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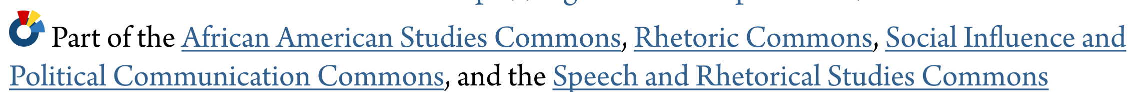
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AUGUST 28, 1963: BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH COLLECTIVE DISCOURSE

by

Jennifer Lynn Nestelberger

Bachelor of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2010

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

Department of Communication Studies
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs
The Graduate College

University of Nevada Las Vegas
May 2012

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August 28, 1963: Building Community through Collective Discourse

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May 2012

ABSTRACT

August 28, 1963: Building Community through Collective Discourse

by

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The August 28, 1963 March on Washington is often remembered primarily for Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, which serves as the pinnacle of civil rights movement oratory. This thesis, in contrast, examines speeches of the leaders of the "Big Six" organizations that preceded King's well-known words in order to shed light on the complexities of the movement and the outcomes that can result from meaningful dissent. Occurring at a time of division, the March emerged as a symbol of hope for change in the nation. The addresses of the day reflected this hope and helped build a sense of community, not only through their words, but also through the embodiment of a community working together to achieve progress. This thesis argues that through its materialization as a dynamic spectacle, the arrangement of the discourse at the March, and its iconic representation of desired change, the March on Washington constructed community among civil rights activists. This sense of community, in turn, helped urge subsequent action and provided an identity for the African-American community.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The American public remembers August 28, 1963 as one of the most significant moments in the civil rights movement and in the history of the United States. On this day, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom took place as a monumental demonstration urging social change. This event exhibited the powerful ability of collective action to alter the course of American history. One hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, approximately 250,000 people gathered in the nation's capital. The majority of marchers were middle class African-Americans, a quarter were white and about 15% were students. Altogether, they comprised the largest and best-remembered demonstration in American history.[1] Along with the abundance of people comprising the physical audience, media from all over the world captured this historic moment. Media coverage surpassed that of John F. Kennedy's inaugural address just years before.[2] This unprecedented attention to the March formed not only an enormous audience, but a diverse collection of listeners who would be captivated by the messages conveyed during the March. Six civil rights organizations--Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the National Urban League--united to arrange the March. While each of these organizations had unique goals, they agreed that the nation needed to undergo significant change if it were to live up to its Constitutional values and promises.

The March on Washington is often remembered as the symbol of the civil rights movement. "To many Americans, the March on Washington in August of 1963 *was* the civil rights movement."[3] Moreover, within this symbol is the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" address. Although ten speeches were delivered by leaders of the varying civil rights, religious, and labor groups, King's address became not only the most praised of the March but one of the most highly acclaimed speeches in American history, pushing the others to the margins of American memory.[4] The primary impression of the vast majority of Americans is that the March was the event in which King delivered his masterpiece. King has been elevated into an iconic representation of the civil rights movement which obscures not only the collective memory of the March but the movement as whole, which was "built on the courageous and determined efforts of thousands upon thousands of everyday people."[5] Some of these people include the other speakers present at the March. Although not as widely recognized as King's, the speeches that preceded his address and the March merit more attention than they have been given. The March on Washington ought to be remembered as more than simply the event that allowed King to portray his dream. As a mass protest and organization of hundreds of thousands of Americans, this collective action represents the power that social movements can have and the outcomes that can result from meaningful dissent.

Numerous works have been written about the March with the dominant focus of nearly all being King's oration.[6] However, as Professor Garth Pauley points out, through examining the other speeches of the day a better understanding can be reached about the experiences of civil rights activists at a critical moment in history, the differences between the various civil rights organizations, and the nature of protest as a form of

political action.[7] Pauley suggests that at least one other address at the March merits attention, and he chose to apply that attention to John Lewis' address. Through his analysis, he demonstrates the desirability of looking beyond King to understand the richness of the March. While Pauley provides a thorough examination of Lewis' speech, further study of six of the speeches that day, representing the "Big Six" organizations,[8] provides valuable insight into the complexities of the March and the movement. Given the status, quality, and success of these organizations that shared the stage with King that day, at least comparable attention to their words is warranted. Following Pauley's lead, the purpose of this project is to examine other speeches delivered on August 28th. For as Pauley's analysis reveals, looking at additional performances provides a more complete accounting of the March's rhetorical complexities, than does the concentration on King alone.

The remainder of this chapter includes five sections. The first introduces the rhetorical experience. The second explores the situational factors that led to the March on Washington and how the March was organized. A literature review consisting of an overview of social movement rhetoric, protest rhetoric, and an orientation to previous studies of the March follows contextual details. Next is a description of the analytical approach in which I discuss the concepts of community building, dynamic spectacle, arrangement, and iconicity as the method of analysis. Finally, the concluding section outlines the organization of the project.

Rhetorical Experience

Pauley's examination of an address at the March other than King's suggests that looking at additional texts of the day may be similarly illuminating. While King's address generally attracts the most attention, even cursory examination of the other speeches demonstrates that they deserve more consideration than they receive. Although overshadowed by King, A. Philip Randolph of BSCP, John Lewis of SNCC, Walter Reuther of the United Automobile Workers of America, Floyd McKissick of CORE, Whitney M. Young, Jr. of the National Urban League, and Roy Wilkins of NAACP delivered speeches that abound with rhetorical features that call for further examination.

A. Philip Randolph delivered the first address of the day. While Randolph's interest was largely economic, his address at the March reflected a general desire for social justice for all. John Lewis, national chairman of SNCC, delivered an address demonstrating his discontent with the Kennedy administration's proposal for changes in legislation. Walter Reuther of the UAW was the only white labor leader to speak at the March and spoke for the labor organization's belief that the only way freedom would be achieved would be if jobs were available to all. In his address, Reuther articulated his position that the struggle for civil rights should be the struggle of every American citizen. Floyd McKissick of CORE delivered an address written by James Farmer who was also a member of CORE but was in jail at the time of the March for "disturbing the peace" during demonstrations in Plaquemine, Louisiana. Farmer's address, delivered by McKissick, revealed his commitment to nonviolence through the use of several rhetorical features. Whitney Young of the National Urban League delivered an address at the March depicting a common goal of unity among the organization and American citizens. Roy

Wilkins, executive secretary of NAACP, delivered an address in which he urged lawmakers "to be as brave as our sit-ins and our marchers."[9] While each organization differed in its approaches for social change, common threads were apparent among speakers and the collective message at the March reflected a sense of cohesion and community.

The speeches delivered before King's "I Have a Dream" address contain a variety of rhetorical features that deserve examination. The current study analyzes these speeches in order to gain a wider perspective of the March on Washington than previous reviews that mainly included coverage of King's "I Have a Dream" speech provide. Through this analysis, the project achieves a more comprehensive view of the event, the prominent organizations of the day, and the rhetorical strategies employed to construct community. To comprehend the necessity for community building and the influence of the rhetorical tactics employed, a preliminary observation of the contextual factors is needed.

Social and Political Context of the March

The March occurred during a time of friction for the United States. It served as a response to the extensive division in the nation that resulted from the socially constructed identity of African-Americans as an inferior race. Frustrated by the unfair treatment they had long endured, African-Americans began to express their dissatisfaction publicly. Yet they soon realized that traditional methods of public communication were not enough to accomplish their goals. Thus, they began to use nondiscursive means to convey their discontent and redefine the inferior identity given to them by whites.[10] John W. Bowers, Donovan J. Ochs, Richard J. Jensen, and David P. Schulz contend that going beyond the

normal discursive means of persuasion is a crucial feature of social movement rhetoric. They assert that agitators must use forms of persuasion apart from just verbal appeals. As might be expected, African-Americans were faced with the difficult task of trying to have their voices heard. "Shunned by the political parties, and rejected in the courts, blacks had to look outside the normal channels of democracy to press their cause."[11] One such channel was the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Explored here is a brief overview of the history of inferiority for African-Americans that prompted the March, followed by the organization and coordination behind the event.

The Struggle for Identity

Beginning with slavery and continuing through the mid-1950s, the dominant definition of African-Americans in the United States was one developed by whites and one that served the interests of whites.[12] This inferior conceptualization began with proponents of slavery who established African-Americans as subhuman. While this designation subsided after much dissension and time, attempts to confirm the professed second-class status of blacks persisted. Even after the abolition of slavery, African-Americans were treated as lesser beings.

