

hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all of their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood, Martin Luther King Jr.

## 4.5

Keith D. Miller and Emily M. Lewis

## *Touchstones, Authorities, and Marian Anderson: The Making of 'I Have a Dream'*

*Keith Miller is assistant professor of English at Arizona State University. He is author of Voice of Deliverance: The Language of Martin Luther King Jr. and Its Sources.*

*Emily Lewis is a former graduate student at Arizona State University.*

**O**n Easter Sunday 1939, when Marian Anderson sang 'America' ('My country 'tis of thee/Sweet land of liberty') from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, the event served as both a culmination and a beginning—the culmination of a long effort to identify Abraham Lincoln as a symbol of racial equality and the beginning of a method of formalized protest that would climax when Martin Luther King Jr. delivered 'I Have a Dream' on those same steps twenty-four years later.

After the Daughters of the American Revolution had prevented Anderson from singing at Constitution Hall because of her race, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt resigned from the DAR, and NAACP chief Walter White arranged for Anderson to perform at the Lincoln Memorial before 75 000 people. Harold Ickes, Secretary of Interior, introduced Anderson by commenting on the appropriateness of the setting: 'In this great auditorium under the sky all of us are free. When God gave us this wonderful outdoors and the sun, the moon and the stars, He made no distinction of race, or creed, or color.'

As Scott Sandage explains, by scheduling the concert as a response to the controversy, 'black organizers transformed a recital of sacred music at a national shrine into a political rally.' Sandage argues that, by reinterpreting the Lincoln Memorial, the NAACP and Anderson helped revise the memory of Abraham Lincoln from that of the National Saviour to that of the Great Emancipator.

Such an effort was necessary because northern white leaders had sought to define Lincoln as an icon unrelated to slavery and emancipation. When designers planned the Lincoln Memorial and commissioned a sculptor to chisel the giant statue housed inside, they envisioned their work not as a tribute to the liberator of slaves but instead 'as a symbol of national consensus, linking North and South on holy, national ground.' At the dedication in 1922 the chief planner of the Lincoln Memorial, former president William Howard Taft, gave a lengthy speech that en-

tirely ignored the subject of slavery. In another address at the dedication, President Warren Harding insisted that Lincoln 'would have been the last man in the republic to resort to arms to effect . . . abolition. Emancipation was a means to the great end—maintained union. . . .'

On other occasions as well, white officials exalted Lincoln by extracting him from the divisiveness of slavery and emancipation. In 1916 President Woodrow Wilson accepted as a national site the farm where Lincoln was born. Credentialing himself, Wilson stated, 'I have read many biographies of Lincoln.' He hailed Lincoln as 'a man of singular, delightful, vital genius' and a 'natural ruler of men' with a 'great heart that seemed to comprehend all mankind.' Nowhere in his panegyric did Wilson mention slavery or emancipation. Nowhere did he even allude to the Civil War. Rather he portrayed Lincoln as a god-like figure involved in human affairs yet somehow elevated above them.

African-Americans, however, interpreted national symbols differently than did presidents. In his famous 1852 jeremiad 'What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?', Frederick Douglass attacked slavery in part by contrasting the promises of the Declaration of Independence to the horrors of bondage. When Henry Highland Garnet denounced slavery, he invoked George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Moses, and the Christian religion as his authorities.

After slavery ended, African-American orators continue to make arguments similar to those offered by Douglass and Garnet. These later speakers contrasted the values enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, the newly amended Constitution, and the Bible to the ugly racism institutionalized in American life. Following Douglass and Garnet, these black leaders urged whites to end prejudice and hypocrisy by living up to the noble ideals of democracy and brotherhood that whites claimed to embrace. Adding Lincoln to the gallery of sanctified religious and patriotic figures whom they invoked, these orators interpreted the Emancipation Proclamation as another touchstone of democracy and freedom.

