

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'S STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY
FOR BLACK PEOPLE IN AMERICA**



MINOR THESIS

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Motto

*“...Free at last, free at last
Thank God Almighty, I’m Free at last...”*

- Martin Luther King Jr. -

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to:

**My late father; *I Miss You Dad*, My beloved Mother for your patience, my
brothers; Eko Junor, Indra Junor and Donin Junor**

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I do realize this thesis is not even near good, therefore, I would be gladly appreciate and welcome any input and criticism. Hopefully, this thesis would do some use to anyone who reads this thesis.

Surakarta, April 2003

Writer

Table of Contents

Approval of the Consultants	ii
Approval of the Board of Examiners	iii
Motto	iv
Dedication	v
Acknowledgment	vi
Table of Content	viii
Abstract	1
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Background	1
1.2. Problem Statement	4
1.3. Method of Research	4
1.4. Approach	5
1.5. Biographical Review of Martin Luther King, Jr	5
1.5.1. Family Contributions	5
1.5.2. Education	7
1.5.3. Friends and Societies	10
2. Analysis	11
2.1. The Concept of Equality	11
2.2. The Struggle to gain Equality for Black American	13
2.3. Equality in America after the Struggle	26
3. Conclusion	30
Bibliography	35

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'S STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY FOR BLACK PEOPLE IN AMERICA

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Abstract

This research is about “Martin Luther King Jr.’s Struggle for Equality for Black People in America”. This library research thesis is based on historical and biographical approach. The purpose of this research is to find out how Martin Luther King Jr. struggled for equality in America especially for the black people.

Historical approach is used to view the historical background of the black people in America from the first settlement and first slave trade to the slave abolishment until in the middle of 20th Century. Biographical approach, however, is used in this thesis to view the struggle conducted by Martin Luther King Jr. in order to fight for the civil rights.

After analyzing the background of the black people, the writer found out that the reason Martin Luther King Jr. fought for civil rights was because of the law that was not run in practice in America, even though black people are guaranteed by the law.

Martin Luther King, Jr. made a significant change to America especially for the black people. Even though issues of racism are still found these days in America, generally the life of the black people in America developed to a good improvement in economy as well as in politics.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

America is a country with, probably, the most diverse culture in the world. From England to the Far East and Asian culture are found in the land of hopes and dreams. And a country with most racial problems. Certainly, there were countries that also had a racial problem, but somehow, it was in

America that mostly influenced people, not only in America, but also in the world.

From the first settlements, slavery is the most common problem in America. Many ways were taken to abolish slavery, yet it was never completely abolished even with an act. For the Whites, Black American were always considered the inferior ‘citizens’ of America, because of the slavery status that the Blacks carry on their shoulders.

In the Declaration of Independence it is stated, *“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”* However, since 1776 until the mid 20th century, Blacks still cannot taste the freedom of Human Rights of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

In 1858, U.S. Senate Candidate Abraham Lincoln delivered a speech at the State Republican Convention held in Springfield, Illinois, which later on would won his presidency, *“A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free”*. Five years later in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln warns the Americans again of the slavery-abolishment. He issued an Emancipation Proclamation, *“...all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thence forward, and forever free...”*

Other important speeches to abolish slavery was in 1948 by President Harry S. Truman in his Executive Orders 9981, "*It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.*" At the same year on December 10, the United Nation General Assembly proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "*Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.*"

Nevertheless, from all the speeches and act issued previously, the speech by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC was the most inspiring speech for the American History. In his I Have A Dream speech, he stated, "*I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.*"

The reason why writer would analyze the phenomena of Martin Luther King Jr. is that it is fascinating to understand that one of the most influenced people in America would later on change the perspective of equality among whites and blacks. There was several Black American heroes, if writer may say so, like Malcolm X, Rosa Parks or Frederick Douglas. But what makes the struggle of Martin Luther King Jr. more accepted in America especially by whites? Nevertheless, how could a Martin Luther King Jr. affect the judgment among whites about black Americans?

With the theme “Martin Luther King Jr.’s Struggle of Equality”, writer will analyze the influence of the concept and struggle of Martin Luther King Jr. to gain equality towards the American people, Blacks and Whites.

