration that he alone cannot control the broad movement that had emerged that year and that it was up to them to deliver systemic change.

The final group of listeners critical to this study is the international audience. As explained before, the international audience was paying close attention to the events developing during the summer. King, most likely aware of the reports coming from the Soviet Union on the racial situation, stays clear from making international comparisons, something he often does in his speeches. In the sermon *The American Dream*, for example, King discusses his travels to India, where he spoke in a school where most of the students were children of former untouchables. The principal introduced King as "a fellow untouchable" and after some consideration, King came to the conclusion that "Yes I am an untouchable, and every Negro in

¹¹⁹ King, Jr., 'I Have a Dream', 219.

¹²⁰ King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait*, 21.

¹²¹ King, Jr., 'I Have a Dream', 218.

the United States of America is an untouchable”.¹²² In the *I Have A Dream* speech, however, he places his speech within the frames of the United States’ propaganda campaigns. In these campaigns, the story of the racial relations in the United States was portrayed as a story of redemption. Through the democratic process, black Americans slowly gained their civil rights. It was thanks to democracy that slavery was abolished and that discussions on the current status of race relations were possible in the United States.¹²³ People should appreciate the progress made since the days of slavery, rather than condemn the current situation.¹²⁴ To compare his situation with those of the untouchables in India or with other repressed groups would possibly create a diplomatic scandal for the Kennedy administration and would certainly undermine its efforts to include newly decolonised countries into its sphere of influence. By refraining from making international comparisons or discussing the international situation King accommodates the administration, exhibiting the boundaries of this period.

In the *I Have A Dream* speech, the opening paragraphs on the history of slavery and race in the United States correlate with the narrative told by the State Department. The stark difference, however, is King’s rejection of the current situation. King continuously places his faith in the opportunities given by the liberal and democratic foundations of the country. However, he insists on the incompatibility of democracy and segregation. In the first version of this speech, given during the Freedom Rally in Cobo Hall two months earlier, King describes this critique more pointedly, “now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. [...] Now is the time to get rid of segregation and discrimination”.¹²⁵ In other words, if the United States is truly a democratic country, segregation should be abolished and he urges to fulfil that promise sooner rather than later since the erosion of its status is already being underway.

¹²² King, Jr., ‘The American Dream’, 90-91.

¹²³ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 49-50.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 50-51.

¹²⁵ Martin Luther King Jr., ‘Address at the Freedom Rally in Cobo Hall’, in: Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard (eds.), *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York 2002) 61-73, 65.

Chapter 4 The Promised Land of Freedom 1965-1968

The *I Have A Dream* speech is the most well-known speech of Martin Luther King's career. It is often cited and used to point out his moderate liberal vision for the United States.¹²⁶ However, when studying this speech, it becomes clear that this interpretation is a simplification of reality. In the very beginning of the speech King states that "the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination; one hundred years [after the Emancipation Declaration], the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity".¹²⁷ This declaration does not sound like the words of a moderate. They also point to another issue that will become prominent in King's rhetoric during the period discussed in this chapter, economic inequality. The reasoning behind the change in his goals will be analysed in this chapter, as well as a discussion of the change and the continuation of his rhetorical strategies.

A soul left in darkness

Between 1963 and 1965, Martin Luther King predominantly focused on fighting de jure segregation in the southern states of the United States. This form of legally recognised segregation was the most obvious, with its signs banning black people from entering public facilities. The Birmingham campaign and the Selma to Montgomery marches, therefore, focused on outlawing segregation, initiating desegregation, and restoring voting rights to all citizens.¹²⁸ The violence portrayed by the Alabama state troopers against the peaceful protesters during the marches shifted public opinion and pushed President Johnson to press for the implementation of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. In a speech before Congress, Johnson delivered a passionate plea for the implementation of the act in words echoing King's belief in the true soul of America. Johnson spoke to the "secret heart of America" seeking to "vindicate the freedom of all Americans".¹²⁹ Still, most impactful were three words no president had spoken before: "we shall overcome". These words were part of the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement and had become its rallying cry. Johnson, a southern President, speaking those words in his Texan accent, decidedly declared his administration an ally of the Movement, a

¹²⁶ Yanco, *Misremembering Dr. King*, 12.

¹²⁷ King, Jr., 'I Have a Dream', 217.

¹²⁸ Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 74; 102-103.

¹²⁹ Lyndon B. Johnson, 'Special Message to the Congress: The American Promise', *LBJ Presidential Library*. 15 March 1965.