Early in this century George William Cook compared Christ's preaching to the Declaration of Independence. James Curtis and M. C. B. Mason compared Lincoln to Christ and called for equal rights. In his speech 'Abraham Lincoln and Fifty Years of Freedom', Abraham Walters praised 'the immortal Emancipator', demanded racial equality and claimed, 'Mr. Lincoln was the first to suggest to his party the enfranchisement of the Negro.' Ernest Lyon celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation by evoking Lincoln and the Constitution and by describing African-American triumphs against great odds. Lyon concluded his speech optimistically: ' . . . since Right is Right and God is God, Right must ultimately prevail.' In yet another oration honouring the fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, William Lewis asserted that Lincoln 'walked with God'; Lewis identified Jefferson, Lincoln and Christianity by claiming that Lincoln, in effect, declared, "The Negro is a man" and " my [Lincoln's] ancient faith tells me that all men are created equal."

During inaugural week of 1909, Francis Grimke entered his pulpit in Washington, DC, cited Lincoln, and issued a jeremiad to whites who failed to live by their expressed values: 'The secession of the Southern States in 1860 was a small matter compared with the secession of the Union itself from the great principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, in the Golden Rule, in the Ten Commandments, in the Sermon on the Mount.' After invoking these touchstones, Grimke protested the pattern of segregation unfolding across the

South. He bemoaned the loss of the vote, rejoiced that blacks were generally 'dissatisfied' and advocated the need to struggle against 'this great evil of race prejudice.' He ended optimistically, affirming 'The right is bound, sooner or later, to triumph' and explaining 'A better day is coming; but we have got to help to bring it about.'

At the consecration of the Lincoln Memorial in 1922 Robert Russa Moton, who replaced Booker T. Washington as president of Tuskegee Institute, was the only speaker to violate the careful process of crafting Lincoln's image as a national healer who stood above the issue of race. Unlike Taft and Harding, Moton dared to tie Lincoln to manumission. He hailed Lincoln as 'the great emancipator', who implemented part of Jefferson's promise that 'all men are created equal'; further, he challenged Americans to make their nation 'an example for all the world of equal justice and equal opportunity for all.' Although Moton had his say, white officials apparently won this particular battle over the memory of Lincoln. Blacks were allowed to witness the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial only from a segregated area where they sat behind white spectators—an arrangement that obviously conflicted with Moton's call for 'equal justice.'

Despite their setback in contesting the image of Lincoln at the 1922 dedication, blacks continued to call for equality by appealing to sanctified touchstones and authorities. African-Americans acted on a rhetorical assumption that Kenneth Burke articulates: 'if the excommunicated would avoid the corner of negativism, he must recruit a group who steal the insignia of the orthodox.' Burke explains, 'The stealing back and forth of symbols is the approved method whereby the Outs avoid "being driven into a corner"'. By fusing their demands to hallowed emblems, blacks claimed that the American civil religion necessitated racial equality. In this argument, rejecting equal rights meant rejecting all things dear and holy.

But in order to appeal successfully to the emblem of Lincoln, African-Americans first had to win the rhetorical war over what Lincoln symbolized. They did not enjoy the luxury of explaining how Lincoln intertwined his roles as National Saviour and Great Emancipator—a task that Frederick Douglass undertook in 1876 when dedicating a monument to Lincoln. No, they needed simply to define Lincoln as the emancipator—period. Then he could serve as a rhetorically useful authority and a link to connect Christianity and Jefferson's words—'all men are created equal'—to their own situation.

Although white Americans' memory of Lincoln appears to have gradually evolved from National Unifier (in 1922) to Emancipator (in 1938), Anderson's 1939 performance at the Lincoln Memorial proved decisive in garnering massive, positive publicity that permanently associated the image of Lincoln with the theme of racial equality. She and the NAACP thereby won a decisive battle in the rhetorical contest to seize and command the symbol of Lincoln, culminating the combined rhetorical efforts of Curtis, Mason, Lyon, Walters, Lewis, Grimke and Moton. Forever would Lincoln's name be coupled with what Kenneth Burke would call the 'god-terms' of 'freedom' and 'equality.'