1.2. Problem Statement

Related to the discussion, the researcher presents the following problem:

- How did the struggle of Martin Luther King, Jr. bring equality for the black people in America?

1.3. Method of Research

This research will apply library research. The main source of this thesis is the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr. “I Have a Dream”, taken from <http://www.mlkonline.com/dream.html>. The primary data of this analysis are the biography of Martin Luther King Jr., which is taken from compiled data as taken from Martin Luther King Jr.’s website <http://www.mlkonline.com> and Encarta Encyclopedia 2002. The secondary data are taken from other source of books relating to the problem issues, articles from magazines, printed materials from the Internet and CD-ROM.

1.4. Approach

This analysis applies biographical approach and historical approach to complete this research. Biographical approach will be used to find out the issue of Martin Luther King Jr., his ideas and his struggle to gain civil rights for the Black American people in 1960's – 1965's. Historical Approach will be used to find out the background history of black oppression before Martin Luther King's struggle.

1.5. Biographical Review of Martin Luther King, Jr.

1.5.1. Family Contribution

Martin Luther King Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15, 1929. He was the eldest son of Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. and Alberta Williams King and had two relatives, Christine and Alfred Daniel.

King's father served as pastor of a large Atlanta Church, Ebenezer Baptist, which had been founded by Martin Luther King Jr.'s maternal grandfather. Since Martin Luther King Jr. wanted so much to be a minister like his father, at age 18 he was ordained as a Baptist minister at the same Church as his father served.

Martin Luther King Jr. had experienced many uncivilized treatments from the whites when he was a little child. One experienced to another he felt even bitter each day. He once had two white friends until the white

mothers forbid their children to play with blacks. King Jr., often called by his relatives 'ML', was hurt, because he lost two of his friends.

When King Jr. entered his youth era, he realized that segregation in the United States was a reality in the Southern states. As a black, King Jr. could only use several public facilities, like drinking spot, or public restroom; since other places was given a sign 'Whites Only'. Even schools are separated; blacks could never enter white's schools.

The most unforgettable bitter experience happened when King Jr. was 15. He joined a debating contest in another town, and received a prize for his speech 'Negroes and Constitution'. King Jr. was very excited to win a prize and went home with his teacher by bus. But two whites came in and the bus driver ordered King Jr. and his teacher to give up their seats to the whites, ML refused. He was very angry and upset, just a few hours ago, he gave a speech about black civil rights, but it seems that blacks had no civil rights. His teacher asked him to give his seat, to avoid any more violence from the whites, and was also afraid to be caught. Martin Luther King Jr. gave up his seat. He felt he lost a battle he should have won. King Jr. never forgot Daddy King's perspective on racism: *'I don't care how long I must live with this system. I will never accept it. I will fight the system until I die.'*

In Boston, Martin Luther King Jr. met Coretta Scott, a music student and native of Alabama. King Jr. admired her beauty, intelligence, personality, and strong character. They were both married on June 18, 1953 by Martin Luther King Jr.'s father himself in Coretta's residence in Marion.

In the following years, they would have four children; Martin Luther III, Dexter Scott, Yolanda Denise, and Bernice Albertine.

Coretta Scott-King gave full support for her husband. She knew that Martin Luther King Jr. was there to help black communities to free themselves from segregation. Martin Luther King Jr. was raised in a family that fought against segregation. He passed Daddy King's thoughts and ideas to his own family. Even his children understood what their father was doing.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s family was a supportive family. They did not think only on their own family, but more to a black community family fighting against segregation to gain civil rights. Until this present day, Martin Luther King Jr.'s sons and daughters still fight for any segregation in the United States, although in a small scope. They give additional information about anything concerning civil rights, black communities, and most of all, detail information on their heroic father; Martin Luther King Jr.

1.5.2. Education

Martin Luther King Jr. was a bright and diligent person. At age five, he could remember a few sentences from the bible. He joined the choir in the church, when he was six years old. One day he heard an impressive sermon from a Baptist minister at his church and said to his parents; "I'm going to preached like that one day!"

Fifteen years after his birth, Martin Luther King Jr. entered the Morehouse College, which means three years earlier than any average student. Morehouse College was the best black college in Atlanta, where discussion about racial conflict was allowed and opened.

