

# Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as Spiritual Leader

Andrea Pierce<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s spiritual leadership through his "I Have a Dream" speech. The paper explores the three characteristics of spiritual leadership as posed by Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership theory: vision, hope/faith and altruistic love. The research draws upon these characteristics through qualitative content analysis of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech to illustrate Dr. King's leadership as that of a spiritual leader. The research advances the spiritual leadership theory by establishing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a spiritual leader. Through the illustration of Dr. King's spiritual leadership, the characteristics of a spiritual leader are given tangible understanding.

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## 1. Introduction

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is one of most influential people of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; his contributions to modern society have changed the social course of American society. Through his mission for social justice and equality, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. became an icon. The leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is rooted in the peaceful protest movements instituted by Gandhi in India (McGuire & Hutchings, 2007). Through this illustration of Gandhi, King was able to incite social change through peaceful action to create awareness of the social disparity in the United States (McGuire & Hutchings, 2007). Through the historical context of King's 1968 "I Have a Dream" speech, it is evident of the monumental contribution King made to society.

The essence of spiritual leadership theory was developed by Fry (2003) to create an understanding for the need of spiritual awareness in the workplace. Because of the limited research on spiritual leadership, the purpose of this research is to build upon the present spiritual leadership theory by providing a qualitative study of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Limited research has been completed on Martin Luther King Jr. as a leader and even less research exists on the spiritual leadership of Martin Luther King Jr.

## 2. Spiritual Leadership Theory

Fry (2003) defines spiritual leadership as "comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (p. 695). Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership theory is developed as a source for organizational motivation as well as personal motivation. More specifically, Fry (2003) articulates a theory of spiritual leadership that recognizes the establishment of spirituality in the workplace. In many circumstances, individuals identify with a specific realm of spirituality. Regardless of personal religious preference, spirituality is integral part of personal belief and identity (Fry, 2003). Fry (2003) recognizes the power of leadership as a tool to connect with followers. Through identifying with followers' spirituality, Fry (2003) affirms that follower motivation will be higher as a result. The three components Fry (2003) develops as primary tenants of spiritual leadership theory are: vision, altruistic love and hope/faith. These core elements encompass spiritual leadership and spirituality in the workplace.

The composition of the spiritual leadership characteristics incorporates characteristics from leadership theory to include: transformational, path-goal, charismatic and transactional leadership theories (Fry, 2003). The purpose of developing an organizational vision is to provide followers with a clear path for the organization (Fry, 2003). The development of a clear organizational vision motivates followers to perform their jobs proficiently and with pride (Fry, 2003). Producing a strong organizational vision allows followers

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<sup>1</sup> Regent University, United States

to develop of sense of meaning and calling because of their connectedness with their organization (Fry, 2003). The term altruistic love goes beyond care and concern for an individual or group to include unconditional care and concern. Although Fry (2003) does not specifically reference a specific religion in spiritual leadership theory, the belief in a higher power, that loves without regard, is an influential component of altruistic love (Fry, 2003). Fry (2003) incorporates characteristics of ethical and authentic leadership in the development of spiritual leadership through altruistic love. The elements of trust, honesty, caring, self-control, loyalty and selflessness are integral to altruistic love (Fry, 2003; Yukl, 2010; Brown & Trevino, 2006); however, the scope of these tenants goes beyond their original meaning to include an unconditional element that is exclusive to altruistic love and spiritual leadership theory. Fry (2003) compels proponents of spiritual leadership theory to understand the nature of altruistic love as being more than simply *trust in leadership*. These combined elements are described by Fry (2003) as the following: hope describes the desire of fulfillment and faith affirms hope. Therefore, individuals must not only have hope, but faith in certainty of hope (Fry, 2003). Faith is derived from the feeling of absolute certainty. As in the altruistic love element of spiritual leadership theory, faith is an exclusive component to spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003). The authentic leadership components of trust and belief are founded in the hope/faith component of spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003; Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012); however, Fry (2003) explains the basis of the spiritual element of leadership is full and absolute trust. If followers have hope/faith in their leadership they will follow with absolute certainty.