During Reconstruction, upon losing "the right to own blacks outright," Southerners sought to establish other forms of domination. Southerners in particular tried to preserve this definition. Professor emeritus of communication at University of Georgia, Cal Logue, explains that the language of southern whites, from the Reconstruction period through the civil rights movement, was designed to define African-Americans around three assumptions, "that blacks were barbaric, immoral, and incapable

of self-government."[13] Blacks were represented as passive and dependent on the paternalism of whites, and this representation was long accepted by white Americans and affected African-Americans' self-images.[14] They began to believe the image projected upon them by whites and often saw themselves as second-class citizens. Kerran Sanger asserts, "Because of their experiences in white America, first as slaves, later as people free only in the most literal sense of no-longer-in-actual-irons, blacks in America were heirs to a grim legacy."[15] They were rejected at almost every opportunity for advancement. They were denied a decent education, the opportunity for jobs due to lack of education and discrimination, and the right to vote and participate in the democratic process.[16]

With the vast repudiation of African-Americans as equals came the impression among blacks that they were, in fact, inferior to whites. They began to experience a considerable amount of self-doubt, and, as a result, blacks as a group had an immense deficiency in their self-definitions and perceptions of their worth. A recognition of this lack of self prompted Chief Justice Earl Warren to note that this definition produced in young minorities "a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone."[17] However, in the years leading to the civil rights movement, African-Americans began to "acknowledge the extent to which they had adopted this white definition in spite of the limitations it placed on them."[18] They realized that the acceptance of this definition of self was crippling, yet this recognition also allowed them to understand that just as their self-worth had been prescribed to them by whites through words and actions, they too could just as effectively change that definition through their own language and behaviors. Gary S.

Selby explains that this conflict between divergent meanings is a defining characteristic of social movements. He contends that social movements are involved in a symbolic struggle over meaning and interpretation. He cites William A. Gamson, professor of Sociology at Boston College, who asserts, "One can view social movement actors as engaged in a symbolic contest over which meaning will prevail."[19] Civil rights activists realized that they needed to abandon the societal representation of their race and replace it with a self-definition that would allow them to move forward in their country.[20] A particular way in which activists began to redefine their identity was through the activism seen in the civil rights movement.

A variety of types of protest began to take place throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, such as bus boycotts, sit-ins, and Freedom Rides, and opened the possibilities for communication among activists throughout the movement. However, while activism spread in the nation, so too did aggressive reactions from the opposition. Violence was especially prominent in the South where pressure hoses and police dogs were used to stop protestors. More on the turbulence in the nation follows in Chapter Two; however, it is important to note that both the growing activism and the increasingly violent responses to these demonstrations led to the proposal for a massive protest at the capital as an attempt to generate change.

Organizing the March

A. Philip Randolph proposed the idea for a march on Washington to end discrimination against African-Americans. Randolph called upon the nation's leading civil rights organizations for support and to attempt to get Kennedy's approval for the

March.[21] Randolph chose civil rights activist and organizer, Bayard Rustin to coordinate the plans behind the March. As plans for the March developed, Randolph gained the cooperation of several groups with varying agendas and perspectives on how to secure jobs and freedom for African-Americans.[22] At the end of January 1963, Rustin and two associates, Norm Hill and Tom Kahn, prepared a detailed memo for Randolph that proposed a two-day "mass descent" upon Washington with a target figure of 100,000 marchers. Some of the goals included drawing public attention to: the economic inferiority of African-Americans, the need to create more jobs for all Americans, integration in the fields of education, housing, transportation and public accommodation, and the wider aim of a broad and fundamental program of economic justice.[23] With these goals in mind, the nation's major civil rights leaders gathered to discuss their plans.

Rustin and the leaders of each organization worked diligently to have the March unfold smoothly as thousands of supporters prepared to march on the nation's capital. Greatly differing from the protests that preceded it, the March on Washington occurred without any confrontation or violent incidents.[24] It was remembered as a day that stood out from the hostile demonstrations seen previously. The *New York Times* reported that "for many the day seemed an adventure, a long outing in the late summer sun--part liberation from home, part Sunday School picnic, part political convention, part fish-fry."[25] The effort behind the March often goes unnoticed while the image of the March itself is etched into the American public memory as a symbol of the civil rights movement. Several rhetorical tactics can be observed when examining the discourse of the March, including the event as a dynamic spectacle, the arrangement of the speeches at the March, and the event as an iconic representation of community building and agency

within the community. These tactics warrant further study to recognize more fully how the collaboration of the disparate civil rights organizations came together to form the March and construct a sense of community. To understand the principles behind these strategies, a literature review of social movement rhetoric, the rhetoric of protest, and a review of previous studies of the March on Washington follows.

Literature Review

A critical analysis should contribute to an existing body of knowledge and research. In order to situate the current project within the accumulation of existing scholarship and elucidate the rationale for this project, an overview of previous works on the subject is laid out.

Social Movement Rhetoric

Rhetorical analyses often emphasize as their primary focus single texts spoken by single rhetors. This approach can provide valuable details about the process of persuasion through public discourse; however, as some scholars contend, the scope of rhetorical study should be broadened. Specifically, Leland M. Griffin asserts that studies should go beyond examining individual speeches and "that we pay somewhat less attention to the single speaker and more to speakers."[26] He maintains that the study of public address outside of the biographical should be encouraged and that rhetorical critics ought to extend their analyses to movements as well. Since Griffin's call for further analysis, subsequent social movement study has flourished and demonstrated that such study is a worthwhile endeavor.

With the expansion of the scope of rhetorical scholarship comes a greater variety of points on which critics may focus their analyses. The range of rhetorical strategies employed in social movements supplies the critic with an extensive selection of possible methods of analysis. In order to generate change, social movement supporters use a variety of methods to communicate their purpose. Activists can use speeches, demonstrations, protests, pamphlets, language, images, etc. to demonstrate their purpose and attempt to persuade audiences. Each of these actions signifies something about the movement's objectives and its desire for social progress and provides a point of study for the critic. While several strategies are available to activists, the study of social movements often centers on the symbolic behaviors that make movements rhetorical.

Robert S. Cathcart asserts that movements are inherently symbolic and contain a multitude of rhetorical components signifying their cause. He contends that the study of a social movement should center around "the tokens, symbols, and transactions which unite or separate people who organize to produce change."[27] Movements are built and maintained through language, both verbal and nonverbal. The use of language in movements is strategically employed and brings about identification of an individual with the movement.[28] Cathcart asserts that the rhetorical form of movements give their study rationale and purpose. Through the rhetorical study of a movement's language and symbolic behavior, an understanding about the particular movement studied and about movements in general can be reached.

Charles J. Stewart additionally asserts that the rhetorical analysis of movements often entails observing the symbolism behind the movement. He maintains that social movements must describe the change they desire and what should be done to achieve that

change.[29] Each movement must "explain, defend, and sell its program for change"[30] and movement members often do so through symbolic behaviors. Such actions are seen, according to Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith, in confrontational acts such as marches, sit-ins, demonstrations, and "discourse featuring disruption, obscenity, and threats."[31] Scott and Smith assert that critics should observe the use of confrontation as a tactic for gaining attention to the movement. They explain that the rhetorical behaviors of movement activists are studied by critics to comprehend how the movement attempted to justify their sense of rightness and how they created a sense of guilt in others, particularly the opposition.[32] Studying the ways in which they attempt to drive change reveals significant insight into the values of the movement as well as how they fit into the larger culture in which they develop. Furthermore, Scott and Smith argue that studying the symbolic behaviors of movements may "inform us of the essential nature of discourse itself as human action."[33] This allows us to understand the rhetorical strategies employed in movements and how they correspond to subsequent efforts. Since Scott and Smith contend that confrontation is a useful means of examination for social movement studies, an observation of the rhetoric of protest follows.

The Rhetoric of Protest

To comprehend the strategies utilized during the March on Washington, a better understanding of the rhetoric of protest is in order. The rhetoric of social movements develops in response to dissatisfaction with prevailing social norms, practices, and constraints.[34] This discontent leads to a desire for change and a variety of methods to bring about this change. Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne discuss how

movement activists adapt strategically to the situations they confront and employ rhetoric that is often directed outward.[35] This outward projection of discourse attempts to influence audiences outside of the social movement to challenge the existing unfair practices and to ultimately result in political, social, economic, religious, or intellectual change. Studying the rhetorical attempts to challenge the accepted social structure can lead to a better grasp of how movements and activists aim to persuade and generate social change. Moreover, Leland Griffin explains that historical movements usually occur when, at some time in the past

> men have become dissatisfied with some aspect of their environment, they desire change — social, economic, political, religious, intellectual, etc.— and they make efforts to alter their environment; eventually, their efforts result in some degree of success or failure, the desired change is, or is not, effected, and we may say the historical movement has come to its termination.[36]

This description of the process of social movements, one of the first efforts to theorize movement criticism, illustrates the steps that leaders and supporters experience in their quest for change. Griffin discusses two types of movements: pro movements and anti-movements. In pro movements, the rhetorical attempt is to arouse public opinion to create or accept an institution or idea. In anti movements, the rhetorical attempt is to arouse public opinion to destroy or reject an existing institution or idea.[37] Within each movement, two classes of rhetors may be distinguished: aggressor and defendant rhetors. Aggressor rhetors include orators and journalists who attempt, in the pro movement, to establish, and in the anti movement, to destroy. Defendant rhetors are those who attempt, in the pro movement, to resist reform, and in the anti movement, to defend institutions.[38]

Griffin notes that the central concern of the rhetor is to move the public to the desired action before the point of alienation is reached and reaction develops.[39] Activists must take necessary steps to produce change, yet take caution not to become too distant from current practices so as to avoid isolation from possible supporters. Cathcart asserts that in order for a movement to come into being, people must come together in the belief that a reality of injustice exists and that the desired change is achievable. He maintains that social movements seek to reconstitute these inequitable social norms or values and the attempt for change by movement activists provides an important area of analysis for social movement critics.