Daddy King would be proud if his son had any interest in serving as a minister at his church. But Martin Luther King Jr. thought different. He thought it was best to work as a doctor or a lawyer, which it would be more helpful for the black people. The president of Morehouse College, Dr. Benjamin Mays, was a minister who thought that church ought to give a bigger role to the American societies. King Jr. learned even more from his lecture, and was very much impressed by Dr. Mays' sermon. This changed his idea of being a doctor or lawyer. Being a minister of a church like Dr. Mays could help many people in any ways possible.

Martin Luther King Jr. told his father that he wanted to be a minister. Daddy King gave him an opportunity to give a sermon in a 'try-out' at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Many people came to listen to the seventeen-year-old future-minister. King Jr. was nervous, since it was his first appearance in front of many congregations, and he did not want to disappoint his father. All of the congregations were impressed by King Jr.'s sermon. He had his own 'style' of sermon; Martin Luther King Jr. did not like the way other ministers give sermon with emotions and being applauded by the congregations. He would prefer a calm, relax, but more serious sermon. In addition, he was later recognized as an impressive

preacher. King Jr. was ordained at age 18. He gave up his pastorate in Montgomery to become co-pastor with his father of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta when he was 31 years old.

In 1948, Martin Luther King Jr. entered Crozer Seminary in Pennsylvania. He learned a lot about theology and philosophy, and was fascinated by Henry Thoreau's work. Henry Thoreau was an abolitionist, a person who believed that slavery must be eliminated, who helped slaves escape on the Underground Railroad. Thoreau was once jailed for refusing to pay a poll tax during the Mexican War. He later discussed this act of nonviolent resistance in his well-recognized essay 'Civil Disobedience'.

But the most influenced person to Martin Luther King Jr. was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, better known by Mahatma Gandhi. His philosophy about resistance without violence, and the power of the soul, was the key for the Indian people to fight against political power and English Imperial Military. Gandhi said, even they must surrender their soul for freedom; they were not allowed to take any lives to gain it, no matter how bad they were treated.

In 1959, Martin Luther King Jr. visited India and worked out more clearly his understanding of *Satyagraha* (Sanskrit, 'truth' and 'firmness'), Gandhi's principle of nonviolent persuasion, which King Jr. had determined to use as his main instrument of social protest. Martin Luther King strongly believes that black American must use the nonviolent method by Mahatma Gandhi. Nonviolent protest did not mean passive action. Those protest

meant non-cooperative with the ‘colony’, willing to sacrifice for righteousness, willing to go to jail, and if necessary willing to die for the movement.

After Martin Luther King Jr. graduated from Crozer Seminary with a remarkable grade, he continued his study to Boston University. King Jr. took the major theological philosophy studying Hindu, Shinto, Islam, and certainly Christian. He received his doctoral degree in Boston University after two years of study.

1.5.3. Friends and Societies

Basically, Martin Luther King Jr. was a loving, generous, and a well-adapt person. Since a child, King Jr. even had two white friends. He had many friends in school, college and in the university as well. But, as he was a civil rights leader, he had many influenced friends. It started from Montgomery where King Jr. began his role as a civil rights leader.

When Martin Luther King Jr. was a newly citizen in Montgomery, the bus boycott just started by the captured Rosa Parks. A local NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People) leader, Edgar D. Nixon, believed that a citywide protest should be led by someone who could unify the community. Unlike Nixon and other leaders in Montgomery’s black community, the recently arrived King had no enemies. Furthermore, Nixon saw King’s public-speaking gifts as great assets in the battle for black civil rights in Montgomery. King was soon chosen as

president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), the organization that directed the bus boycott. Since the boycott, people then recognized King Jr. as a perfect and charismatic leader to lead them to the gate of civil rights.

Martin Luther King Jr. made a lot of friends and alliances to help him fulfill his ideas and thoughts to gain black civil rights. With Northern whites, black civil rights from another state, peace activist, and even with the Jewish, which provided money and advice about strategy. Martin Luther King Jr.'s closest adviser at times was Stanley Levison, a Jewish activist and former member of the American Communist Party. King also developed strong ties to leading white Protestant ministers in the North, with whom he shared theological and moral views.