The spiritual leadership characteristics of spiritual leadership theory implore followers to feel a sense of membership and calling in their organizations (Fry, 2003). The purpose of the development of spiritual leadership theory is to identify the connection spirituality has in the workplace through the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers (Fry, 2003). The clear vision of spiritual leadership provides a clear path for followers (Fry, 2003). Therefore, followers feel a sense of calling (Fry, 2003). The components of altruistic love and hope/faith build upon the notion of organizational membership. Altruistic love is described as absolute care and concern for another (Fry, 2003). From this meaning, Fry (2003) proposes that followers will feel a sense of belonging to their organization because their leadership unconditionally cares about their well-being. Further, Fry (2003) confirms that followers must have hope/faith in order to believe in altruistic love that leads to membership. The component of hope/faith describes absolute trust and conviction in belief (Fry, 2003). Therefore, followers feel absolute trust and understand that their leadership unconditionally values them which allow followers to feel a sense of belonging and membership to their organization (Fry, 2003). Fry (2003) postulates that spiritual leaders can incite organizational commitment through the characteristics of vision, altruistic love and hope/faith. Further, Fry (2003) affirms the increase in productivity in organizations due to follower membership and calling, which are mediating variables between the three core components of spiritual leadership and organizational commitment (Fry, 2003).

### **3. A Brief Historiography of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Leadership**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1950s and 1960s. Through his work, Dr. King is remembered as a pioneer for equality (Cone, 1992). A seminary trained minister, Godwin, Houghton, Neck and Mohan (2011) assert that Dr. King “developed his moral, spiritual and leadership values from the African-American’s most influential body, the church” (p. 24). As a Baptist minister, Dr. King fought within his community in Alabama to end the Jim Crow laws that prohibited African Americans from interacting with the white population (Cones, 1992).

In 1954, a breakthrough occurred with the U.S. Supreme Court’s historical ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*; therefore, finding it unconstitutional to segregate black and white school children (McGuire & Hutchings, 2007). However, the Southern states did not immediately desegregate schools; the Southern states allowed public schools to remain segregated until forced to desegregate schools (Cone, 1992). Following the desegregation of the school systems, the Montgomery Bus Boycott led to the desegregation of the public transportation system. Throughout the mid-50s and mid-60s, violence against African Americans increased as a means to limit the social change that has been instituted in the United States for over one hundred year (Cone, 1992). It was under Dr. King’s leadership that the African American community boycotted the public bus system in Montgomery for over a year until the Supreme Court deemed public segregation unconstitutional (Cone, 1992).

Immediately after the arrest of Rosa Parks on December 1, 1955, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was asked to serve as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), his first appointed leadership position (Garrow, 1987). As a result of the arrest of Rosa Parks, the Montgomery Improvement Association instituted a public bus boycott (Garrow, 1987; Glennon, 1991). The mission of the MIA was to desegregate the public buses in Montgomery, Alabama as opposed to having a white section at the front of the public bus and a black section at the back of the public bus (Garrow, 1987). Originally, Dr. King and the MIA assumed white officials would be willing to negotiate with the African-American community on desegregation, but after eleven months their public transportation system in Montgomery was still segregated (Garrow, 1987; Glennon, 1991). It was not until the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Browder v Gayle*, in June 1956, which deemed public transportation segregation unconstitutional did Montgomery desegregate the public transportation system (Glennon, 1991).

In 1957 Dr. King, alongside his wife Coretta Scott, instituted the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (McGuire & Hutchings, 2007). The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was built upon strong notions of nonviolence and peaceful negotiation (Laing, 2009). The mission of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference fostered the influence of nonviolence as a means of instituting social change (Laing, 2009). The purpose of the SCLC "was to challenge the White hegemony used to legitimize the oppression of African Americans." (p. 641) The SCLC, under the leadership of Dr. King, fought to reform policies and organizational constraints that oppressed African American people (Laing, 2009). As a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Alabama Council on Human Rights, Dr. King fought tirelessly to bring about social and economic change for African American people (Cone, 1992). At the urging of members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the student-led sit-ins and non-violent protests continued with the support of Dr. King (Carson, 2005).