Previous Studies of the March on Washington

As one of the most significant movements in the nation's history, the civil rights movement and the rhetorical strategies employed by movement leaders and supporters have generated extensive scholarly attention; and as the most memorable event in this movement, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom has received a vast amount of coverage as well. Research has led me to three distinct rhetorical studies of the March. The works of Garth E. Pauley, Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook, and Mark Vail explore the March from different perspectives and their findings are briefly discussed.

Pauley asserts that a particular speech at the March on Washington deserves closer examination. He analyzes SNCC leader John Lewis' address at the March to understand how it differed from his original message and still gained considerable attention.[40] Pauley notes, however, that this attention is generally from academic

specialists who tend to focus on the controversy that led to Lewis censoring his original version of the speech. Pauley asserts that Lewis' address deserves much more attention than simply being "a sidebar to our knowledge about the March on Washington."[41] He argues that while Lewis' address did not possess the same amount of eloquence as King's speech, the militancy of his address still made it notable. Pauley maintains, "Even though Lewis was forced by other speakers at the March to 'tone down' his rhetoric, he still delivered a powerful indictment of racial injustice and the politicians' failure to address the nation's chronic civil rights problems."[42] Through the analysis of Lewis' early political activism, the March on Washington as a protest, and Lewis' address, Pauley argues that a better understanding can be reached about the experiences of civil rights activists at a critical moment in history, the differences between the various civil rights organizations, the civil rights movement's tense relationship with white liberals, the nature of protest as a form of political action, and the power and limitations of militant protest rhetoric.[43] Pauley's comprehensive examination of a key speech at the March provides a unique perspective of the March, adds to the background of the event, and provides a point of entry to the current study of six other speeches of that day.

Endres and Senda-Cook's article, "Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest," offers an additional perspective. They examine several protest events and their locations, including the March on Washington, and discuss the rhetorical force of place and its relationship to social movements. They argue that the place in which a protest occurs can function in line with the goals of a social movement.[44] Throughout their essay, they observe how the rhetorical deployment of place is a common tactic for social movements. Protests and those leading the events often call on the memories of or

attachment to particular places. For example, environmental social movements typically ask their supporters to take action that will "save" particular places that have special meanings, such as Yosemite Valley, Glen Canyon, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).[45] They observe not only how referring to particular places can function as arguments in protests, but explain that the location in which the protest event is staged can have a lasting impact on the success of the protest and the overall movement with which it is associated. The March on Washington is cited as an example of how the place in which a protest occurs influences the event's messages. Endres and Senda-Cook state, "The 1963 Civil Rights Movement's March on Washington culminated at the Lincoln Memorial in the Washington Mall in part because of the significance of that place: both its proximity to the center of Federal Government and Abraham Lincoln's role in freeing slaves."[46] Throughout their analysis of several protest events, Endres and Senda-Cook conclude that place constructions can function rhetorically to challenge the central meanings and practices of a place. They assert that place is a performer along with activists in creating the possibilities of protest.[47] The evaluation of the March presented throughout this article points out critical observations of the context in which the March occurred.

Vail provides a unique view of the March from the perspective of King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Through a discussion of King's address, Vail asserts King exhibits an "integrative" rhetorical style that maintains his call for a racially integrated America.[48] Vail seeks to augment the existing literature on King's address by observing how the interaction between text and context ultimately informed both the address and the rhetorical situation. To execute this study, he employs the concepts of voice merging,

dynamic spectacle, and the prophetic voice.[49] When discussing the rhetorical and historical precedents surrounding King's address that created an "integrative context," Vail asserts the possibility that, "King's speech is so fondly remembered because it so accurately reflected the mood generated by the March. In stark contrast to the protests that preceded it, the March on Washington unfolded without incident."[50] Many observers and attendees noted the calmness of the March and how smoothly it was executed. Vail maintains that while King's rhetoric may have captured media attention and shaped perceptions of the March, "the fact was that King, a preacher, and his message, a sermon promoting nonviolence, complemented the event's emergent tone and tenor."[51] He observes how King's integrative rhetoric functioned to create this atmosphere and influence the perceptions of the March. Vail asserts that King's rhetorical challenge at the March was to integrate the two seemingly disparate concepts of economic (jobs) and social (freedom) issues on which the March focused.[52] Vail's evaluation of King's address supplies valuable insight into the most remembered address at the March and is useful in understanding the March as a whole.

While each of these studies provides worthwhile information about the communicative aspects of the March, absent from these studies, with the exception of Lewis' speech, are the addresses that led to King's oration. This deficiency prevents a full understanding of the March from being reached. Further examination of the overlooked speeches of the day is needed to supplement this partial view of the March. Analyzing the speeches of the "Big Six" organizations can illuminate the collaboration involved in putting together the March and the tactics employed by activists during the movement.

The following method of analysis describes the theoretical principles to be utilized in examination the addresses at the March.

Analytical Approach

This project seeks to understand how the speeches that led to King's renowned "I Have a Dream" speech reflect the complexities of the March and how they went about constructing a collective message despite differing viewpoints. Explored here are the concepts of dynamic spectacle, arrangement, and iconicity and how they contribute to the construction of community.

Community Building

The rhetoric of community provides the foundation for this analysis. To assess how a community is built and maintained, one must first understand the role of communication in the construction of community. Language establishes human behavior and provides the foundation for a community. Symbols influence and generate action and are crucial elements in community building. Hugh Duncan maintains, "language determines society. It *orders* experience because it creates the forms which make possible the communication of experience."[53] Communities are constituted and sustained by the words of those leading the community.[54] Community building becomes crucial to the maintenance of a culture during times of conflict. While some argue that dissension interferes with the solidarity of a community, some argue that disagreements can often lead to even stronger conceptions of a collective identity. Community members find subjects on which they agree and enhance those ideas while suppressing those that cause

division. These agreements and the added need of working together heightens individuals' connection to the community.

Creating a sense of community is essential for marginalized groups as it helps to define themselves and relate rhetorically to the dominant culture.[55] The inequality surrounding the civil rights movement indicates a lack of connection between African-Americans and the larger culture. As Americans out of place in their own country, they needed to find a way to build a sense of community of their own in a way that also corresponded to the general American culture. One way in which movement activists attempted to construct community was through the March on Washington, which was a socially constructed dynamic spectacle.

Dynamic Spectacle

David E. Procter explains that critics should study rhetoric "not as the tool of an individual whose purpose is persuasion, but as the molder of a community, functioning to shape and reinforce values, goals, and actions."[56] The role of the rhetorical critic from this perspective is to go beyond recognizing that symbols create, sustain, and destroy community and to discuss how symbols accomplish these functions. Procter describes the dynamic spectacle as a brief moment in which a flow of arguments of a given moment are captured and serve as a touchstone for community-building.[57] The concept of dynamic spectacle provides critics with a rhetorical frame through which to examine the arguments of a society and the communicative processes of community-building. The March on Washington encapsulated the arguments of the civil rights movement by displaying a variety of perspectives offered by the leading organizations of the

movement. Viewing the March through the various discourses provided that day allows an exploration of how the different organizers of the March merged their messages into a cohesive event contributing to the peaceful atmosphere of the day and forming a sense of community. In addition to viewing the various interpretations offered by the speakers at the March, an examination of the arrangement of the elements within the March helps illustrate how a sense of community was created at the event.

Arrangement

The way in which a message is arranged can influence the outcome of how it is received by audience members. The study of arrangement generally deals with the structure of an individual message; however, this project's focus is within the body of the March rather than within a single speech. The March unfolds in a way that seems to build up to King's address and uses the arrangement of the speeches to introduce key arguments of the March and demonstrate a sense of unity among speeches. Richard Whately describes arrangement as "the ordering of logical, ethical, and emotional proofs within the body of a speech."[58] The form or structure of an argument involves the recurring patterns in discourse or action, including the repeated use of images, metaphors, arguments, structural arrangements, configurations of language, or a combination of such elements.[59] Additionally, Whately maintains that the beginning of an address prepares the audience for the reasoning to be employed and presents an illustration of what is to follow later in the composition. Thus, the manner in which the components of a text are presented influences the audience's reception to the message.

Iconicity

Just as meaning results from the way in which the words of a message are arranged, the meaning of a message is also informed by the interaction between its form and content. This interaction is identified as "iconicity."[60] Iconicity is "a relationship between a sign and its object (often a linguistic pattern or another sign) in which the form of the sign replicates the object in some way."[61] The form or structure of the discourse imitates the meaning it represents. The form of the March mirrored how the organizers wished the community to act once the March concluded. As a group of separate organizations united in a common cause with a collective message, the leaders represented the change they sought in the nation and the action they urged the audience to take. This argument emerged from the collective structure of the March and contributed to the sense of community at the event.

Organization of Chapters

In order to execute this analysis, the remainder of this thesis includes three chapters. The second chapter contextualizes the March on Washington by assessing the social and political factors influencing the March and movement responses. This chapter serves as a contextual foundation to the rest of the project as it highlights the events preceding the March that made the event both possible and necessary.