<http://www.lbjlibrary.net/collections/selected-speeches/1965/03-15-1965.html> (16-12-2019).

declaration that reportedly brought tears to King's eyes.¹³⁰

The friendly alliance would not hold for long, though. The period discussed here would become one of the most divisive since the Civil War.¹³¹ Only five days after the signing of the Voting Rights Act, riots in Watts, Los Angeles broke out.¹³² These riots, which lasted six days and killed thirty-four people, would become the start of a new period in King's activism.¹³³ They laid bare the simmering problems in the Northern cities, where de facto segregation was the reality and civil rights leaders and politicians rarely paid attention to these problems. It most distinctly presented itself in economic terms: unequal access to housing and jobs, pay discrimination, and lack of opportunity. This de facto segregation would become the logical successor for the movement and for King.¹³⁴

In the article *Next Stop: The North* and the speech *Where Do We Go From Here?*, respectively published and given in 1965 and 1967, King lays out the strategies implemented to include northern goals into his plans. In both texts, King starts by laying out the successes he and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), of which he was the president, achieved over the past years. He talks about the desegregation of the South, the implementation of civil rights legislation, and the restoration of voting rights to the black community.¹³⁵ In the articles, written for a national magazine, King uses the successes achieved in the South to paint a contrasting picture to the reality in the North. He explains that because the Movement had been "essentially regional, not national" the progress was also regional. As the black citizen in the South gained their constitutional rights and experienced increasing freedoms, the black community in the North experienced stagnation and even a decrease in the quality of life.¹³⁶ This situation inevitably led to the riots, which "cast a light on the imperfections in the civil rights movement and the tragic shallowness of white racial policy in the explosive ghettos".¹³⁷

In that opening quote, it becomes immediately clear that King blames himself and his

¹³⁰ William E. Leuchtenburg, *The White House Looks South: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Lyndon B. Johnson* (Baton Rouge 2005) 197-198; Martin Luther King, Jr., 'Address at the Conclusion of the Selma to Montgomery March, in: Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard (eds.), *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York 2002) 119-132, 121-122.

¹³¹ George McGovern, 'Introduction: Beyond Vietnam', in: Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard (eds.), *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York 2002) 133-137, 133.

¹³² Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 89.

¹³³ Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 106.

¹³⁴ Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 88-90.

¹³⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., 'Next Stop: The North', in: James M. Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco 1986) 189-194, 189-190; Martin Luther King, Jr., 'Where Do We Go From Here?', in: Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard (eds.), *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York 2002) 171-199, 171-178.

¹³⁶ King, Jr., 'Next Stop: The North', 189-190.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.

fellow civil rights leader as much as the political establishment for the situation in the North. This feeling of responsibility is most likely genuine. As several biographies have established, King took the violent outburst in the North personal and saw them as a rejection of his nonviolence ideology and as a failure to include all black citizens in his goals.¹³⁸ To step up and take the responsibility was a recognition of this failure and serves to acknowledge the problems that brought these people to riot, a first step in regaining their trust. Additionally, the passages in which King sketches the northern situation and explains the shortcomings of the Movement serve to invalidate criticism and accusations immediately. Critics would be fast to blame King, nonviolence, and black mobilisation for the riots, arguing that the riots were a logical next step in the radicalisation of blacks in the nation. Instead, King uses the article to point to the economically miserable situation in the northern ghettos to explain the riots: “If a soul is left in darkness, sins will be committed. The guilty is not he who commits the sin, but he who causes darkness”.¹³⁹

The focus on economics in both texts also introduces a change in King’s rhetorical strategy. As he stated, “now we are approaching areas where the voice of the Constitution is not clear. We have left the realm of constitutional rights and we are entering the area of human rights”.¹⁴⁰ As King and the SCLC shifted North and started focusing on economic inequality and exclusion, they no longer could rely on the protection of the Constitution and the United States’ liberal history. Instead, the United States’ history and its treatment of its black population serves more as rebuttal than to paint a positive picture of democratic progress.

“They are too poor even to rise with the society, too impoverished by the ages to be able to ascend by using their own resources. And the Negro did not do this to himself; it was done to him. For more than half of his American history, he was enslaved. [...] His unpaid labor made cotton kings and established America as a significant nation in international commerce. Even after his release from chattel slavery, the nation grew over him, submerging him. It became the richest, most powerful society in the history of man, but it left the Negro far behind. And so we have a long, long way to go before we reach the promised land of freedom.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 107; Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 89-90.

¹³⁹ King, Jr., ‘Next Stop: The North’, 192.

¹⁴⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., ‘Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom’, in: James M. Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco 1986) 54-61, 58.