Not only did Anderson's performance end the struggle over what Lincoln represented, it also inaugurated a stylized form of dissent in a specific location. Sandage explains:

A standardized civil rights protest ritual evolved from the elements in Marian Anderson's concert, such as using mass rallies instead of pickets, performing patriotic and spiritual music, choosing a religious format, inviting prominent

platform guests, self-policing the crowds to project an orderly image, alluding to Lincoln in publicity and oratory, and insisting on using the memorial rather than another site.

Although this formalized ritual was new, it simply constituted a refined form of the same argument that Douglass, Garnet and other black orators had used before, namely criticizing whites for preaching equality and justice while practising segregation and injustice. In this refined political ceremony, not only did blacks again protest exploitation and argue from authority, they claimed the same specific authorities—Moses, Christ, Jefferson and Lincoln—that Douglass, Garnet and other African-American speakers had cited singly or in combination. And they argued from the same benchmarks—the Bible, the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation. Through her singing Anderson added 'America' ('My country 'tis of thee/Sweet land of liberty') to the list of touchstones.

Two years after the Anderson concert, A. Philip Randolph started a March on Washington Movement, threatening President Franklin Roosevelt with a huge demonstration that would conclude at the Lincoln Memorial. Fearful of Randolph's march, Roosevelt supplied an executive order outlawing segregation in the defence industry. In 1943 Randolph organized a small band that gathered at the memorial on Lincoln's birthday and sang the spiritual 'Go Down, Moses.' Other protests followed at the site.

Of course African-Americans continued to dissent in places other than the Lincoln Memorial. In 1944 a fifteen-year-old boy from Atlanta won a local oratorical contest (and qualified for a state contest) by disputing racism. His name was Martin Luther King, Jr. Whether King wrote this address, 'The Negro and the Constitution', or borrowed it from an unacknowledged and as-yet-undiscovered source, he identified himself with it and delivered it with enough conviction to win a contest.

In this speech the teenage King followed familiar practices. His chief themes were identical with those of Francis Grimke. Both Grimke and King lambasted racial inequity, advocated the right to vote, applauded the black struggle for freedom, and concluded with a note of high optimism. Like Mason and Lyon, King discussed the beginning of American slavery in 1620. Like Lyon, King claimed that emancipation left blacks in a rather pitiful, undeveloped state. Again like Lyon—albeit much more briefly—King announced that African-Americans had nonetheless important contributions.

In 'The Negro and the Constitution' the young King also appealed to hallowed emblems in order to contrast America's gaudy promises to its disturbing practices. Like Grimke, King recalled the Golden Rule. Like Curtis and Mason, King identified Christ and Lincoln. Like Lewis and Moton, King incorporated Jefferson's assertion from the Declaration of Independence: 'all men are created . . . equal'. Like Lyon, Walters and Lewis, King alluded to the number of years that had passed since the Emancipation Proclamation. And just as Grimke merged his voice with lyrics from the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic', King merged his own voice with lyrics from 'Lift Every Voice and Sing', sometimes known as the Negro National Anthem.

In the same oration the youthful King analysed the importance of Anderson's 1939 concert:

Marian Anderson was barred from singing in Constitution Hall, ironically enough by the professional daughters of the very men who founded this nation

for liberty and equality. But this tale had a different ending. The nation rose in protest, and gave a stunning rebuke to the Daughters of the American Revolution and a tremendous ovation to the artist, Marian Anderson, who sang in Washington on Easter Sunday and fittingly, before the Lincoln Memorial.

After remarking the distinguished members of the audience and the size of crowd, King explained,

[Anderson] sang as never before with tears in her eyes. When the words of "America" and "Nobody Knows de Trouble I Seen" rang out over that great gathering, there was a hush on the sea of uplifted faces, black and white, and a new baptism of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Here the adolescent King associated the American Revolution, Constitution Hall, Washington, DC, and the Lincoln Memorial—where Anderson 'fittingly' sang—with the 'god-terms' of 'liberty' and 'equality.' Like the organizers who staged Anderson's concert on Easter, King skilfully fused sacred and patriotic messages, mentioning the timing of the concert on Easter Sunday and claiming that it initiated a 'new baptism of liberty.' The baptism occurred when Anderson sang 'America' and a spiritual and thereby identified patriotism and African-American culture.