Chapter Three focuses on the theoretical grounding and method of analysis that is used to execute the project. The chapter begins with an examination of community building rhetoric as the foundational element in the analysis. An exploration of the theoretical precepts of dynamic spectacle, arrangement, and iconicity are provided in this

chapter to establish the groundwork for analysis. These critical precepts are then applied to the discourse at the March to comprehend their function in community building. Studying the rhetorical features of the speeches that led to King's famous "I Have a Dream" address illustrates the depth and complexities of the civil rights movement in general and the March on Washington in particular. This understanding provides insight into the rhetorical strategies utilized at a key event in a critical moment in American history and their contribution to community building.

Based on the preceding analysis, Chapter Four offers closing remarks about the findings of the project. This chapter reasserts my overall argument and situates it within the current body of communication research. Additionally, the conclusion offers several possible tracks of future study of the March on Washington.

Notes

[1] Bruce J. Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement* (Great Britain; Pearson Education Limited, 2004), 87.

[2] Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement*, 88.

[3] Garth E. Pauley, "John Lewis' 'Serious Revolution': Rhetoric, Resistance, and Revision at the March on Washington," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1989): 320-340.

[4] Garth E. Pauley, "John Lewis 'Speech at the March on Washington' (August 28, 1963)," *Voices of Democracy* 5 (2010):18-36.

[5] Edward P. Morgan, "The Good, the Bad, the Forgotten," in The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory, ed. Renee C. Romano & Leigh Raiford, (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), 141.

[6] Examples of such works include: Clarence B. Jones' *Behind the Dream: The Making of the Speech that Transformed a Nation*; Drew D. Hansen's *The Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*; L.S. Summer's *The March on Washington*. Mark Vail asserts, "Ten civil rights activists and supporters readied themselves to address the vast crowd assembling at the Great Emancipator's feet. But only one of those speakers, Martin Luther King Jr., ultimately captured and ameliorated the collective conscience of the American people."

[7] Pauley, "John Lewis 'Speech at the March on Washington' (August 28, 1963)," 18.

[8] The "Big Six" organizations included: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the National Urban League. The six speeches that will be analyzed represent each of these groups, with the exception of SCLC, which is the group to which King belonged. Therefore, the sixth speech to be examined is Walter Reuther's of United Automobile Workers (UAW).

[9] Roy Wilkins, http://openvault.wghb.org/catalog/march-eecfb3-part-12-of-17/print, 6.

[10] Sanger, *"When the Spirit Says Sing!,"*3.

[11] Bayard Rustin, *Strategies for Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 7.

[12] Sanger, *"When the Spirit Says Sing!,"*3.

[13] Cal Logue, "Rhetorical Ridicule of Reconstruction Blacks," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62 (1978): 401.

[14] Sanger, *"When the Spirit Says Sing!,"* 3.

[15] Sanger, *"When the Spirit Says Sing!,"* 4.

[16] Sanger, *"When the Spirit Says Sing!,"* 4.

[17] Ellen Levine, ed., *Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories* (New York: Avon, 1993), 38.

[18] Sanger, *"When the Spirit Says Sing!,"* 4.

[19] Gary S. Selby, "Framing Social Protest: The Exodus Narrative in Martin Luther King's Montgomery Bus Boycott Rhetoric," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 24(2001): 68-93.

[20] Sanger, *"When the Spirit Says Sing!,"* 4.

[21] Mark Vail, "The 'Integrative' Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9 (Spring 2006): 51-78.

[22] Vail, "The 'Integrative' Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech." 52.

[23] Garrow, *Bearing the Cross,* 266.

[24] Vail, "The 'Integrative' Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech." 52.

[25] Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement*, 88.

[26] Leland M. Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, ed. Charles E. Morris and Stephen Howard Browne (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001), 9-14.

[27] Robert S. Cathcart, "New Approaches to the Study of Movements: Defining Movements Rhetorically," *Western Journal of Speech* (1972): 85.

[28] Cathcart, "New Approaches to the Study of Movements," 86.

[29] Charles J. Stewart, "A Functional Approach to the Rhetoric of Social Movements," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, ed. Charles E. Morris and Stephen Howard Browne (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001), 152-159.

[30] Stewart, "A Functional Approach to the Rhetoric of Social Movements," 155.

[31] Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith, "The Rhetoric of Confrontation," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, ed. Charles E. Morris and Stephen Howard Browne (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001), 28-35.

[32] Scott and Smith, "The Rhetoric of Confrontation," 33.

[33] Scott and Smith, "The Rhetoric of Confrontation," 33.

[34] Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne, *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest* (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001), 163.

[35] Morris and Browne, *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, 163.

[36] Leland Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," 10.

[37] Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," 11.

[38] Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," 11.

[39] Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," 12.

[40] Pauley, "John Lewis 'Speech at the March on Washington' (August 28, 1963)," 18.

[41] Pauley, "John Lewis 'Speech at the March on Washington' (August 28, 1963)," 18.

[42] Pauley, "John Lewis 'Speech at the March on Washington' (August 28, 1963)," 18.

[43] Pauley, "John Lewis 'Speech at the March on Washington' (August 28, 1963)," 18.

[44] Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook, "Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97 (August 2011): 257-282.

[45] Endres and Senda-Cook, "Location Matters," 257.

[46] Endres and Senda-Cook, "Location Matters," 257.

[47] Endres and Senda-Cook, "Location Matters," 258.

[48] Vail, "The 'Integrative' Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech." 51.

[49] Vail, "The 'Integrative' Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech." 51.

[50] Vail, "The 'Integrative' Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech." 56.

[51] Vail, "The 'Integrative' Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech." 56.

[52] Vail, "The 'Integrative' Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech." 72.

[53] Hugh Duncan, in Procter, "The Dynamic Spectacle," 117.

[54] Hogan, *Rhetoric and Community,* xv.

[55] Hogan, *Rhetoric and Community*, xix.

[56] Procter, "The Dynamic Spectacle," 118.

[57] Procter, "The Dynamic Spectacle," 118-119.

[58] Clarence W. Edney, "Richard Whately on *Dispositio*," *Speech Monographs* (1954): 227.

[59] Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action* (Falls Church, VA: The Speech Communication Association, 1978), 19.

[60] Leff and Sachs, "Words the Most Like Things," 258.

[61] Bruce Mannheim, "Iconicity," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9 (2000): 107-110.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEXTUAL DETAILS OF THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom provides a unique opportunity to view a situation that captured the essence of the civil rights movement at a given moment. Although Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech typically outshines the other addresses that day, an observation of their contribution to the March helps illuminate details that are overlooked when viewing the March as the occasion of a single speech. In order to understand how the discourses at the March on Washington contributed to the March's dynamic quality, one must first examine the situation in which the March occurred. As James R. Andrews, Michael C. Leff, and Robert Terrill point out, "people speak in order to solve problems, to gain adherents, to rouse interest and sympathy, or to compel action because there is something going on in the world around them that is in *need* of modification or is threatened and must be defended."[1] Rhetoric emerges from events that a speaker wishes the audience to view as important. Therefore, an initial task of a rhetorical critic is to consider the factors that made it possible or necessary for a speaker to deliver a message at all. Historical and political events, Andrews, Leff, and Terrill assert, can force certain issues into the audience's consciousness and the situation makes it imperative that an issue be addressed.[2] Those events that made the March both possible and necessary are explored in this chapter.

While the March provided the stage for one of the greatest speeches in our nation's history, closer examination of the contextual details of the day can help illuminate the underpinnings of the remaining discourses at the event. This day in Washington captured unprecedented attention from all around the world, and although

King's address is primarily what is remembered of the day, the media gathered all over Washington before they knew they would be reporting on a historic speech. Thus, it is necessary to observe not only the situational factors surrounding this point in history, but the other speeches that were delivered in response to these factors as well, contributing to the March's dynamic quality. As Clarence B. Jones, advisor and lawyer for King points out, "Although watching the black-and-white news footage of Dr. King's historic call to action is stirring to almost everyone who sees it, learning about the work that went into The March and the speech—the discussions and debates behind closed doors—offers a unique context that magnifies the resonance of hearing those famous words 'I have a dream' in that phenomenal, inimitable cadence."[3] Events preceding the March and the dynamics of the March itself provided King the opportunity to emphasize the importance of the movement through his address.[4] An understanding of these events and dynamics is critical to comprehending the value and function of the discourse overshadowed by King's as well as how these texts contributed to the event as a whole.

Five sections follow to help reach this understanding, including activism in the civil rights movement, the background of the organizations involved in planning the March, the details that went into the collaboration and planning of the March, tensions that resulted from this planning, and a look at the day and atmosphere of the March itself. These details illustrate the call for the leaders of the March to speak and help make sense of their responses to the contextual factors surrounding the March.

Activism in the Civil Rights Movement

A primary factor that made the March on Washington possible was the activism seen throughout the civil rights movement. African-Americans have made great efforts to challenge their socially prescribed inferiority in the United States. The civil rights movement exemplifies this battle, as numerous organizations, activists, and protestors sought to redefine African-American worth during this time.[5] The long history of injustices this group faced throughout generations led to tremendous protest activity as activists began to voice their discontent through a variety of means. These included bus boycotts, sit-ins, and freedom rides, all of which helped shape the civil rights movement into a revolutionary movement in United States history.

