

Instead of just reading MLK's speech, you can also watch the speech on youtube. It's a much better way of experiencing the speech than just reading it. Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I47Y6VHc3Ms>

In 1963, during a march on Washington, Martin Luther King Jr. gave the most iconic speech of The Civil Rights Movement. Even if you haven't read the entire speech before, you are likely familiar with some passages from it.

The Civil Rights Movement timeline of events can be found here: <https://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement/civil-rights-movement-timeline>

2020 has shown us again how far we still need to go in order to finally root out systemic racism in our country. The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis was a wake-up call to so many white people who have been ignoring what black people have always known: the American experience is simply not the same for people of color as it is for white Americans.

As you can see from the picture of me on blackboard, I am about as white as a person can be. Because of this, I have been in many spaces where other white people say racist things to me, assuming that I feel the same way. When I first moved to Beaumont after getting hired at Lamar in 2006, I went to look for an apartment. One of the apartment managers said to me, "This is a nice apartment complex. It's mostly white." I attended college in a small town in Minnesota, and my best friend was a black male. On two separate occasions, while we were driving in his truck, a police officer pulled us over to ask if I was okay. I will never know what it feels like to be black in America, and I only have second-hand experiences to give me a tiny taste of what it must feel like to deal with systemic racism every single day.

Martin Luther King Jr. speaks here about the dreams he had for a better America, dreams that he even died for when he was assassinated in 1968. Before his death, he wrote in letters that he knew there was a chance someone would kill him. White people wanted him to just stop speaking out and "wait" for his equality. Just like white people asked black athletes to stop their nonviolent protests, black people in the 1960s were told over and over again to just be patient. White people in the 1960s spoke of MLK in the same way so many white people spoke of Colin Kaepernick while he was engaging in his own peaceful protest. It was only after the cop in Minneapolis knelt on George Floyd's neck for almost nine minutes that most white people finally started to listen.

MLK's speech specifically references why black Americans should not have to wait for the basic rights that they deserve.

#### Assignment 14

Answer the following questions with at least a paragraph for each question.

1. What words or phrases are repeated in the speech? What is the significance of repeating these things?
2. Martin Luther King Jr. starts the speech with the signing of The Emancipation Proclamation (the document that set all slaves free). Why does he start here? What is the significance of the speech being delivered one-hundred years later?
3. Why does he urge the listeners to not use physical violence to get their rights? How difficult do you think it was for civil rights activists to protest without using violence? (You might want to read a little about the history of sit-ins).
4. What are some of the specific dreams King refers to? How likely do you think these things seemed in the 1960s?
5. In what ways do we still see systemic racism today? (You can use personal examples). Do you think America will ever achieve equality for all people?