

Excerpts From “I HAVE A DREAM”

On August 28, 1963, Dr. King led 250,000 civil rights supporters in the March on Washington. Their peaceful demonstration demanded the end of racism and full rights and freedoms for all Americans. Dr. King’s address from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial was a defining moment of the Civil Rights Movement and our nation’s history.

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...

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—yes, black men as well as white men—would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now...Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy...Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God’s children...

I say to you today my friends—so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, 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 the table of brotherhood.

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

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification—one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and 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.

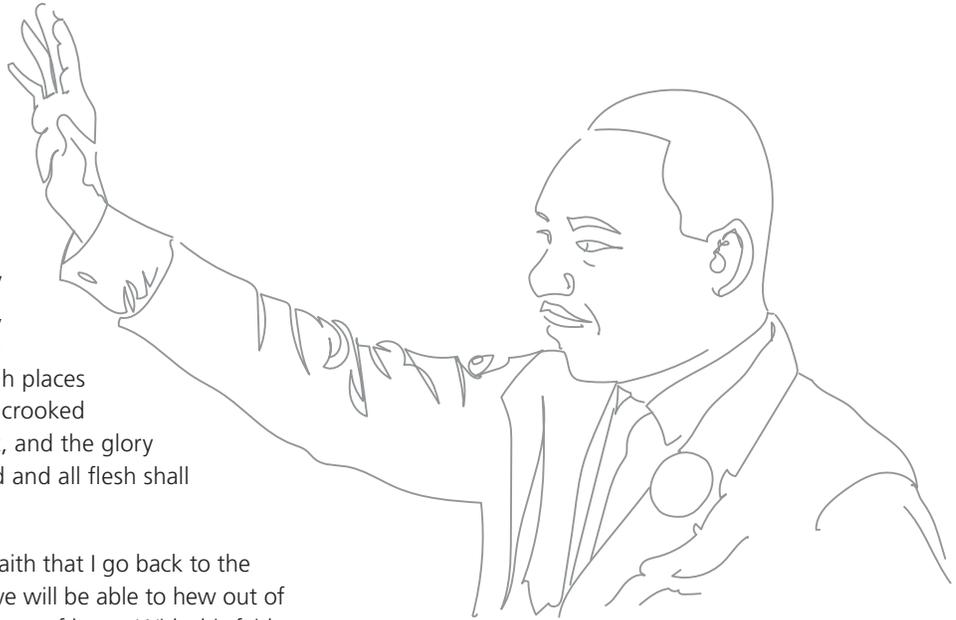
This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will 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, 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 Pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!"

And, if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

And, 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 snow-capped 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, and when we allow 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!"

Excerpts From “WHAT IS YOUR LIFE’S BLUEPRINT?”

On October 26, 1967, Dr. King spoke to a group of middle school students at Barrett Junior High School in Philadelphia.

I want to ask you a question, and that is:
“What is your life’s blueprint?”

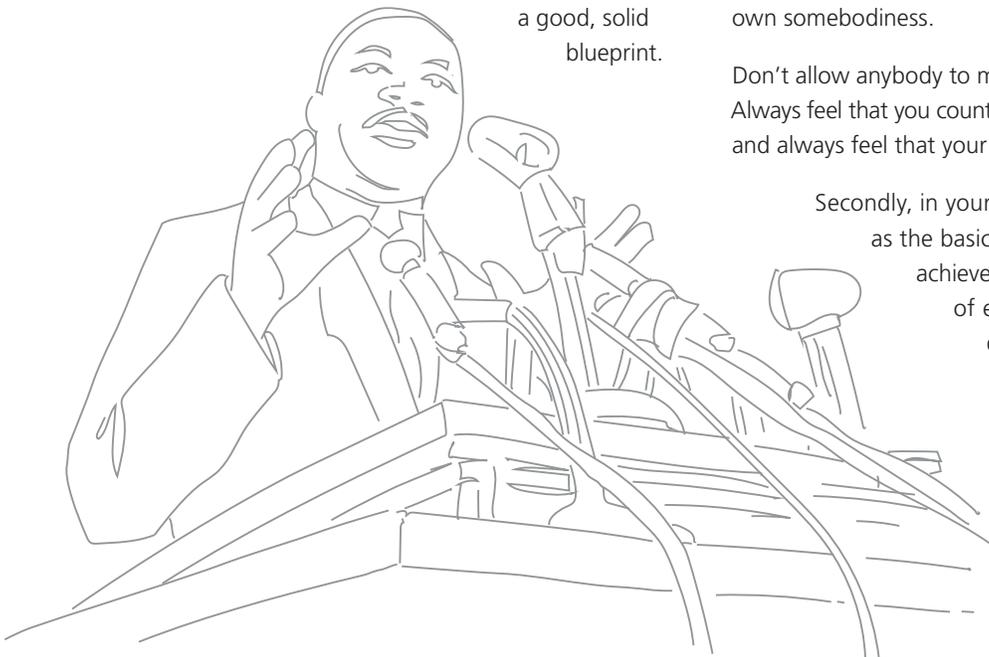
Whenever a building is constructed, you usually have an architect who draws a blueprint, and that blueprint serves as the pattern, as the guide, and a building is not well erected without a good, solid blueprint.

Now each of you is in the process of building the structure of your lives, and the question is whether you have a proper, a solid and a sound blueprint.

I want to suggest some of the things that should begin your life’s blueprint. Number one in your life’s blueprint, should be a deep belief in your own dignity, your worth and your own somebodiness.

Don’t allow anybody to make you feel that you’re nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth, and always feel that your life has ultimate significance.

Secondly, in your life’s blueprint you must have as the basic principle the determination to achieve excellence in your various fields of endeavor. You’re going to be deciding as the days, as the years unfold what you will do in life—what your life’s work will be. Set out to do it well.



And I say to you, my young friends, doors are opening to you—doors of opportunities that were not open to your mothers and your fathers—and the great challenge facing you is to be ready to face these doors as they open.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great essayist, said in a lecture in 1871, “If a man can write a better book or preach a better sermon or make a better mousetrap than his neighbor, even if he builds his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door.”

This hasn’t always been true—but it will become increasingly true, and so I would urge you to study hard, to burn the midnight oil. I would say to you, don’t drop out of school. I understand all the sociological reasons, but I urge you that in spite of your economic plight, in spite of the situation that you’re forced to live in—stay in school.

And when you discover what you will be in your life, set out to do it as if God Almighty called you at this particular moment in history to do it.

Don’t just set out to do a good job. Set out to do such a good job that the living, the dead or the unborn couldn’t do it any better.

If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music, sweep streets like Leontyne Price sings before the Metropolitan Opera.

Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well.

If you can’t be a pine at the top of the hill, be a shrub in the valley. But, be the best little shrub on the side of the hill.

Be a bush if you can’t be a tree.

If you can’t be a highway, just be a trail.

If you can’t be a sun, be a star.

For it isn’t by size that you win or fail.

Be the best of whatever you are.