2. Analysis

2.1. The Concept of Equality

Living in a family of Christianity made Martin Luther King Jr.'s life more educated and disciplined. His father, as mentioned above, was an influential Reverent not only for the neighborhood but also for Martin Luther King Jr. His father gave him many essential advices about life. Martin Luther King Jr. was a clever boy at school, and he learned about Henry David Thoreau, which later on influenced his idea about humanity and life under a government as a citizen. One most influential and inspiring work of Henry David Thoreau to Martin Luther King Jr. was *Civil Disobedience*. He learned that one citizen or more could defy a government when it lost the capability to govern its own people.

“...All men recognize the right of revolution; that is. The right to refuse allegiance to, and to resist, the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency is great and unendurable.”

(<http://www.cs.indiana.edu/statecraft/civ/dis/html>, March 25, 2003)

Martin Luther King Jr. then thought that it might be possible to refuse segregation for the black people. To change the law that was unfair and unbeneficial to the black American people. It was time for the black American people to be able to go to any school, to enjoy great meal in any restaurant available in the city, and to use any means of transportation without being refused.

But in what way was it best to protest the government without another hatred from the white people? Martin Luther King Jr. also learned from Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi about *Satyagraha*, in Sanskrit means truth and firmness, which was a program of nonviolent resistance by Mahatma Gandhi to the British colonial laws.

Unlike Malcolm X who insisted on self-reliance and the right of blacks to defend themselves against violent attacks, Martin Luther King Jr. gained more respect by most blacks and even whites with his non-violent resistance program against segregation.

His hopes and goals of this equality was that the whites and blacks could live together in a harmony of peace as the citizens of United States of America, where in its Declarations of Independence stated, *“...All Men are created equal...”* Martin Luther King Jr. had believed that there was a time

and place that one day black Americans and white Americans could overlook their color of difference.

Martin Luther King's concept was also based upon the laws issued previously in America. The laws were never put in practice since the Declaration of Independence to the Executive Orders 9981 by President Harry S. Truman. Not even the Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued by United Nations General Assembly.

He then led a series of demonstration, made several speeches to convince the government and all the whites in the country that whites and blacks should break the wall of color difference, which was raised since the early settlement. Certainly, Martin Luther King Jr. had so much help and support from his friends, relatives and families. His concept was build mostly from his beliefs of Christianity, Henry David Thoreau, and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, better known as Mahatma Gandhi.

2.2. The Struggle to gain Equality for Black American

With his concept, he motivated the blacks to stride towards freedom with all their power invested by God. Martin Luther King Jr. regained the black American's self-respect to move forward to break the wall of slavery and segregation.

It started in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955. Rosa Parks was just on her way home from work using a bus. She sat in one of a seat in the middle row of the bus, when a white man came in the bus and the seats were full, she

supposed to give up her seat to the white, but she refused. The segregation law of the bus stated that the four rows in front of the bus was reserved for whites, the rest section of the bus at the back was for blacks. And when the white section was full, the blacks were supposed to give up their seats for whites.

On a cold winter, the boycott went on with the warmth of every black's spirit in their soul. But the local government never stopped looking for reason to make them end the boycott. More than 70 people were arrested including Martin Luther King Jr. He was sent to jail and brought to court. In February 1956, an attorney for the MIA filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking an injunction against Montgomery's segregated seating practices. As hopes were fading away, the federal court ruled in favor of the MIA, ordering the city's buses to be desegregated, but the city government appealed the ruling to the United States Supreme Court. By the time the Supreme Court upheld the lower court decision in November 1956, King was a national figure. His memoir of the bus boycott, *Stride Toward Freedom* (1958), provided a thoughtful account of that experience and further extended King's national influence. (Norrell, Robert J., "King, Martin Luther, Jr." Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002 © 2002.)

The success in Montgomery was the beginning, but it had a widespread impact to all the black people around the States. To unify them, an organization of black churches and ministers that aimed to challenge racial segregation was formed. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference

(SCLC) was established on January 1957, and appointed Martin Luther King Jr. as the leader. He had many invitations to give speeches in places where on place is sometimes far away from the other. But this was the time in which Martin Luther King Jr. could keep the black people believe that their struggle could made an effort if they continue the movement without violence.