¹⁴¹ King, Jr., ‘Where Do We Go From Here?’, 181-182.

The difference with the famous *I Have a Dream* speech is striking. The optimistic vision of a society moving towards its Founders' ideological visions of an equal and free society is gone and replaced with a picture of a country working against parts of its population, actively trying to halt their progress.

King's only reference to the founding ideals is when he mentions the three-fifths compromise: "When the Constitution was written, a strange formula to determine the taxes and representation declared that the Negro was 60 percent of a person."¹⁴² For King, the solution no longer lies within the promises of the United States history or ideology, he tells his audience to find it within themselves. They have to regain their "dignity and worth", a "sense of self-esteem", and gain "a sense of power"¹⁴³ Essentially replicating much of the black power talking points of black pride and self-determination. King was prepared for such criticism, however, explaining that the difference with his tactics was the use of love: "What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive".¹⁴⁴ Thus, King continues to speak to the moral conscience of his audience, while thoroughly changing his interpretation of the United States' liberal history.

This change in message also brought on a change in some of the keywords used by King. In the previous period, the most prominent words used in his speeches were freedom, equality, and justice, whereas in this period brotherhood and love feature prominently. Justice, however, remains to be continuously present in his rhetoric. As will be discussed in the next section, this points to King's increasing focus on unity in the nation during increasingly polarising times.

Radicalisation or transformation?

The 1967 *Where Do We Go From Here* speech illustrates the growing tension and hostility in the United States. The Civil Rights Movement was splintering into different factions. The main organisations increasingly pursued different tactics and organised on different ideologies. The election of Stokely Carmichael as the chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) reflected the shift towards black nationalism and the abandonment of nonviolence.¹⁴⁵ The 'black power' slogan adopted by the SNCC in 1966 was only supported by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). The NAACP and SCLC rejected the slogan, stating that it would cause more division in the Movement and within the nation.¹⁴⁶ The NAACP, at the other side

¹⁴² King, Jr., 'Where Do We Go From Here?', 182.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 184-186.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 186.

¹⁴⁵ Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 92.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 93-95.

of the argument, argued for a more conservative approach in which they sought to work with the political establishment and mainly fought segregation and inequality in the courtroom. King and the SCLC were in the middle of this argument, although there was discussion within the organisation as well. Some advisors to King urged him to take moderate steps in order not to antagonise the white supporters, while others urged him to lead the organisation into politics and seek change through the democratic process.¹⁴⁷ In the end, King chose to refocus his actions predominantly on instigating economic and structural change and ending de facto segregation in the North through nonviolent campaigns that sought to bring to light the reality of economic inequality in the ghettos of the North. The result was moderate at best and King became increasingly frustrated with white northern liberals, the government, and the United States liberal society in general.¹⁴⁸

When King stepped up to speak at the Riverside Church in New York City in April 1967, all these factors played a role. He would speak to the whole nation, as he did in 1963, but would discuss a topic even more controversial. As the Civil Rights Movement had become more divided, another movement, possibly equal in passion, emerged in the United States and soon took over the domestic agenda: the anti-war movement.¹⁴⁹ King, reluctant to break the bonds with President Johnson, postponed publicly condemning the Vietnam War as long as he could. However, the escalation of the war and the disproportioned number of black soldiers fighting in Vietnam would ultimately be decisive in King's speaking out against the war.¹⁵⁰

In the *Beyond Vietnam* speech, King expresses his reluctance to break with the Johnson administration, stating that one does "not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy".¹⁵¹ As he goes to explain, he gives a twofold reasoning to do so regardless. The dominant reason, in accordance with King's argumentation throughout his career, is based on moral deliberation. As with the speeches previously discussed, the opening remarks immediately lay out his most prominent argumentation for speaking out in such a controversial way, he says "I have come to this house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice".¹⁵² By accepting the invitation of the Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV), for which he is delivering the speech, the intentions of his speech would be immediately clear. Thus, by these opening remarks, he directs critics right away and aims to

¹⁴⁷ Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 110-111.

¹⁴⁸ Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr.*, 96.

¹⁴⁹ McGovern, 'Introduction', 133.

¹⁵⁰ Sunnemark, *Ring Out Freedom!*, 186-187.

¹⁵¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., 'Beyond Vietnam', in: Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard (eds.), *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York 2002) 139-164, 140.