The well-known act by Rosa Parks in Montgomery, Alabama, sparked movement activism. On December 1, 1955, Parks violated Montgomery's segregation laws and refused to give up her seat on a city bus to a white person. The law at this time required African-Americans to be seated in the back of a bus and to give up their seats for white people when no other seats were available.[6] Parks' act and subsequent arrest initiated a bus boycott in Montgomery that lasted for over a year. Although African-Americans comprised at least seventy-five percent of Montgomery's bus riders, the city refused to comply with the demands of the boycotters, which initially did not even include changes to the segregation laws. They simply asked for courtesy, hiring African-American drivers, and implementing a first-come, first-served seating policy. After over a year, on June 5, 1956, a federal court in Montgomery ruled that any law requiring racially segregated seating on buses violated the Constitution, and Montgomery's buses were integrated on December 21, 1956.[7] As Thomas R. Peake notes, this historic boycott

represented the power of mobilization and prompted "a decade of direct-action protest that permanently altered the status of black Americans."[8] The protests that followed entailed a wide range of tactics that began to characterize the civil rights movement and activists' effort to transform the state of the nation.

One such tactic for social change was the sit-in. This form of protest involved demonstrators occupying a particular place, typically an establishment that enforced segregation, until their demands to be treated equally were met. These demonstrations formed a dominant method activists employed to influence change, beginning in Woolworth's department store with the "Greensboro Four."[9] On February 1, 1960, four African-American college students from North Carolina decided to take the bold step of challenging this store's demeaning and hypocritical policy that allowed African-Americans to buy merchandise but refused them service at the diner.[10] Their sit-in was, of course, met with resistance, and the protesters were told several times of the store's policy that forbade serving blacks. The students showed the manager their receipt from an earlier purchase, and he attempted unsuccessfully to have them arrested. Nevertheless, they remained in their seats until the store closed and they returned the following day with more students from local colleges.[11]

The Greensboro Four encouraged other young African-Americans to take action and initiated the student phase of the civil rights movement. Word of their sit-in spread quickly and energized those who heard about its success. Within a week, similar demonstrations surfaced in other North Carolina cities such as Raleigh, Durham, High Point, and Winston-Salem, and African-American colleges and churches collaborated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP),

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to organize additional students who demanded an end to segregation as well. By the end of 1960, sit-ins had occurred in all the southern states except for Mississippi. By this time, approximately 70,000 citizens "crossed the color line" in 150 cities in an attempt to desegregate divided establishments and public venues. Demonstrators began by sitting at segregated diners, but once they saw and felt the capacity for change resulting from their sit-ins, they started kneeling at segregated churches, swimming in segregated pools, reading in segregated libraries, attending segregated theaters, and applying for 'whites-only' jobs.[12] The action of four young students ignited a spark among the African-American community to speak out about their long held frustrations.

Freedom Rides constituted another tactic of communication in the movement. On May 4, 1961, thirteen African-American and white civil rights activists initiated the Freedom Rides, a sequence of bus rides through the American South to express opposition to segregation in the interstate bus terminals. The 1961 Freedom Rides sought to test a 1960 Supreme Court decision that segregation of interstate transportation facilities, including bus terminals, was unconstitutional.[13] The Freedom Riders, seven African-American and six white volunteers, were recruited by the civil rights group CORE. The African-Americans sat in the front of the bus and the whites sat in the back to challenge the existing practice of most bus systems.[14] Throughout their course the Freedom Riders attempted to use "whites-only" lunch counters and restrooms. Although they were met with violent opposition, Freedom Rides, like the Montgomery bus boycott and the Greensboro Four sit-in, encouraged several hundred other Freedom Rides to take

place as well as other civil rights demonstrations to surface and exemplify the activism throughout the movement.

These many different forms of protest that surfaced throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, some successful and others failures, opened the possibilities for communication among activists throughout the civil rights movement. Seeing those that were successful gave hope to activists for even bigger demonstrations, which they would soon learn were necessary given the increasingly violent responses to their demonstrations.

Issues and Events Leading to the March

The year of 1963 brought about profound changes in the civil rights movement as new techniques were employed to sustain mass militancy in the movement.[15] Not only were activists becoming restless in their struggle, alternative approaches to the movement, including black nationalism, left activists with tough decisions about which course to follow. Recognizing that the movement was at a crossroads, King formulated a plan called Project Confrontation, or Project C, aimed at desegregating Birmingham, a city so well-known for its violence that it became known as "Bombingham."[16] Aware of the city's violent reputation, King believed that performing demonstrations in Birmingham could tremendously help the movement. King hoped that, in response to the demonstrations, public safety commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor would react brutally with the rest of the world watching, which would then compel federal intervention.[17] Project C resulted in success when national attention turned to an irritated Bull Connor's retaliation against the demonstrations. He instructed firefighters to turn high-pressured

hoses against demonstrators. When he heard about activist Fred Shuttlesworth's hospitalization as a result of the hoses, Connor replied, "I'm sorry I missed it. I wish they'd carried him away in a hearse."[18] Additional violent tactics demonstrators encountered were the attack of police dogs and the swinging clubs of police officers. As a result of the violent reactions in Birmingham, SNCC's James Forman observed that activists, such as Wyatt Tee Walker and Dorothy Cotton, were "were jumping up and down, elated," and that they emphasized, "We've got a movement. We've got a movement. We had some police brutality. They brought out the dogs. We've got a movement." Forman viewed this celebration as "a disgusting moment . . . for it seemed very cold, cruel and calculating to be happy about police brutality coming down on innocent people, bystanders, no matter what purpose it served."[19] However brutally violent the reactions were, the reality was that the national publicity of the violence hurt the image of the United States but ultimately brought much needed attention to the movement.

Another event that generated awareness for the movement involved an incident at the University of Alabama. In June 1963, Governor George Wallace kept his promise to defend "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever"[20] and "stand in the schoolhouse door" to prevent two African-American students from enrolling at the University of Alabama. In order to protect the students and secure their admission, President John F. Kennedy federalized the Alabama National Guard.[21] These events generated a great amount of attention from the media and it became clear to King that an opportunity for a large demonstration was present. He told his aides, "We are on a breakthrough. We need a mass protest."[22] In response to the events in Birmingham,

Kennedy delivered a televised address on June 11, 1963. He spoke from the Oval Office to discuss the implications of the National Guard being sent to protect the two African-American students as they enrolled in the University of Alabama.[23] Despite Kennedy's speech, the violence he had hoped to dissolve did not cease immediately. A few hours after his address, a White Citizens Council organizer shot and killed NAACP field Secretary Medgar Evers as he stepped out of his car in Jackson, Mississippi. Later that summer, a white supremacist bombed Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, killing four girls. Neither case was ever solved.[24] As the violence in the streets persisted, Kennedy continued speaking about civil rights and the hostility that often accompanied such issues. He asked Congress to pass the most comprehensive civil rights act in American history, and began to put his administration behind the movement's aims to end school segregation and provide voting rights. While Kennedy continued to speak out for civil rights, his position in his "Civil Rights Address" split the nation. Many activists, including King, were elated over the president's speech, yet others believed that the speech seemed to be "too little and too late."[25] This divided sentiment was not unique to the Kennedy administration's actions. Several civil rights organizations had different views on the best way to go about influencing change in civil rights. The resulting difficulties are reflected in assembling the March on Washington.

The nation's violent atmosphere combined with the optimism resulting from the activism surrounding the time led to the proposal for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Numerous activist groups emerged throughout the movement, each with their own vision for how to bring about change. In addition to CORE, the NAACP, and the SCLC, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), Student Nonviolent

Coordinating Committee (SNCC), United Automobile Workers of America (UAW), and the National Urban League (NUL) eventually came together to plan the March. A closer look at the formation and values of each organization helps clarify the similarities and differences among groups that may have brought about certain tensions seen when planning the March. This observation follows the order in which each organization's leader spoke at the March.

Background of Organizations Involved in the March

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters formed in response to unfair labor practices in the Pullman Company, a railroad company that employed African-American railroad car porters to serve generally wealthy whites.[26] Ashley L. Totten, an African-American railroad worker for the Pullman Company, approached A. Philip Randolph for help in organizing a union for the porters who had experienced discrimination, intimidation, and awful working conditions for years during their employment at Pullman.[27] The porters depended on tips to earn a living wage, and some of their complaints included: working long hours for little pay, a lack of job security, and being victimized or favored "according to the whim of their supervisors."[28] Randolph recognized that these porters represented a large segment of exploited and underpaid African-American labor as they were not unionized. Realizing this, he started the BSCP and, in his endeavor, developed dual commitment to the labor movement and the African-American community.[29] The BSCP was formally organized on August 25, 1925, with Randolph at its head. However, as Paula F. Pfeffer explains, times were difficult for new unions, even established white unions were losing members in the 1920s. The

Pullman Company's profits were down at this time, and they realized that there were many unemployed African-Americans who could serve as replacement porters. Additionally, the company claimed that it was a supporter of the African-American race, which led many prominent blacks, as well as a majority of the black press, to oppose the BSCP. Other issues arose that made Randolph's position as leader difficult as well. Many identified him as a radical, which then led to Pullman labeling him a Communist in order to frighten the porters. Randolph also had personal liabilities that made establishing a rapport between him and the average porter difficult. For instance, they could not easily identify with his "Harvard" accent, his courtly manners, and his impeccable dress.[30] Despite these obstacles, Randolph became extremely successful in leading the BSCP and was devoted to strengthening all African-American labor, not just the porters. An international charter was later awarded to BSCP in August of 1935, the first charter awarded to an all-black union.[31] Randolph continuously stressed the idea that in founding the union, for the first time African-Americans had financed their cause using their own money, a theme he would later emphasize in the planning of the March.