Wanting his tribute to Anderson to be more than a panegyric, the teenage King transformed it into a values appeal in his protest against segregation: 'Yet [Miss Anderson] cannot be served in the public restaurants of her home city, even after it has declared her to be its best citizen.'

In 1955, eleven years later, the Montgomery bus boycott catapulted King onto the national stage. In 1957, King and NAACP chief Roy Wilkins planned a Prayer Pilgrimage to the Lincoln Memorial on the third anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education*. On the steps of the memorial, gospel soloist Mahalia Jackson sang 'America.' Wearing his pulpit robe at that same spot, King delivered 'Give Us the Ballot', the major speech of the Prayer Pilgrimage. He urged the nation to obey the desegregation order of the Supreme Court and repeatedly implored Congress for the right to vote. He closed by referring to Moses and by quoting ten lines from 'Lift Every Voice and Sing'—the same hymn he had excerpted thirteen years earlier in 'The Negro and the Constitution'.

In the nineteen years between 'The Negro and the Constitution', and 'I Have a Dream', King remembered Marian Anderson. To understand his references to her in 1963, we need to return to her 1939 performance at the Lincoln Memorial. There she helped construct her musical persona by singing 'America', an Italian aria, Schubert's 'Ave Maria', and several spirituals. By selecting 'America', she bolstered her credentials as a patriot; by choosing 'Ave Maria', she became a worthy purveyor of the finest classical music; by picking beautiful and religiously orthodox spirituals, she argued for the importance of the people who produced them. By creating her musical persona out of such disparate materials, Anderson presented herself as a loyal, black American soaked in the finest European culture.

The mature King constructed his rhetorical persona in an analogous fashion. Seeking legitimacy, he carefully fixed himself within the coordinates of Christian, Euro-American moral and intellectual traditions. In an autobiographical essay, 'Pilgrimage to Nonviolence', he maintained that his ideas sprang from reading prestigious Euro-American philosophers and theologians even though he repeatedly copied the words of fellow preachers and friends to explain what he claimed to

have learned from Marx and other renowned thinkers. He dotted—and sometimes saturated—his discourse with quotations from and references to Shakespeare, Jefferson, Lincoln, Thoreau, Emerson, the American Revolution, the Civil War, emancipation, *Brown v. Board of Education*, Moses, Christ and other biblical figures—each of whom served as an authority or touchstone that helped clarify a current situation. He garnered many of these quotations and references from books of sermons by preachers whose names he rarely mentioned.

Balancing his use of Euro-American icons and history lessons, King frequently incorporated into his addresses the lyrics of spirituals, gospel songs and hymns, using them to cap several of his most important orations. Like Lyon, he highlighted his African-American identity by occasionally spotlighting outstanding black achievers who had overcome extremely formidable obstacles.

One of the achievers King chronicled was Anderson. In 'The American Dream', a sermon delivered in February 1963, he applauded her: 'From poverty-stricken conditions . . . Marian Anderson rose up to be the world's greatest contralto, so that Toscanini had to cry out: "A voice like this comes only once in a century." And Sibelius of Finland said: "My roof is too low for such a voice."'

At the end of the homily he referred to Lincoln, 'who had the vision to see that this nation could not survive half slave and half free', and quoted Jefferson—'all men are created equal'.

In 'Dives and Lazarus,' a sermon delivered in March 1963, King spoke more about Anderson. Borrowing from white preacher/scholar George Buttrick and from British preacher Leslie Weatherhead, King expounded the theme of interrelatedness, explaining the need to recognize one's dependence on others. He introduced his analysis of Anderson by talking about 'that great experience I had in reading the autobiography of Marian Anderson'. Published in 1956, Anderson's autobiography is one of only a handful of books that King ever claimed to have read after the start of the Montgomery bus boycott.