It was the culmination of the events of the mid-1950s through the early 1960s that led to the March on Washington on August 28, 1963. The March on Washington celebrated "the one-hundredth anniversary of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and it protested ongoing racism in American society" (Vander Lei & Miller, 1999, p. 84). Initially, the "I Have a Dream" speech was intended to send a message of economic equality; however, Dr. King continued to be plagued by the violent outbreaks against African Americans during the Civil Rights era (Godwin et al., 2011). Therefore, the tone of the "I Have a Dream" speech shifted from economic prosperity to social equality and freedom (Godwin et al., 2011). Through this monumental moment on American history, one of the greatest social leaders delivered one of the most influential speeches of modern time.

Figure 2: Chronology of Major Events of Dr. King's Public Life

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|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 1954      | <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> U.S. Supreme Court ruling deeming segregation of public schools unconstitutional  |
| 1955      | Arrest of Rosa Parks, Montgomery, Alabama  |
| 1955      | Dr. King asked to serve as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)                                 |
| 1956      | <i>Browder v. Gayle</i> U.S. Supreme Court case ruling segregation of public transportation systems unconstitutional |
| 1957      | Founding of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)  |
| 1960-1961 | Freedom Rides  |
| 1963      | March on Washington; "I Have a Dream" speech delivered   |

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#### 4. Spiritual Leadership in Text

Through historical accounts of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s life, there is evidence supporting Dr. King as a spiritual leader. Through the examination of Dr. King's leadership through the lens of spiritual leadership, the full understanding of Dr. King's spiritual leadership is illustrated. Fry (2003) identifies three attributes of a spiritual leader: vision, hope/faith and altruistic love. Through the historical examination, the characteristics/attributes of spiritual leadership are exhibited through Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s life.

**4.1 Developing a vision.** It is with unequivocal evidence that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a visionary (Godwin et al., 2011; Franklin, 1990). The essence of Dr. King's visionary approach to social justice is summarized by Franklin (1990):

“King believed all of human society and reality itself to be interdependent and thoroughly interconnected. As a national leader, this perspective compelled him to see that the fate of the black community was ineluctably bound up with the overall health of the United States. And future prospects for peace within the U.S. republic were, in part, dependent upon the nation’s deliberate actions to empower and recompense black citizens. Unlike many parochial leaders of his time who were tribunes of justice for blacks alone, King was profoundly committed to an inclusive, public conception of justice.” (p. 58)

Franklin (1990) examines the goals of Dr. King’s later life as being thoroughly committed to an American identity; an identity no bound by color of one’s skin or religious affiliation. The concept of *justice*, mentioned often by Dr. King, involved the understanding of equality as King (1986) informs Dr. King’s values incorporated the essence of peace and human rights. King (1986) continues by explaining the Dr. King revered in current American society was not the same man the American public recognized during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Dr. King’s vision of equality, justice and moral obligation was in stark contrast to the values of the American society of the 1960s (King, 1986). Garrow (1981) examines the vision of Dr. King as threatening the values of American society by exploring its flaws. Garrow (1981) contends that the Civil Rights Movement was not only about the fight for equality, freedom and justice, but that the Civil Rights Movement also revealed American societal flaws in terms of racism, poverty, militarism and materialism. Further, the voice of Dr. King confirmed the systemic flaws of American society and through Dr. King’s vision, called for a dramatic reconstruction of the American society as a whole (Garrow, 1981).

**4.2 Articulating altruistic love.** The core of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s altruism is the legacy with which he left behind. Dr. King, in the midst of the Civil Rights movement, was not concerned about many worldly things; Dr. King was concerned about the well-being of his family and the movement towards African American equality in the United States (Garrow, 1987). Dr. King was often critical of himself as to ensure his speech was clear and his message was articulated (King, 1986). Further, the integrity with which Dr. King carried himself is to be commended given the numerous attempts on his life, violent and harassing acts in public as well as at his home (Garrow, 1987). Dr. King, though arrested, maintained a peaceful protest policy that was never violated indicating his integrity as a change agent (King, 1986). Dr. King’s influential leadership touched many lives throughout the two decades he was an active Civil Rights activist (King, 1986; Laing, 2009). Throughout much of his public appearances, Dr. King maintained integrity and continued to encourage peaceful opposition to overt injustices placed on African American citizens (Garrow, 1987). Further, Garrow (1987) explains Dr. King’s restlessness at home as he toiled through his influence in the Civil Rights Movement. Because of the number of threats on Dr. King’s life and the number of times he was arrested, there was always a private concern for the safety of his family; however, this private concern was never mentioned during his marches, speeches or any other public engagement (Garrow, 1987). Dr. King’s testament to integrity, humility, forgiveness and etc. are the foundational aspects of his altruistic nature.