While a major focus of BSCP was improving the labor conditions of African-Americans, SNCC concentrated on the use of nonviolence as a primary means of communication and as a way to maintain the commitment of younger activists. A group of African-American college students founded SNCC in 1960 on the campus of Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina during a conference sponsored by the SCLC. Emily Stoper, writer and historian, notes that Ella Baker, who was then working for SCLC, was interested in developing a committee whose purpose would be to coordinate sit-in activities, keep leaders in touch with one another, raise funds for their projects, and

increase publicity.[32] The keynote speaker of the conference, James Lawson, delivered an address that emphasized the power of nonviolent confrontation to "give courage to the black man and to change the heart of the white."[33] This notion brought the students of SNCC together and inspired them to form an organization that would be dedicated to such action and energized by the youthfulness of the students. In May 1961, SNCC decided to focus on the integration of interstate buses and bus terminals. Their coordination with a group of CORE leaders led to the Freedom Rides of 1961 from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans in order to desegregate the buses and terminal facilities along the way.[34] Almost all the early SNCC activists participated in the first Freedom Rides and saw the Rides as a turning point, just as the sit-ins had prompted action in numerous colleges across the country. While all members sought reform, there were major disagreements regarding strategies to achieve the change sought.[35] One group wanted "direct action," or the use of nonviolent confrontation to integrate aspects of society. The other group felt that direct action had limited value and wanted to work for voter registration in the South, maintaining a long-range goal of creating a political base for demands for equality. At a meeting at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee in August 1961, SNCC was on the verge of splitting into two organizations when Ella Baker stepped in and prevented its dissolution. An agreement was made to divide the organization into two wings rather than breaking up the group. The group's overall commitment remained dedicated to nonviolent confrontation as their main tactic for action. They believed, according to Stoper, that getting too involved in politics was dangerous as it was believed to be "dirty" and that it would necessarily compromise their

moral principles.[36] Their pledge to use nonviolent tactics guided their decisions and influenced their contribution to the March in 1963.

Influencing the United Automobile Workers of America's contribution was the dedication to working for equal job opportunities. Walter Reuther led the UAW, a labor organization maintaining that job opportunities should be open to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, or religion.[37] John Barnard writes that Reuther entered Detroit's automobile factories just a few years before the Great Depression, a time in which many faults in America's economic system were revealed. As a fervent unionist and socialist, Reuther's father had a profound influence on his belief system. Following his father's lessons on the injustices of capitalism, he was committed to the cause of the auto workers' union. Reuther's dedication to this cause emerged in response to the economic predominance of giant corporations in most of the nation's fundamental industries.[38] Under Reuther's guidance, the UAW grew to approximately one million members and became one of the largest unions in the nation. The organization was dedicated to resolving issues such as safety and health provisions, health benefits, and negotiation grievance procedures.[39]Throughout his leadership in the UAW, Reuther was dedicated to advancing social justice among all citizens and became a model for his ability to organize and gain political influence through his words. His address at the March demonstrated the power of his language and his devotion to social justice in America.

Also dedicated to social justice in the United States was the Congress for Racial Equality. This organization reflected many aspects of the UAW as well as SNCC. An interracial group of students from the University of Chicago assembled CORE in 1942.[40]

As one of the founders, James Farmer greatly influenced the organization's philosophy and structure. Mary Kimbrough and Margaret W. Dagen explain that before starting CORE, Farmer was a member of a Christian pacifist organization, Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). He rejected violence and war and wanted to start a nationwide interracial movement supporting and practicing the principles of nonviolence.[41] CORE was a secular extension of FOR and relied on interracial teams to execute small-scale actions.[42] When Farmer took the position as one of the group's leaders, he made a commitment to remain involved in all of CORE's activities and demonstrations. He asserted that he did not want to be an "armchair general, tied to the tent. I would not *send* troops, but would go with them."[43] Later he admitted that this pledge was challenging yet necessary to uphold during the Freedom Rides. CORE believed firmly in the use of nonviolent tactics as a principal strategy for making progress in the movement, adding another challenge for Farmer and CORE. He explained, "The concept that violence could be greeted with love generally evoked only contempt." He maintained that a common reaction from both black and white leaders was, "You mean that if someone hits you, you're not going to hit him back? What are you, some kind of nut or something?"[44] Despite the hesitance and lack of understanding from observers, CORE remained dedicated to this direct action tactic and their enthusiasm about nonviolence won them the admiration of some leaders in the African-American community. An official of the Urban League compared a few of the major organizations of this day, "the Urban League is the State Department of civil rights; the NAACP is the War Department; and CORE is the marines."[45] Although CORE gained respect from the African-American community, they did not receive much attention from the media. Farmer was known as a pacifist, and

said, “CORE was a large part of my world, but most of the world knew nothing about it.”[46] This quiet presence in the movement is similar to the role CORE played in the organization of the March.

The National Urban League similarly viewed the activists’ role in the movement as one committed to the activities and demonstrations it coordinated in order to facilitate growth in the community. Nancy J. Weiss writes that the NUL was founded just before the movement of African-Americans toward the North during World War I and established itself as the primary agency that dealt with the issues of blacks in American cities. While the NAACP, NUL’s counterpart, focused on the political and legal rights of African-Americans, the NUL attempted to open employment opportunities and to provide social services to alleviate the process of urbanization as many experienced difficulty in adjusting to a new environment. This organization approached the issue of employment by trying to find contacts with which African-Americans could network in order to gain personal connections with private employers.[47] It also conducted scientific investigations of conditions among urban communities as a basis for practical reform. The group was also dedicated to training its members and trained the first corps of professional African-American social workers and placed them in community service positions.[48] Whitney Young was a young black social worker in training when he got involved in the organization and found their work suitable to his experience and ideas for social improvement. He became the executive director of the League in 1961 and brought about critical changes to the generally moderate organization. Through his participation in the group, he significantly developed the NUL’s fundraising abilities and made the civil rights movement one of its primary concerns. He also expanded the organization’s

mission and reach by adding new projects each year.[49] Some of these projects' aims included improving employment opportunities for African-Americans, enhancing the quality of education and motivation for young African-Americans, and giving African-Americans a stronger voice in public affairs. Since the NUL, unlike any of the other organizations, was "a tax exempt agency and as such precluded from overt lobbying," Young felt that the organization should not participate in the March on Washington. However, the Southern sit-ins had put pressure on the NUL to take a more activist approach. Thus, Young decided to support the March and join the organizing committee in order not to "detract from the vigorous and forceful new image" that the NUL was making every effort to project.[50] Nevertheless, Young had reservations about some of the organizations involved in planning the March, but still helped the NUL contribute to the event.

Finally, the NAACP was the oldest and largest civil rights organization in the nation. It was founded in 1909 by W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, Henry Moskowitz, Mary White Ovington, and William English Walling, a group of social and political activists who were inspired by the abolitionist movement.[51] In response to a series of lynching and other brutalities against African-American men, Walling, a young Southern journalist, wrote about the dangers of the race wars in the South and that they were sure to spread to the North if action was not taken. He got in touch with Ovington, a wealthy white social worker and philanthropist, and together they drafted a call for racial justice. The call argued, "Silence under these conditions means tacit approval. This government cannot exist half slave and half free any better today than it could in 1861."[52] Dozens of prominent white liberals signed the call and later met in Cooper Union in New York City

and laid plans to turn the document into a permanent organization, which led to the birth of NAACP. Roy Wilkins became involved in the organization in 1931 as secretary and later replaced W.E.B. Du Bois as editor of *Crisis*, the official magazine of the NAACP.[53] As a key member of this organization, Wilkins' work influenced many aspects of the civil rights movement.[54] He worked to organize and raise money for the organization's struggle against segregation. He rose to the position of executive director at a high point for NAACP's influence in American politics and developed a close relationship with President Lyndon Johnson.[55] Wilkins' participation in the planning of the March allowed the perspective of a key civil rights organization to be included in a significant event of the movement.

Although in 1963 King and the SCLC received more national attention than most other civil rights groups, the organization had no intention of carrying out the massive demonstration alone. Both the ideology of the movement and the logistics of the March required a team effort for successful execution.[56] As a movement committed to the struggle for equality through democratic means, the most suitable method of implementation for this large demonstration was through collaborative efforts. Thus, the SCLC, BSCP, SNCC, UAW, CORE, NUL, and NAACP all worked together to arrange the details for this historical day and become known as the March's Organizing Committee and later as the "Big Six."