After noting Anderson's autobiography, King cited Anderson as someone with a keen sense of obligation to her extraordinary mother. He devoted 342 words to detailing the enormous sacrifices that Mrs Anderson made to further Marian Anderson's education and Mrs Anderson's unlimited joy when she heard her daughter sing 'Ave Maria' and a spiritual at Carnegie Hall. Then he related Marian Anderson's gratitude to her mother. He recalled that someone had asked Marian Anderson about 'the happiest moment' in her life, inquiring,

Was it the moment that Toscanini said that you possess the "voice that comes only once in a century"? Miss Anderson said "No." Was it the moment that you sang before Sibelius of Finland and he said, "My roof is too low for your voice"? Miss Anderson said "No". . . . What was it then? . . . "The happiest moment in my life was when I could say, 'Mother, you may stop working now.'"

Here King established Anderson's musical status by indicating that she sang Schubert's classic 'Ave Maria' in Carnegie Hall, easily the most famous auditorium in the nation. He reinforced and upgraded that status by noting the acclaim lavished upon her by the greatest living conductor of European classical music (Toscanini) and by the greatest living composer of European classical music (Sibelius). No one could dismiss such authorities.

King further explained that Anderson served as a stellar ambassador of the African-American community, one who brought spirituals to an arena where they could be savoured by the best-trained and most discriminating of musical ears. As if this were not enough, King ventured, Anderson maintained perspective on her rare fame. She was happiest when earning enough money to rescue her hard-working mother from a life of endless toil. King urged his listeners to emulate her recognition of interdependence.

King concluded by turning the whole theme of interrelatedness—including his exegesis of the parable of Dives and Lazarus and his long Anderson illustration—into an argument against white supremacy, a doctrine that denied interdependence. He thereby transmuted his Anderson illustration into a values appeal against racism, just as he had done in 'The Negro and the Constitution'.

One hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation, a few months after delivering 'Dives and Lazarus', King joined A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins and other civil rights advocates in orchestrating a massive March on Washington. A galaxy of religious figures—including a Roman Catholic archbishop, the president of the American Jewish Congress, and a leader of the National Council of Churches—joined 200 000 others at the Lincoln Memorial. There they sang 'Go Down, Moses', the spiritual that Randolph's small group had brought to the same spot twenty years earlier.

From the steps of the memorial, various speakers offered highly predictable values appeals in demanding strong civil rights legislation. Randolph invoked Jesus Christ. Wilkins quoted the New Testament. Moderate Whitney Young claimed that civil rights were 'constitutionally guaranteed'. Youthful militant John Lewis called for agitation 'until the Revolution of 1776 is completed.' Joan Baez sang the spiritual 'Oh Freedom'. Jewish leader Joachim Prinz cited the Pledge of Allegiance and urged action on behalf of 'the image, the dream, the idea, and the aspiration of America itself'. Walter Reuther, President of the United Auto Workers, lamented the 'moral gap between American democracy's noble promises and its ugly practices in the field of civil rights.' He added, 'There is too much high octane hypocrisy in America.'

Nearing the end of the proceedings, Randolph introduced Marian Anderson, who calmed the huge crowd with a spiritual, and Mahalia Jackson, who revived everyone with an up-tempo spiritual bewailing the slaves' mistreatment and implying that justice would come.

After Prinz's remarks, King's turn came. A few days earlier, he had told a friend that he wanted to give 'a sort of Gettysburg Address'. That intention was obvious when, in his second sentence, King echoed the opening of Lincoln's famous oration and alluded to the enormous statue of Lincoln gazing at his back; 'Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation.'