**4.3 Finding Hope/Faith.** Carson (2005) explained the resilience of Dr. King during many periods of his life whereby he was imprisoned. Dr. King stood firm in his commitment to non-violent protests. After being arrested in Birmingham in 1962, Dr. King continued to influence the Civil Rights Movement and continued to be an influential leader. It has been hypothesized that Dr. King’s status as a leader increased during this incarcerated period primarily because of Dr. King’s written correspondence sent from his jail cell in Birmingham (Carson, 2005). The widely circulated correspondence Dr. King sent to eight clergymen, all of which incredibly critical of the nonviolent protest movement instituted by Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, explaining the nonviolent protest purpose because he stood between the “do-nothingism or the complacent and the hatred and despair of the black nationalist.” (p. 19)

Garrow (1987) captures the essence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s hope and faith during the Civil Rights Movement. Garrow (1987) identifies moments whereby Dr. King was emotional low and emotional high. In Garrow’s (1987) work on Dr. King, Garrow (1987) explores the essence of the spirit and leadership of Dr. King. Garrow (1987) identifies key moments in Dr. King’s life whereby the illustration of hope and faith is vividly pronounced. Dr. King describes the moment in his life whereby he finally began to trust in God totally (Garrow, 1987). This experience signifies the fulfillment of Dr. King’s spirituality as a minister and spiritual leader.

## **5. Method**

The study was conducted using the qualitative methodology of content analysis. The purpose of content analysis is to examine a social communication medium to create and understanding between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and spiritual leadership theory. Through content analysis, patterns and themes are observed in the "I Have a Dream" speech. These themes and patterns were analyzed to create an understanding for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s spiritual leadership qualities as defined in Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership theory.

**5.1 Data Collection: Text of the Speech.** The data collection process includes interpreting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. The data collection process includes reading the "I Have a Dream" speech as well as listening to the speech. Because content analysis seeks to understand the material, reading and listening to the speech will allow for a complete understanding. The data collection includes the gathering of specific trends and themes found in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.

## **6. Content Discussion of the "I Have a Dream" Speech**

There is clear acknowledgement that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech as one of the greatest public speeches in American history (Goodwin et al., 2011). Though he worked all night prior to the March on Washington, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. abandoned his carefully crafted written speech mid-way through delivering the "I Have a Dream" speech; therefore, speaking extemporaneously throughout the remaining half of the speech (Vander Lei and Miller, 1999). Alvarez (1988) explains the importance of the delivery of the speech as a medium for understanding the composition and message; if one does not understand the cultural context of the speech, the impact and message is not fully known. Therefore, the illustration of the "I Have a Dream" speech implores listeners to feel the plight of the African American. The cultural context of the "I Have a Dream" speech illustrates the significance of freedom in the African American community; the March on Washington took place on the anniversary of the Lincoln's signing of the Emancipation Proclamation (Vander Lei & Miller, 1999). Significant freedom events, in the African American community, were extremely popular; thus explaining the decision by Dr. King to have his March on Washington coincide with such a remarkable moment in history (Vander Lei & Miller, 1999). The acknowledgement of the significance of the day chosen to deliver the "I Have a Dream" speech is extremely important in understanding the overall significance of the speech to the African American community (Vander Lei & Miller, 1999). The delivery of the "I Have a Dream" speech on the Washington Mall in Washington D.C. on the anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by the Civil Rights leader of the African American community signified a great moment in history for all people, most importantly the African American community that continued to struggle with acts of persecution and violence. The African American community identifies Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, Vander Lei and Miller (1999) explains, as an oration honoring the promise of freedom while protesting racism. The famous African American rhetor, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., delivered a speech in just protest of civil inequality while persisting upon the promise of freedom. "Thus King's "I Have a Dream" finds precedent in speeches such as Frederick Douglass's "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" (Vander Lei & Miller, 1999, p. 85) which illustrates the insignificance of freedom to a people group that does not consider themselves free.