¹⁵² King, Jr., 'Beyond Vietnam', 139.

leave them no room to interpret his motivations in another way. King describes how staying silent on the issue, or “the betrayal of my own silences”, had hurt his credibility.¹⁵³ As the Civil Rights Movement was becoming more divided, King tried to convince activists of the rightness of nonviolence. He tried to steer the “angry young” away from violent methods to nonviolent action but the Vietnam War directly contradicted his message.¹⁵⁴ “They asked if our own nation wasn’t using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted”, pointing out the contradiction.¹⁵⁵

This argument points to the second reason for King’s decision to speak out against the war. As the United States had moved on from the civil rights bills signed in 1964 and 1965, the attention of the Johnson administration was increasingly directed to the escalating war. As a result, the administration had fewer funds to direct to the Great Society programs, which aimed to eliminate poverty and racial inequality.¹⁵⁶ On top of that, the 1966 civil rights bill, which would implement fair housing regulation, failed to pass. These developments implied that the federal government would not be able to help further the civil rights cause so long as Vietnam took up most of their attention. In the following section King discusses this argument:

“A few years ago, there was a shining moment in that [civil rights] struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor, both black and white, through the poverty program. [...] Then came the buildup in Vietnam, and I watched this program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war. And I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.”¹⁵⁷

Besides an argument for speaking out against the war and consequently against Johnson’s policies, this quote also portrays several other trends in King’s rhetoric during these final years of his life. First and foremost, it illustrates King’s focus on poverty and his vision of fighting poverty as a vehicle to achieve equality. In the 1963-1965 period, King was mainly concerned with ending segregation and starting integration. After the turn towards the North

¹⁵³ King, Jr., ‘Beyond Vietnam’, 141.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 143.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Theodore Windt, *Presidents and Protestors: Political Rhetoric in the 1960s* (Tuscaloosa 1990) 67-68.

¹⁵⁷ King, Jr., ‘Beyond Vietnam’, 142.

and the lessons learned during the Chicago Campaign, his understanding of the United States' society changed. As is also depicted in this quote, King no longer viewed the United States as a nation on its way towards its predetermined, free, and equal society. Instead, he viewed the nation as fundamentally flawed and the only way to save it would be to systemically change its society. Systemic change, therefore, was a recurrent theme in his narrative during these years. In the Vietnam speech, King elaborates on this new diagnosis of American society. He explains that "the war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit" and that affliction was threefold, "the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism".¹⁵⁸ To cure society of these obsessions, "a true revolution of values" was necessary.¹⁵⁹ In other words, relying on the foundational ideology would not be enough to end inequality, a complete reinterpretation of what being American meant was necessary.

Such declarations for revolutionary changes would be incendiary in most situations but spoken by Martin Luther King, still a controversial figure and still actively investigated by the FBI, were especially provocative. To defend himself against the harshest of criticisms and to position himself in line with the United States' interests, King continued to position himself as a patriot. He reminds his audience of the motto of the SCLC: "To save the soul of America".¹⁶⁰ He argues that he criticised his "beloved nation" because he feared that "America's soul [would] become totally poisoned" by the war.¹⁶¹ Thus, he speaks out against the war and against the United States' societal problems out of love for the country, as a true patriot would do, hereby changing his interpretation of patriotism but continuing to use this strategy.

King's renewed patriotism also served, as it did in the previous period, to create unity in an increasingly divided nation. The riots and the SCLC's new campaigns in the North had created a white backlash to the Civil Rights Movement. Many felt that the Movement was moving too fast and that it was moving beyond control.¹⁶² Combined with the division within the Movement and the government's increasing preoccupation with the Vietnam War, King had to re-establish trust in the Movement. By continually appealing to his audience's patriotism he tries to find that common ground needed to work towards a mutual goal. He states that "no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war".¹⁶³ On top of that, King's pleas for the use of nonviolent methods becomes stronger in this period,

¹⁵⁸ King, Jr., 'Beyond Vietnam', 156-157.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 157-158.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 144.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 141; 144.

¹⁶² Kirk, *Martin Luther King Jr*, 92.

¹⁶³ King, Jr., 'Beyond Vietnam', 144.

serving to rally white supporters of civil rights behind his operations as he positions himself as a moderate option, in between radical and conservative civil rights organisations.

Lastly, King's call for a change in values not only serves the moral health of the nation but it also has the more practical effect of being "our best defense against communism".¹⁶⁴ Meaning that it would not only serve to clear the conscience of the nation but it would also serve to represent the United States internationally in a more positive way.