In its structure and themes, King's 'I Have a Dream' closely resembles Francis Grimke's jeremiad of 1909. Like Grimke, King protested the loss of the vote and measured white racism against the Declaration of Independence and the Bible. Grimke rejoiced that blacks were 'dissatisfied'; King asserted that blacks 'can never be satisfied' with injustice. And, like Grimke (and Lyon), King ended with a strikingly hopeful vision based on the promises of the American civil religion.

Further, as Dave Barboza observes, the form and themes of 'I Have a Dream' strongly resemble those of King's 'The Negro and the Constitution.' The major purpose of each speech is to protest racial injustice. One theme common to the orations is the need to recognize interdependence. In 'The Negro and the Consti-

tution' King argued that slaves established 'the empire of King cotton' that made possible the unique 'status of life and hospitality' enjoyed by southern whites. In addition he maintained that white Americans' health hinged on racial justice. Because diseases spread from blacks to whites, he argued, a 'healthy nation' was impossible as long as blacks were 'harboring germs of disease which recognize no color lines.' In 'I Have a Dream', he contended that African-Americans needed to recognize interdependence: 'many of our white brothers . . . 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. We cannot walk alone.'

Many of the same, ritualized values appeals animate 'The Negro and the Constitution' and 'I Have a Dream'. Following a pattern established (or confirmed) by Grimke, King in both orations marshalled ritualized appeals to protest an American nightmare; then he paradoxically offered hope based on the same civil religion. In 'The Negro and the Constitution' King ventured that, despite the Civil War and emancipation, 'Black America still wears chains'. In 'I Have a Dream' he used the same metaphor to describe the same nightmare: 'One hundred years [after emancipation] . . . the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation.' In 'The Negro and the Constitution' he objected that Marian Anderson could not 'spend the night in any good hotel in America'. In 'I Have a Dream' he decried blacks' inability to 'gain lodging in . . . the hotels of the cities'.

In both 'The Negro and the Constitution' and 'I Have a Dream', he piled one racist scandal on top of another, organized each pile in parallel sentences beginning with 'We cannot', and included a biblical scale to weigh each injustice—in the first, a reference to Jesus; in the second, an excerpt from the prophet Amos. Compare:

'The Negro and the Constitution'

We cannot have an enlightened democracy with one great group living in ignorance.

We cannot have a healthy nation with one tenth of the people . . . harboring germs of disease which recognize no color lines . . .

We cannot have a nation orderly and sound with one group so ground down . . . that it is almost forced into . . . crime.

We cannot be truly Christian people so long as we flaunt [sic] the central teachings of Jesus: brotherly love and the Golden Rule.

We cannot come to full prosperity with one great group so ill-delayed that it cannot buy goods.

'I Have a Dream'

We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. . . .

We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one.

We cannot be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood . . . by signs saying 'For Whites Only.'

We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote. . . .

No, we . . . will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

By the time King reached this 'We cannot' litany in 'The Negro and the Constitution', he had already alluded to Lincoln, the Emancipation Proclamation, and con-



stitutional amendments outlawing discrimination; he had already quoted Jefferson's 'all men are created equal'; and—in the section on Anderson—he had already cited Constitution Hall, the American Revolution, Easter Sunday, the Lincoln Memorial, 'America' and a spiritual.

By the time he reached the 'We cannot' litany of 'I Have a Dream', he had already echoed the Gettysburg Address; turned a Shakespearean phrase inside out; alluded to a teaching of Jesus; and noted the Emancipation Proclamation, the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence, which he had quoted.

Extending a metaphor for seven sentences, King used familiar benchmarks to contend that the 'architects of our republic' had offered a 'check' that promised freedom. 'America', he complained, 'has given the Negro people a bad check', which kited due to 'insufficient funds'. Yet the promise of Jefferson's Declaration is sacred and will surely be redeemed: 'We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we've come to cash this check.' This appeal to sterling promises—whose realization is currently thwarted but eventually certain—underlies the entire speech, just as it did Grimke's oration and 'The Negro and the Constitution'.