## **7. Content Analysis of the "I Have a Dream" Speech**

The implications from the content analysis of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech enlists spiritual leadership characteristics as well as supports Fry's (2003) model that spiritual leadership characteristics incite follower commitment and membership thus increasing organizational commitment. Through the content analysis of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech the following themes prevailed: vision, hope/faith, altruistic love, membership and calling.

**7.1 Vision.** Fry (2003) provides a firm definition of vision consisting of five key elements: Broad appeal to key stakeholders, defines destination and journey, reflects high ideals, Encourages hope/faith and establishes a standard of excellence. There are two primary sub-themes that correlate with the aforementioned definitions: dream and freedom. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. eludes to both sub-themes a total of twenty-eight times throughout the duration of the "I Have a Dream" speech. Through expressing the

his vision, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. provides a painted picture for his audience as he eloquently describes the plight against African American peoples. In one of the most famous passages of the speech, Dr. King cries out "I have a dream today!" as he continues forth through exclaiming:

"I have a dream that one day the nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed. I have a dream that 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 the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that 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 are not judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today."

In this significant passage of the text, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s language appeals to key stakeholders as evidenced by the call for equality across racial barriers: "I have a dream that the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." Further evidence of this key passage illustrates the essence of a vision through illustrating events that were unfolding. As evidenced by the historical context of Dr. King's March on Washington and his "I Have a Dream" speech, the African American community was under increasing persecution. Therefore, the vision of having "the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners eating at the table of brotherhood" suggests a standard of excellence and reflects high ideals for the society as a whole. Secondly, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. seeks to incite societal revolution through his message by proclaiming, "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed." Through these illustrations, there is a clear understanding of the vision of the Civil Rights Movement, under Dr. King's leadership, which is equality. Further, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., through his visionary language, encourages hope/faith in the African American community through evoking a sense of commonality as well as defines the journey of the Civil Rights Movement as he states, "I have a dream that one day my four children will live in a nation where they are not judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. elaborates further by evoking vision through his encouraging language to illustrate the importance of freedom:

"Let freedom ring! 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 slopes of California. Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi."

In this segment of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, the illustration strongly reflects the characteristics of vision as explained by Fry's (2003) definition. Through this speech, Dr. King evokes a sense of hope/faith. Dr. King enlists a visionary approach as he exclaims the power of freedom at every corner of the United States. Through this exclamation of freedom, Dr. King defines the journey and destination as well as establishes a high standard of excellence through the exclamation and power of freedom.

Figure 3: Fry's (2003) Vision Components

| <b>Fry's (2003) Vision</b>           | <b>Dr. King's "Dream" Components</b>   | <b>Dr. King's "Freedom" Components</b> |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Broad Appeal to Stakeholders         | The sons of former slaves and former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood  |  |
| Defines destination and journey      | I have a dream that one day my four children will live in a nation where they are not judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character  | Let freedom ring!                      |
| Reflects high ideals                 | The sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners eating at the table of brotherhood   | Let freedom ring!                      |
| Encourages hope/faith                | I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed.<br>I have a dream that one day my four children will live in a nation where they are not judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. | Let freedom ring!                      |
| Establishes a standard of excellence | The sons of former slaves and former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood  |  |