In 1960, a college student made a protest by sitting in front of the ticket booth in a bus station, because he was not properly served by the ticket clerk. Days gone by and his friends supported him. The same protest happened in Atlanta, where Martin Luther King Jr. gave them support of their protest by joining them to sit in a bus station. Seventy-five demonstrators were arrested, including Martin Luther King Jr. The college students were soon released several days afterwards, but Martin Luther King Jr. stayed. Three days later, he was sentenced to prison for four months. Coretta Scott King received a phone call from the presidential candidate of Democratic Party, Senator John F. Kennedy on King's first day in prison. Senator Kennedy offered her his help, and Coretta was very excited after few days the judge dropped the case. Kennedy's help was not only to get King out of the jail, but it has a political goal. Senator John Fitzgerald Kennedy won the presidential election, because many blacks gave their votes of his help to Martin Luther King Jr.

The most challenging place to struggle against segregation was in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1963, King and the SCLC joined forces in

local protest. The Police Commissioner Eugene ‘Bull’ Connor, who was a racist, would meet protestors with violence. In May 1963, King and his SCLC staff escalated antisegregation marches in Birmingham by encouraging teenagers and school children to join. Hundreds of singing children filled the streets of downtown Birmingham, angering Connor, who sent police officers with attack dogs and firefighters with high-pressure water hoses against the marchers. Scenes of young protesters being attacked by dogs and pinned against buildings by torrents of water from fire hoses were shown in newspapers and on televisions around the world.

During the demonstrations, King was arrested and sent to jail. He wrote a letter from his jail cell to local clergymen who had criticized him for creating disorder in the city. His “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” which argued that individuals had the moral right and responsibility to disobey unjust laws, was widely read at the time and added to King’s standing as a moral leader. National reaction to the Birmingham violence built support for the struggle for black civil rights. The demonstrations forced white leaders to negotiate an end to some forms of segregations in Birmingham. Even more important, the protests encouraged many Americans to support national legislation against segregation.

The successful campaign victory in Birmingham, Alabama brought another demonstration in Washington on August 28, 1963. That date was

chosen to commemorate 100 years of the abolishment of slavery in United States of America.

Martin Luther King Jr. hoped it would be at least 100,000 people gathering in the heart of Washington. As he watched the news in the morning before he went to Lincoln Memorial, he heard only 25,000 people were gathered. But both him and his wife were astonished beyond believe as they saw the tremendous crowd. It was not 25,000, but it was a big 250,000 people and no sign of violence. Not only black people joined the demonstrations but also white people who believe in the movement and civil rights. It was the biggest demonstrations in the history of civil rights movement, especially in America. They brought posters which said, “We seek freedom in 1963, which was promised in 1863”, “One hundred year debt must be paid”. The white people draw an equal sign (=) on their forehead to show their full involvement and support in the movement.

Martin Luther King Jr. was 34 years old, young for a leader, but to the people gathering that day, he was the essential figure who understood their rights for a freedom. He was to give a speech in Lincoln Memorial; Martin Luther King Jr. planned his speech carefully and chose the right words for that special moment, words that could change people’s minds and hearts. As he started to speak about the promise America made for equality that has not been ‘paid’, the crowd cheered. Martin Luther King Jr. knew he spoke with their voice, from them to them.

Because of the enormous support from the crowd, he put aside his prepared speech and spoke with his heart. It was a speech that changed his life and the life of America. He gave a well-known speech “I Have A Dream”, which was a point of freedom to the black American.

I Have a Dream

*Address at March on Washington
August 28, 1963. Washington, D.C.*

*I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.
[Applause]*

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So, we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that

there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check -- a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold, which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to 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 their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a

Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow 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. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four 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.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

(<http://www.mlkonline.com/dream.html>, February 19, 2003)

It was stated in the newspaper that Martin Luther King Jr. unofficially had become the 'President of the Black American People'. He was then truly acknowledged as the leader of the civil rights movement, a trusted man loved by his followers and respected by many others. His speech and the march built on the Birmingham demonstrations to create the political momentum that resulted in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited segregation in public accommodations as well as discrimination in education and employment.