Like Grimke's speech, 'The Negro and the Constitution' ended with great optimism as King blended sacred and secular appeals: 'My heart throbs anew in the hope that inspired by the example of Lincoln, imbued with the spirit of Christ, [Americans] will cast down the last barrier to perfect freedom.' Continuing 'I Have a Dream', King quoted again from the Declaration—'all men are created equal'—and included an extended, visionary metaphor from Isaiah that reappeared in the New Testament and in Handel's 'Messiah' ('every valley shall be. . .').

King ended 'I Have a Dream' by borrowing, adjusting, and adding to the conclusion of a speech that black pastor Archibald Carey gave at the 1952 Republican Convention. Carey had argued against segregation by citing emancipation and appealing to Jesus, Paul, the Hebrew Bible and the Declaration. Carey began his conclusion by quoting 'America':

We, Negro Americans, sing with all loyal Americans:

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!

That's exactly what we mean—from every mountainside, let freedom ring. Not only from the Green Mountains and White Mountains of Vermont and New Hampshire; not only from the Catskills of New York; but from the Ozarks in Arkansas, from the Stone Mountain in Georgia, from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia—let it ring not only for the minorities of the United States, but for . . . the disinherited of all the earth—may the Republican Party, under God, from every mountainside, LET FREEDOM RING!

Compare Carey's words to those in 'I Have a Dream':

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning:

My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty. Of thee I sing—Land where my fathers died, Land of the Pilgrims' pride. From every mountainside Let freedom ring!

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 Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill in Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring!

Unlike Carey, King reached the climax of the peroration when he stated emphatically, 'Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill in Mississippi. . . .' Inasmuch as Mississippi is a low-lying state, this imagery revived the earlier metaphor of geographical transformation that King had quoted from Isaiah—'every valley shall be exalted'. Thus he brilliantly merged Biblical eschatology and the 'god-term' of freedom that, by now, was firmly identified with Jefferson and Lincoln.

King further improved Carey's conclusion by quoting a spiritual. King envisioned a day when whites would overcome the contradictions between American promise and American practice, and everyone would 'join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God, Almighty, We're free at last."' Through the word 'free', he again fused the slaves' desires with Isaiah's dramatic prophecy and the goals of Jefferson and Lincoln.

By singing 'America' and a spiritual at her 1939 concert, Anderson had similarly merged the slaves' desires with the goals of Jefferson, Lincoln and Christianity—an identification that essentially repeated the values appeals of Grimke and others. In 'The Negro and the Constitution', King remarked this identification by observing that, by singing 'America' and a spiritual, Anderson had precipitated a 'new baptism of liberty'. In 'I Have a Dream', he offered a strikingly parallel appeal.

James Cone, David Garrow, Lewis Baldwin and Keith D. Miller contend that King's religion, politics, ideas and eloquence stem from his immersion in the black church, not, as a generation of scholars has argued, from his graduate training in Euro-American philosophy and theology. Alexandra Alvarez, Robert Harrison and Linda Harrison, and Miller argue that 'I Have a Dream' reflects King's exposure to his father's folk preaching.

Clearly 'I Have a Dream' sprang not only from African-American folk sermons, but also from the black oratorical (and sometimes homiletic) tradition of Douglass, Garnet, Lyon and Grimke. At her 1939 concert Anderson refined their values appeals into what became a political ritual at the Lincoln Memorial. In a speech he gave at the age of fifteen, long before he enrolled in graduate school, King offered decidedly comparable appeals throughout and analysed Anderson's concert as an example of such appeals. In 'I Have a Dream', he re-enacted the political ritual that Anderson had begun and that he had interpreted when he was fifteen.

'I Have a Dream' did not succeed despite its 'historical self-consciousness' as one critic has claimed. Instead, 'I Have a Dream' triumphed because through it King perfected the values appeals that his black predecessors (and he himself) had standardized, stylized, formalized and ritualized.

'I Have a Dream' is an acutely paradoxical oration. It is scintillating. It is incandescent. It is nonpareil. But it is also brilliantly and profoundly conventional.