### **7.2 Hope/Faith**

Fry (2003) outlines five primary characteristics associated with the hope/faith element of spiritual leadership. Fry (2003) outlines the following descriptors for hope/faith: endurance perseverance, do what it takes Stretch goals, and expectation of reward/victory. Through the content analysis of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, the results indicate the hope/faith. Through Dr. King's exhilarating speech, the power of hope and faith is seen through the utilization of language that implores endurance, perseverance and victory. The clear expression of endurance is expressed through Dr. King's promise to return to South with a renewed spirit. Through Dr. King's hopeful mission of equality, Dr. King promises to "continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering [that] is redemptive." Through the expression of endurance, Dr. King exhibits an attitude of promise, hope and faith for a better future for the African American community. Through using language that exudes feelings of freedom, this allows for an expectation of reward and victory. Therefore, through statements such as "the invigorating autumn of freedom and equality," there is clear language of an expectation of reward and victory through the illustration of freedom for the African American community. Dr. King's usage of language that compels one to endure and persevere illustrates components of Fry's (2003) characteristics of hope/faith. Dr. King informs his listeners that he, too, is enduring as he describes returning to the South with faith of change. Continuing, Dr. King instructs his listeners to "continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive" suggesting to continue to fight for justice. Through the endurance of Dr. King, as illustrated through the text of the "I Have a Dream" speech, Dr. King also instructs his followers to persevere as he states, "with this faith we will be able to work together, pray together, to struggle, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day." Through this powerful and empowering statement, followers gained the strength to continue one; the perseverance to continue the fight. In addition, this articulate statement confirms that followers must do what it takes to continue the fight for freedom as Dr. King instructs, "to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together..." Through endurance and perseverance, Dr. King implores his followers to stretch their goals by exclaiming, "We refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt;" thus explaining injustice is unacceptable. Continuing this exploration, Dr. King pronounces, "The momentous decree came as a great beacon of light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared by the flames of withering injustice," furthering the concept of injustice being unacceptable and intolerable any longer.

Figure 4: Fry's (2003) Hope/Faith Components

| Fry's (2003) Hope/Faith                     | Dr. King's Hope   | Dr. King's Faith   |
|---|---|--|
| Endurance                                   |   | This is the faith with which I return to the South   |
| Perseverance                                |   | Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive<br>With this faith we will be able to work together, pray together, to struggle, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. |
| Do What it Takes                            | With this faith we will be able to work together, pray together, to struggle, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. |  |
| Stretch Goals                               | We refuse to believe the bank of justice is bankrupt  |  |
| Expectation of Reward/Victory               | We hold these truths self-evident that all men are created equal.   |  |
| Invigorating autumn of freedom and equality |   |  |

**7.3 Altruistic Love.** Through the explanation of altruistic love, Fry (2003) explains the importance of this characteristic of spiritual leadership as defining “culture, core values and reason for being.”(p. 711) It is altruistic love, Fry (2003) references in spiritual leadership theory that creates a reason for followers to follow. This essence, there are means for which the spiritual leader implores followers to follow, primarily through unconditional care and concern for the well-being of followers (Fry, 2003). Therefore, Fry (2003) outlines the following characteristics of altruistic love: forgiveness, kindness, integrity, empathy/compassion, honesty, patience, courage, trust/loyalty, and humility. From these core identifiers of altruistic love as outlined by Fry (2003), the altruistic nature of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is illustrated through his “I Have a Dream” speech. As previously discussed, the nature of the Civil Rights Movement was embedded with historical injustice of the African American people; therefore, the purpose of the Civil Rights Movement is one of liberation. Through the spiritual leadership of Dr. King, the altruistic behavior is illustrated in his “I Have a Dream speech.” Foundationally, there is an overall sense of altruistic behavior from Dr. King’s leadership as he proclaims, “the Negro community must not lead to distrust all of white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidence by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny.” From the tenants of altruistic behavior, Dr. King influenced followers to forgive and to trust other people, specifically white people. Relevant to the Civil Rights Movement and topics pertaining to race relations, the influence of breaking down racial boundaries is strongly supported by Dr. King. As evidenced by his life as well as his influential speech, the message of clear forgiveness and trust is a foundational tone of Dr. King’s leadership.

Altruistic components of humility and integrity are exhibited in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Through the examination of the phrase, “We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline.” Through the historical context of Dr. King’s leadership, there is a clear tone of promoting peaceful protests. The same message is echoed during the delivery of the “I Have a Dream” speech. Dr. King’s message is clear: act with dignity and discipline of which the word *dignity* can be used to describe humility. In the same sense, the word *discipline* can be used to describe integrity. Dr. King’s message of integrity and humility is exemplified by his purposeful intent to lead a nation of people to justice.