Even though the speech had a great impact on America's life and brought light to a better tomorrow for America, it was too soon to cheer. There were still attacks on black churches. The children were attending Sunday school where suddenly a bomb struck the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Another disaster came across America, one month after Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have A Dream' speech, on November 22, 1963 America was stunned witnessing the death of President John F. Kennedy while crossing the streets in Dallas, Texas. He was shot to death in his convertible car.

This incident brought an impact to the black American. It was another struggle for the black to keep the freedom. The candidates for the next president were Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson and Barry Goldwater, who wanted to keep America as it is, white! It was important that the black American had the right to vote. Fortunately, Vice President Lyndon B.

Johnson was elected President of the United States who cared more to black movement.

On October 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. was awarded Nobel Prize for peace for his effectiveness as a leader of the American civil rights movement and his highly visible moral stance. This added more duty as the leader of civil rights.

In 1965 SCLC joined a voting-rights protest march that was planned to go from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital of Montgomery, more than 80 km away. The goal of the march was to draw national attention to the struggle for black voting rights in the state. Police beat and tear-gassed the marchers just outside of Selma, and televised scenes of the violence, on a day that came to be known as Bloody Sunday, resulted in an outpouring of support to continue the march. SCLC petitioned for and received a federal court order barring police from interfering with a renewed march to Montgomery. Two weeks after Bloody Sunday, more than 3000 people, including a core of 300 marchers who would make the entire trip, set out toward Montgomery. They arrived in Montgomery five days later, where King addressed a rally of more than 20,000 people in front of the capitol building.

The march created support for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which President Lyndon Johnson signed into law in August. The act suspended (and amendments to the act later banned) the use of literacy tests and other

voter qualification tests that often had been used to prevent blacks from registering to vote.

Throughout 1966 and 1967, King increasingly turned the focus of his civil rights activism throughout the country to economic issues. He began to argue for redistribution of the nation's economic wealth to overcome entrenched black poverty. In 1967 he began planning a Poor People's Campaign to pressure national lawmakers to address the issue of economic justice.

On April 1968, Martin Luther King went to Memphis, Tennessee to support striking black workers for a raise. He then gave another speech, but this time his speech was a bit different. *"Like everybody else"* King said, *"I want to live a long life. But that is not for me to decide, because God decides. The Lord has given me an opportunity to reached the top of the peak and sees the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But you must take us all there to the Promised Land. I am very happy tonight, there is nothing I worry. My eyes have seen God's miracle coming."* (p:78. Schloredt, Valerie. *Martin Luther King*. PT Gramedia, Jakarta. 1994).

He was prepared of everything that might happen to him. He vanished all his fear of death, and asked all the black people to continue their struggle. Martin Luther King Jr. spent his time in his hotel room to plan the next protest. He reminded to his fellow man that what ever would happened to him, they must proceed without violence. As they went to the balcony of

the hotel, a gunshot was heard, Martin Luther King Jr. was shot by a sniper across the building.! He was immediately rushed to the nearest hospital. One hour later, America was in grief, Martin Luther King Jr. died on April 4, 1968.

News of the assassination resulted in an outpouring of shock and anger throughout the nation and the world, prompting riots in more than 100 United States cities in the days following King's death. Thirty-nine people were killed and shot in a devastating protest and anger of King's death, a violent act Martin Luther King tried to avoid on his non-violent campaign. President Johnson stated, "There is no doubt what Martin Luther King wanted. If his death triggers violent act, then we denied his struggle". In 1969 James Earl Ray, an escaped white convict, pleaded guilty to the murder of King and was sentenced to 99 years in prison. Although over the years, many investigators have suspected that Ray did not act alone, no accomplices have ever been identified.

Around 100,000 people came to Martin Luther King's funeral. They walked along side his hearse pulled by two donkeys, to remind people of his ancestors as slaves of America. The words carved in his tombstone were taken from an old song by slaves, which was also taken from his speech in Washington, "Free at Last, Free at Last. Thank God Almighty, I'm Free at Last."