"We must not engage in negative anti-communism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy, realizing that our greatest defense against communism is to take offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity, and injustice, which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops."¹⁶⁵

By presenting the structural change he seeks as a weapon against communism King not only counters accusations of communist affiliations, he presents his vision as a way to prevent the spread of communism and surely all patriots would be in favour of that? This strategy shows how King was able to stretch the boundaries of the Cold War and use anti-Communist sentiment to his advantage.

To conclude, as the national and international situation changed, King changed with it. His tactics became more pragmatic, his focus and goals broader in order to include a broader section of the nation in them, and his tone often more sombre. His narrative changed accordingly. However, the broader underlying strategies of uniting his national audience through shared patriotism and pleading to the moral voices within them continued to exist.

¹⁶⁴ King, Jr., 'Beyond Vietnam', 159.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 159.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

In late 1967, King revealed plans for the Poor People's Campaign. The campaign would aim to bring the realities of poor people from all over the United States and from all backgrounds to the capital.¹⁶⁶ On April the third of the next year, King returned to the South, however, to deliver a speech for the Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike.¹⁶⁷ That speech combined the optimism and determinism of his early years, with the pragmatism of his later years and the moral arguments that defined his narrative throughout his career. His assassination the following day, however, meant that the speech would become most remembered for King's acceptance of his own mortality.

This selective memory of King's legacy has come to define the way Martin Luther King, Jr. is remembered today. After his death, a national day of mourning was proclaimed and fifteen years after his death a national holiday was realised. On that day, his speeches are often quoted, especially the *I Have A Dream* speech. These commentators, however, leave out the sections in which King is most critical of American society and its existential faults. He urges his audience over and over again to restructure society in such a way that the giant triplets of racism, militarism, and consumerism, which King viewed as most damaging to society, would be eliminated. Throughout his career, these issues formed the basis of King's activism.

During the years studied in this research, the United States went through significant changes and foreign policy often shaped the domestic landscape of the nation. The Red Scare and McCarthyism had lingering effects in the sixties and continued to exist in the South. On top of that, the Vietnam War and the escalation of American involvement in the war further divided the nation. This division extended into the Civil Rights Movement and drove the organisations and their activists apart. In turn, the radicalisation and the increase of violent tactics used by parts of the Movement alienated large parts of the white supporters. They increasingly viewed the Movement as too fundamental and black protesters as moving too fast. Through all these changes, King positioned himself as the middleman, translating the grievances and concerns of the parties involved, while urging the use of nonviolent tactics.

Positioning himself as the man in the middle had several uses for King. It portrayed him as the sensible option for both whites in support of civil rights and for the government seeking to quell demonstrations and bring back peace to the nation while at the same time condoning the use of violence. One important strategy King used to position himself in this way was his

¹⁶⁶ Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 119-120.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 121-122.

continued patriotic rhetoric. In the early period discussed, King used this rhetoric to point to the positive changes made by the United States throughout its history. He continually explained that these changes were made because the United States liberal ideological foundations defined an equal and free society. As the years went on, however, King became increasingly disillusioned with the liberal vision laid out by the Founders and came to interpret patriotism in a new way in his rhetoric. He no longer pointed to the country's past to motivate his audience to fight for change. Instead, he argued that they should help the country change out of love for the country. It was their duty to save the country from moral death.

Greatly interesting for this research was King's strategy to present structural change as necessary to defend the country from Communism. In this argument, King uses the patriot's love for the country and argues that they should fight to change the wrongs he pointed out in American society if they wanted to restore the United States' standing in the world and stop the rise of Communism. This shows how his usage of patriotic language helped King navigate the domestic Cold War climate in the United States. Since he was arguing out of love for the country, he was able to be more critical and express broader concerns with the nation. However, this strategy had its limits too, as was proven by the widespread condemnation of King's *Beyond Vietnam* speech.

Another consistent strategy of King are his continuous pleas for unity. He chooses symbolic locations for his speeches, includes the struggles of both the black and the white audience in his narrative and continuously explains how the changes he proposes will improve the lives of both these groups. His focus on creating economic equality is framed as a campaign for the poor of all backgrounds and his dream includes all citizens of the United States. Accordingly, his keywords were words that applied to broad sections of his audience just like his focus on the moral conscience of the audience.

To argue, as several scholars have done, that King's ideology and narrative fundamentally changed in the later years of his life would, therefore, be an overstatement. Due to the domestic and international events that continually shaped the United States society over the years of his career, King adjusted and refocused his work. However, the foundational arguments based on morality, love, tolerance, equality, and unity were a continuous presence in his narrative, forming the base upon which he structured his goals and visions. By being the moral voice of a generation, King left a lasting legacy that resonates to this day, if appreciated in its full breadth.

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