Collaboration and Planning of the March

A. Philip Randolph is widely acknowledged among historians as the ideological godfather of the August 28, 1963, March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He first

conceived of a march on Washington in the early 1940s as a way to pressure President Franklin Delano Roosevelt into securing jobs for African-Americans in the growing American industries generated by war contracts.[57] The proposed march was also meant to protest the government's discriminatory practices against the African-Americans that were employed by the defense industries and the U.S. government.[58] Randolph suggested a large demonstration to draw attention to these discrepancies and improve working conditions for African-Americans.

After one of Randolph's visits to the White House, President Roosevelt asked to speak with Randolph and gave him the opportunity to explain why he wanted to have the march. He meticulously outlined the details of his plan for Roosevelt and revealed the seriousness of his proposal and magnitude of the possible event. After he detailed his agenda carefully, emphasizing the justice of his position, the economic value, and the moral fiber, Roosevelt said he agreed with everything that Randolph said, and also concurred that as the leader of the nation he had the power to address most, if not all, of the issues Randolph presented. Roosevelt then turned to Randolph and said, "Now, go out and *make me* do it."[59] Roosevelt was suggesting that the issue was not one of right and wrong, or caring and not caring, it was about leverage. He needed pressure to take action, and Randolph had to organize enough people so the President would have no choice but to react. However, merely the looming idea of the march seemed enough pressure for Roosevelt to concede as he canceled the march at the last minute by negotiating with Randolph and issuing the country's first Presidential Executive Order protecting African-American rights in the twentieth century.[60] When Roosevelt issued Executive Order

8802, making discriminatory practices illegal, the situation was defused and the idea for the March was dropped for the time being.[61]

The thought of a march on the nation's capital was then revived during the winter of 1962-63 as a way to protest the still existing discrimination in the country and to call for action to be taken against the matter. The organizers of 1963 took Randolph's interaction with Roosevelt into consideration and accepted that pressure, not empathy from the President, was the primary instrument of change.[62] Creating enough pressure for meaningful action to ensue required calculating plans for a massive demonstration to represent support for its cause.

In the spring of 1963, Randolph contacted Bayard Rustin, one of King's close advisors, and discussed the idea of staging a large demonstration in Washington, D.C. They examined several possibilities and eventually envisioned a two-day program of organized rallies as their demonstration. Through this organized protest they hoped to link civil rights to the national economic demands of working-class people, drawing attention to the inequities that existed among races.[63] They discussed having sit-ins at congressional offices and other similar "direct-action" strategies that would force lawmakers to take notice of their cause. Randolph wanted to flood congressman "with a staggered series of labor, church, civil rights delegations from their own states that they would be unable to conduct business on the floor of Congress for an entire day."[64] Rustin agreed to propose the concept to the SCLC. He asked King at a fortunate time as he had just led a successful campaign that initiated the desegregation of public facilities and department stores in Birmingham, Alabama.[65] King and other civil rights leaders then

began informal discussions to consider the how they would go about arranging the demonstration.[66]

On July 2, 1963, King and Randolph booked a conference room at the Roosevelt Hotel in Manhattan. They held a meeting in which nearly two dozen activists attended However, Roy Wilkins of NAACP entered the meeting with unease since “he had come for a chiefs-only meeting” and there were seats for about fifteen people. He began to tap the men at the meeting on the shoulders saying, “This one stays. This one goes.”[67] Surprisingly, as Rustin notes, the men listened and dismissed themselves,[68] only to have six leaders remain: Wilkins of the NAACP, King of SCLC, Randolph of BSCP, Farmer of CORE, Lewis of SNCC, and Young of the NUL. During this meeting they discussed the details of their plans and established the organization of the March. A vote was taken to determine who would take on the vital position of chief coordinator. Rustin wanted the role, but some of the other leaders opposed this idea.[69] Although Rustin was well-known for his proficiency in organization, others were leery about Rustin taking on such a responsibility because of his earlier membership in the Young Communist League, his prison sentence for refusing to serve in World War II on grounds of pacifism, his arrest and conviction on a morals charge in California ten years earlier, and his open homosexuality. However, Randolph voiced complete faith in Rustin’s “character, integrity, and extraordinary ability.”[70] King was also confident in his advisor’s ability to coordinate this significant demonstration, so to dissolve the apprehension among other leaders King referenced the Bible’s Gospel of John 8:7, and suggested something similar to “Let he who has not sinned cast the first stone.”[71] Evidently, his message was received because when the final vote was taken, Rustin was named chief coordinator of the March.

Rustin proved his qualification soon after and wrote the *Organizing Manual No. 1* in just a few days. Clarence Jones asserts that this manual became the bible of the March and was consulted for nearly all decisions about the demonstration. By mid-July Rustin had printed and distributed 2, 000 copies of the guide to movement leaders across the country in an effort to create a coordinated system that would allow them to execute the demonstration in an extremely short timeframe.[72]

Although President John F. Kennedy's public remarks about the March demonstrated a sense of support, his initial strategy was to try to persuade leaders to cancel the March. Kennedy's Civil Rights Bill was at the House of Representatives during the summer of 1963, and he believed this clarified his stance on civil rights issues and that a massive demonstration was not necessary at that point. Yet, upon grasping the details and public support for the March, he recognized that giving his own support would be the most suitable response. After he realized there was no way for him to prevent the March, "He took the next logical step: He got on the bandwagon."[73] However, J. Edgar Hoover continued to try to obstruct the organizers' attempts at putting a cohesive demonstration together. The most common way for opponents of the March to attempt to bring it down was to make personal attacks against those leading the March. For example, Hoover tried to use information about King's sexual encounters against the March, and as expected, people began to attack Rustin's past and homosexuality. Fortunately, this gossip subsided and it seemed as though nothing could derail the March.[74]

In fact, as Clarence Jones maintains, the success of the March depended vastly on the perception of the public. If, in the weeks leading up to the March, it seemed like it

was going to be a failure, people would not attend, and it would indeed become a failure. Yet, if it seemed as though the March was an event worth attending, more people would likely show up, making the demonstration a success, at least in terms of audience turnout. Jones asserts that the success of the March was largely about marketing. The organizers needed to make it seem like the public must be there or they would miss out on a historic event. However, Jones explains that it was less like an advertising campaign and more like a political campaign because they had an opponent, segregationists, just as dedicated to the opposite result that they had in mind. In order to publicize the March, Rustin and his staff of volunteers circulated pamphlets, handbills, letters, and copies of the organizational manual. Pamphlets featuring the slogan "The time is NOW" were distributed to all sponsoring organizations that then circulated them throughout the country.[75] Participating organizations were directed to make a primary effort to bring the unemployed to the March by raising funds to pay for their transportation. Sponsoring groups were also asked to urge their employers to grant their workers the day off as a paid vacation, and to encourage ministers to use the Sunday before the March as a day to pray for its success. As the idea of the March gained momentum, the word spread that it would be "the most covered event in the history of this country."[76]

Through their marketing efforts, the organizers successfully created a perception that the event would be massive. Ted Brown, one of Randolph's organizers from the March Committee's Washington, D.C. office, called King on August 10th and reported that Washington was "running from fear, everybody's scared stiff around here. Leaves have been cancelled for hospital personnel, police, and all long distance telephone operators."[77] Brown went on to say that Burke Marshall, Robert Kennedy's deputy

attorney general on civil rights, was terrified as well and reported "they are all afraid in Washington because of the possibility of violence."[78] While violence was not at all their goal, Jones said the impression of magnitude the event was projecting gave the organizers a boost of confidence.

As it became apparent that the March was gaining momentum and that large crowds would likely gather in Washington that day, people began to pay increasing attention to the fine details of the March and the logistics of the event. Observers began asking where the marchers would be fed, how they would take care of personal hygiene, and how they would be transported to the appropriate places.[79] Rustin fulfilled his duties as chief coordinator very effectively. In his approach, he emphasized decentralization. Each organization was responsible for certain tasks, such as arranging for transportation and food for its members and seeing that the buses were furnished with first-aid supplies. All participants had to be under the leadership of locally appointed captains who would keep a register of participants and "be responsible for their welfare and discipline."[80] The logistics of an event so large were overwhelming, and while Rustin had gained valuable experience from earlier demonstrations, tensions still arose during the planning of this massive demonstration.