After his death, King came to represent black courage and achievement, high moral leadership, and the ability of Americans to address and

overcome racial divisions. Recollections of his criticisms of U.S. foreign policy and poverty faded, and his soaring rhetoric calling for racial justice and an integrated society became almost as familiar to subsequent generations of Americans as the Declaration of Independence.

King's historical importance was memorialized at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Social Justice, and a research institute in Atlanta. Also in Atlanta is the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, which includes his birthplace, the Ebenezer Church, and the King Center, where his tomb is located. Perhaps the most important memorial is the national holiday in King's honor, designated by the Congress of the United States in 1983 and observed on the third Monday in January, a day that falls on or near King's birthday of January 15.

2.3. Equality in America after the struggle

History tells that the first slave coming to America was back in 1518 from Africa. Since then to 1865 as slavery was abolished, it was estimated around fifteen million people including women and children were shipped across the Atlantic Ocean to America to become slaves.

Since 1830, the North American States forced to abolish slavery. In 1861, eleven States formed a Confederation and separated from America due to slavery issue. It was then followed by America's Civil War between the North and South. After a devastating four years of war and more than

500,000 people killed, the victory was for the North. The Freedom Proclamations was announced and the slaves were free.

Even so, hundred years after the Civil War, the Southern prevented black people to receive the same chance and opportunities as the white people. The Southern whites blamed the black people for the Civil War and the loss of the Southern States.

The death of Abraham Lincoln in 1865 made it more difficult for the black people to receive proper life and rights. The oppression to the black people had made the Congress proposed the 14th Amendment in 1868 about Civil Rights; *“All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws”*. And was followed by the 15th Amendment in 1870 about Black Suffrage; *“The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude”*. (p:50. Peltason, J.W. *The Constitution of the United States of America. United States Information Agency. 1987*).

The main reason why the laws of slave abolishment and equality were not put on practice by white people because there were no influenced leader

to be listened to and to remind the citizens of the existence of the law. In 1895, those amendments were denied by Southern States. All the black had no rights to vote. Ku Klux Klan was formed to oppress the blacks. It was an organization with a simple goal; keep America white. They would not hesitate to murder any one who tried to fight for equality for the black people, blacks and whites. From the year 1899 to 1919, approximately 3,000 blacks, men, women and children were killed.

In 1950's, Martin Luther King Jr. had brought a better tomorrow for the black people and made the whites acknowledge the existence of black people in America. His 'I Have a Dream' speech had made a big influence to America and brought an ideal society. A society ruled under certain law, especially laws of equality and civil rights. A society that understood laws are made to bring a better life for the citizens. As good as it gets under the struggle of Martin Luther King Jr., almost 40 years after his death, segregation cases were still found in rural areas of Southern America. The owners of the stores and restaurants would rather close their business than have black people wandering in their business.

Nevertheless, improvements were made after King's death. Before the Voting Rights Act in 1965, less than 200 black people became chosen employees around the States; in 1970 the number increased to 1469; in 1980 to 4912 black people; and in 1986 the black people working as an employee in the States became 6,500. These days, more than 290 mayors are black.

Schools and job opportunities are wide open for the black American. Many blacks have made a success in any kinds of carrier. In the sports field we see numerous black American who has made a success. Many NBA players are black. Famous boxers are mostly blacks. PGA Golf Champion Tiger Woods is half black. Baseball players are black. American Football players are mostly black. We shall not forget the movie stars, and singers who also made a carrier to boost their lives. From Sidney Portiere, the late Sammy Davis Jr., to the 'modern era' celebrities such as Edie Murphy, Chris Rock, Chris Tucker, Martin Lawrence, Samuel L. Jackson, Lawrence Fishburn, 2003 Oscar Nominee Queen Latifah, 2002 Best Actress Halle Berry, 2002 Best Actor Denzel Washington, and much more. Also from the singers such as, Michael Jackson and his family (even though his white now), Stevie Wonder, Nat King Cole, Lionel Richie, Tina Turner, the late beautiful young Aaliyah, Whitney Houston, most of the rap singers (except Eminem and Vanilla Ice), and many others as well. In the politics, there is Jesse Jackson from the Democratic Party who was the presidential candidate in 1988. He also wants to continue Martin Luther King's struggle. Foreign Minister of the States, Collin Powel, who was the General in the Gulf War in 1991, is black.