Further, Dr. King's message of kindness is one that fosters the understanding of the need for peaceful action as he states, "we must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence." Through this, Dr. King focuses on acts of peace and kindness towards others as others should not be injured as a result of violent, chaotic protests.

Though vastly uplifting, Dr. King's message of perseverance and endurance are empowered through the message of integrity, humility, forgiveness and trust. However, there are elements of Dr. King's message that are as uplifting as they are acknowledging the serious injustices being placed on African Americans during the Civil Rights era. In examining the concepts of honesty, empathy/compassion, courage, and patience, direct language is utilized. Dr. King states many statements that acknowledge the mistreatment of the African American community. In direct language, Dr. King honestly states, "The Negro is not free." The great moment of the March on Washington, celebrating the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves in the United States and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. exclaims that there is no freedom. Though many African Americans understand the persecution they live, their leader speaks these truths in front of hundreds of thousands of people signifying a call for action. As a tone of empathy and compassion for the African American community, Dr. King expounds, "The Negro is still languishing in the corner of American society and finds himself an exile of his own land." Further, Dr. King implores his followership to be courageous because "there will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights." Dr. King, though encouraging of his followership warns them to be patient; however, there will come a day when "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." The promise of a new tomorrow is exhibited through the action of Dr. King's altruistic message.

Figure 5: Fry's (2003) Altruistic Love

| <b>Fry's (2003 Altruistic Love</b> | <b>Dr. King's Altruistic Love</b>  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Forgiveness                        | The Negro community must not lead to distrust all of 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.   |
| Kindness                           | We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence.   |
| Integrity                          | We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline.  |
| Empathy/ Compassion                | We must not be guilty of wrongful deeds.<br>The Negro is still languishing in the corner of American society and finds himself an exile of his own land.   |
| Honesty                            | America has written the Negro people a bad check.  |
| Patience                           | The Negro is not free.<br>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. |
| Courage                            | There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights.   |
| Trust/Loyalty                      | The Negro community must not lead is to distrust all of 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.  |
| Humility                           | We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline.  |

## 9. Conclusion

The content analysis of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech illustrates a significant spiritual leader. Fry (2003) illustrates the key characteristics of a spiritual leader through outlining three primary qualities: articulating a vision, having hope/faith and illustrating altruistic love. These qualities are practical characteristics of Dr. King's leadership as a spiritual leader during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Throughout this tumultuous era in United States history, significant strides were made towards equality for the African American people based upon the unwavering spiritual leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Specifically exemplified, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s spiritual leadership is exhibited in his March on Washington address that has been termed, the "I have a Dream" speech. This moment in American history is highlighted as a movement towards ending a torrid history of persecution against the African American community. In this address, true to his nature of being a spiritual leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. addresses the crowd and the nation by providing the finest example of spiritual leadership. Through the assessment of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, the essence of Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership is seen through the powerful example of articulating a vision, encouraging hope/faith and altruistic love.

The content analysis of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech can be used as a tool for understanding Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership theory. Through the content analysis of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, there is a practical example of spiritual leadership. Because of the importance of spirituality in the workplace and other facets of everyday life, the significance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s spiritual leadership can provide an example for current spiritual leaders as well as those seeking to understand the purpose and power of spiritual leadership. Through the content analysis of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, there is a testament of each facet of spiritual leadership. Through the illustration of a practical spiritual leader, the terms *vision*, *hope/faith*, and *altruistic love* are shown to exist beyond a basic definition; through the content analysis of Dr. King's speech, there is a practical understanding for each spiritual leadership characteristic. Therefore, the significance of Dr. King's life and legacy continues to be influential and allows for a clear illustration of a true spiritual leader.

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#### **Appendix A**

"I Have a Dream" speech text, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., August 28, 1963:

"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. 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 quick sands 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 30 "I Have a Dream" Speech as a Tool for Teaching Transformational Leadership and Vision 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 father's 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 slopes 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 molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring. And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"