It has made a great impact to the black communities. The blacks have received equality in America. They many times hand in hand work together with whites. With proper education, self-respect, and some support, Martin Luther King's dream has come true in 40 years. *"I have a dream that one*

day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.”

3. Conclusion

Slavery and racialism had become the core problem of humanity. Ironically, most of the slavery and racialism is about blacks and whites. Just as the essential life of good and bad or Yin and Yang. It rooted from the Egyptian kingdom to the first settlement in America, and probably up to this very moment of this so-called next millennium.

It took for America around more than 440 years to completely abolish slavery in United States from the first arrival of the slave to the astounding speech of Martin Luther King Jr. on August 28, 1963. Why was it so long to acknowledge that black people has the same flesh and blood as the whites?

Basically, the blacks wanted a free life from their origin in Africa, just as the whites fled from the tyranny of British Kingdom and Catholic Orthodox. However, white people outsmart black people and gave them false hope about living in a new land, the Promising Land. It was then a promising life indeed for the whites, whereas the blacks could only taste the land, where they should work unwillingly hard for the Land Lords. Years went by and the slavery had become a custom of life in America.

Freedom was the word the black people searched for, but the whites were too powerful for they govern the land. No black people had the courage to stand up against the white people. Certainly several white people disagreed with the slavery, and had made several attempts to abolish slavery, but it was just the law. Freedom stated by the law and not freedom to be tasted by the soul. Laws were issued by the Congress and presidents gave speeches that focused on segregation and racism to end the un-equality among people of the States.

A law would not be complete if there was no one who would lead and remind the citizens of the law. The reason why laws are issued is to bring order to the citizens in on country or certain region. Finally, in the middle of the 20th century, several blacks had the courage to stand up against the whites to force them to acknowledge the blacks. What the black leaders did, where the struggle for freedom that they supposedly felt years ago. Martin Luther King Jr. had more followers than other black leader. Why?

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Church Minister, most of the blacks and whites in America are Christian. This made the white people easier to accept Martin Luther King Jr. than Malcolm X who was a Moslem. The white people had more respect for a black Christian leader, due to the same understandings of God and other teachings of Christianity.

Most importantly, Martin Luther King Jr. adapted Mahatma Gandhi's teachings of *Satyagraha* to America, which brought a non-violent act of demonstrations. This was the key of success in King's struggle to gain civil

rights for the black people. No matter how bad they were treated by the white people, the black people were not to counter attack. Other white people who hated violence, mostly done by whites to blacks, soon sympathized the black people and joined the civil rights movement for black people.

After King's death, more and more white people realized the mistake they made to the black people. The "I Have a Dream" speech of Martin Luther King Jr. truly touched the heart of many people, whites, blacks and colored people around the globe. It was the speech to everyone in this world, especially in America, to realize that all human being around the world has the same rights despite the color and race, that there shall not be any differences among citizens of the world.

It made a great impact to the life of white and black American. The black people could freely go to any schools in the States and have the same opportunities of career without the fear of segregation and without being refused in any job they take. *"...I have a dream that my four 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"*. The impact to white people has more to their realization of the fact that not only white people who lives in America, but variety of culture. Martin Luther King Jr. made the white people aware of the existence of black people and other colored people in America and that they have the same rights as the citizen in America. *"All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the*

jurisdiction thereof are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws”.

What had actually happened was that the whites enslaved themselves of the greed of power and race superiority. They forget that all human beings have the same rights to live free. Black people are more civilized than white people in a matter of life and living. Even though the Declaration of Independence stated, “...*All men are created equal*”, the white people truly neglected their statement of freedom and presumed the word *men* are meant for whites.

These days, Martin Luther King Jr. and his well-known “I Have a Dream” speech with his non-violent act had become a symbol of freedom, not only in America but also in every part of the world, and had become the Declaration of Independence for black people.

It is true that today we could still witness cases of racialism, but the life of black people had boosted to a better opportunities and life after Martin Luther King’s era. We should always remember who we are and what we live for. And we also should remember that every one living in this world has the same opportunities as everybody else. Respect each other, loose the

hatred and avoid war. Let us all hope that living in this world in the upcoming future brings peace to all of us.

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