Tensions during the Organization of the March

With collaboration between six disparate organizations all with varying ideas for how to effectuate social change, tension among the groups while planning one of the largest demonstrations in American history was inevitable. The trick, according Jones, was to balance all of the various agendas. Although all groups had generally the same

vision for improving the conditions for African-Americans in the United States, it was actually more complicated. Each organization had similar goals but different strategies for achieving those goals, and with the growing sense of importance the March acquired came a predictable amount of bickering.[81] Jones explains, "What became clear very quickly in those early weeks of August was that we had a lot of generals and very few foot soldiers."[82] As unique as each of the groups' leaders were and as committed as they were to their own agendas, it is hardly surprising that every organization looked at the struggle of African-Americans in a slightly different way, and this led to distinct views on the March itself.[83] The coalition that constructed the March was unstable from the beginning. The organizations diverged in strategy and tactics and would soon come to disagree on goals as well.[84]

Each organizer's background and affiliation with their own organization provided difficulties in creating a unifying theme for the March. King, for example, initially delayed commitment as the SCLC was preoccupied with the Birmingham demonstrations at the time. Only after Birmingham did King consider how the national impact of the protests could be used to provoke new federal legislative initiatives on civil rights.[85] To add to this preoccupation, Wilkins reminded King that he owed his early prominence to the NAACP which filed a lawsuit settling the Montgomery bus boycott.[86] He asserted that King was young and naive, that his methods "had not integrated a single classroom in Albany or Birmingham," and requested of King, "In fact, Martin, if you have desegregated *anything* by your efforts, kindly enlighten me."[87] The tension between SCLC's King and NAACP's Wilkins presented a challenge in organizing as well. The eight-year rivalry between the two leaders prolonged disagreement among the members.

For example, Wilkins wanted to focus the March almost entirely on legislative reform.[88] Although the NAACP was starting to project an activist image, the organization still emphasized the importance of legal procedures to achieve legislative and judicial support.[89] This approach reflected Wilkins' and his constituents' belief that connecting civil rights to legal issues was the key to achieving racial equality. King's SCLC, SNCC, and CORE emphasized direct action techniques to bring about change. There were some in the March's Organizing Committee who saw the event as a way to support of the passage of Kennedy's Civil Rights Bill; yet there were some who saw the Civil Rights Bill as "watered down" and ineffectual.[90] Others viewed the demonstration as a disapproval of the Kennedy Administration, and believed it was a way to send a message of their frustration with the White House's "foot-dragging" on getting a true civil rights bill passed into law.[91]

Some were concerned with issues of poverty among African-Americans. Some believed the March was primarily a method of directing the nation's attention to overcoming educational barriers. Others saw the demonstration as focusing primarily on the need for better jobs and improved working conditions for African-Americans.

John Lewis of SNCC wanted to stir the African-American community itself to take immediate action, while others wanted to "thrust the burden of change into the laps of those in power."[92] The interests of the NUL clashed with those of the March committee, and the organization was more interested in publicizing its own plans than in promoting the March. Whitney Young of the NUL, although satisfied with most of the progress made in committee meetings, was continually concerned about who was making decisions between meetings, which was typically Rustin and Randolph. The other

organizations also never completely trusted Rustin, and the NUL, therefore, suggested that additional meetings be scheduled "minus the R-R team."[93] Additionally, leaders feared that after the March, King would use the demonstration to garner publicity for the SCLC and himself.[94] These divergent views created a complex atmosphere for planning an event that promoted unity and equality, yet forced the leaders of each group to come to a compromise. Once reached, each major civil rights leader agreed to a march. "For the first time all major civil rights leaders and organizations set aside their squabbling to collaborate on a national undertaking."[95] The outcome of such compromise gave rise to a crucial moment in the movement.

While the leaders disagreed on the details of the March, they eventually came to a decision to emphasize economic and social issues as their focus. They believed that "second-class citizenship could only be eliminated through changes in the economy and social structure."[96] As expectations for the March grew, the leaders attempted to integrate their different ideas for the event and their unique ties to the movement into a unified coalition.[97] Their agreement was not unyielding, however. As their plans matured, the March's emphasis shifted to civil rights issues in their philosophical focus. The March's agenda had changed so that "civil rights demands were given precedence over economic demands."[98] When the March was first conceived, employment was a primary concern and was at the top of the list of the organizers' demands. However, in the final draft of demands the first six issues listed dealt with the impending civil rights legislation, and issues concerning jobs were moved to the final three demands on the list.[99] This change suited King's philosophy of the movement, which regarded economic issues as a result of social and moral matters. He believed that economic inequality stemmed from the failure

of the nation to meet its moral obligation to African-Americans.[100] These ideological adjustments intensified tensions and jealousies between some of the participating organizations, making cooperation in other matters more difficult.

A primary source of conflict in the organization of the March was financing. Randolph first envisioned the March as an event administered by African-Americans. He stated, “The finances for the March will come from various Negro groups and any liberal or labor groups that may be sympathetic, but we will rely upon Negro forces as a main source of the money to finance the March and Mobilization.”[101] The original fundraising methods were similar to the methods of other demonstrations, such as selling buttons, local organization sponsorship, and contributions from other groups. However, as the projected size of the March expanded, it became clear that such marginal funds would not be able to finance the entire event. Even with unions contributing approximately half of the expected budget and sponsoring organizations promising several thousands of dollars to the March, “some observers wondered where the economically pinched black community would get the rest of the money.”[102]

Stephen R. Currier, a friend of the Kennedy family, provided the answer to this uncertainty. He and his wife established the Taconic Foundation in 1958, which was devoted to helping the “deprived Afro-American” and to alleviating the condition of blacks. Currier was convinced that competition for funds was the primary cause of the dissonance seen among civil rights groups, and determined that they needed more coordination in their fundraising activities.[103] Between the time the Taconic Foundation was founded and August, 1963, it had contributed more than one million dollars to organizations working for equal rights for African-Americans. Currier provided large

contributions to help fund the March, which prompted critics to denounce the March as a sellout to white liberals. However, most of the March organizers, with the exception of Wilkins, did not believe that affiliation with Currier meant control over their activities, and argued, "If you are going to have a revolution it might as well be solvent, and imbued with American know-how."[104] Yet critics still believed that white contributions were used as a way to manipulate the March and reduce its militancy.

One such critic was Malcolm X, leader of the Nation of Islam. He claimed that King was a traitor to the African-American race and dismissed the event as the "Farce on Washington," believing its program to be futile. Malcolm argued that the March was funded by white liberals and "stage-managed by President Kennedy."[105] He thought that this coordination with white liberals was too tactful and sought more aggressive action. He insisted that "real revolution" was based on bloodshed and "destroys everything in its way."[106] Criticism from Malcolm and other skeptics made the formation of the March difficult as it occasionally dwindled organizers' confidence in the March.

While there were many issues with which organizers had to deal, one of the most contentious issues in the preparation of the March was the order in which the speakers would deliver their addresses and how much time would be allotted for each one to speak.[107] This issue was mainly one of power and resulted from the desire to uphold one's ego. As Jones explains, this problem "involved time constraints as well as the delicate maneuvering among a minefield of egos."[108] Jones expressed that they were fortunate enough to have the wisdom and guidance of A. Philip Randolph to provide some stability among the frequently clashing egos. Nowhere was the conflict of personalities easier to see than in the discussions about the speaker schedule. Organizers

argued for a uniform time limit of five minutes for every speech. While King did not agree with the time limit, he felt that he should not personally object as he was concerned that it might provoke resentments from the other organizers.[109]

Jones maintained that there was some jealousy of King's national stature. In response to this general sentiment, Levison, Rustin, King, and Jones said in their personal meetings that it would be inappropriate for it to appear as if King were pushing himself to be the speaker with the most time allotted. Yet time constraints remained an issue of principal concern to all organizers. King felt that there were too many speakers and that the time reserved for him was not adequate to deliver the message he wanted. Due to this issue, he wondered if "they are trying to throttle me. Maybe they're determined that I not be in a position of making a speech that will get a great response from people."[110] Jones admitted that this may seem egotistical, but from everything they had been hearing about who planned to attend the March, it was clear that a significant percentage of the potential crowd was coming to Washington specifically to hear King speak. He explained, "We had to make a tough call: is it better to placate other leaders of the Civil Rights Movement or to give the crowd what it was expecting?"[111] Jones decided the latter was the best decision as it was a demonstration for the public not the organizers. He resolved that in order to best please the crowd, King should be introduced by Randolph, be the last speaker, and be allotted the most time to speak.

To let the others know and to have the March unfold in the way he envisioned would satisfy the audience, Jones talked to Cleveland Robinson, international vice president of the District 65 Retail Wholesale Workers Union. District 65 was a consistent source of financial support to King and the SCLC. Robinson had a "booming baritone

voice tinged with a Jamaican accent and a take-no-prisoners attitude you could see in his face."[112] Together, Robinson, Levison, and Jones came up with a plan to alleviate the tension when explaining their preference for the schedule to the others. They had to make sure that the people who were generally supported by the committee members were on their side. They knew they mainly needed to get the support of Randolph, the respected elder statesman of the March, as well as the chief coordinator of the event. Rustin and Randolph agreed with this schedule, and then decided that, as King's lawyer, Jones would have to break the news to the other leaders. He said he ultimately won them over by stating "Believe me, my brothers, nobody here will want to follow Martin as a public speaker."[113] They agreed, albeit reluctantly, that King speaking last would be in the best interest for the March to have the most impact.

Another major issue the organizers encountered was the controversy over John Lewis' prepared address. On Tuesday, August 27, the day before the March, Lewis had a dispute between a few other leaders participating in the March, including Archbishop Patrick O'Boyle of the Washington-area Catholic district. At age twenty-three, Lewis was the youngest speaker on the program. He was angry with the government's lack of progress and was not afraid to express it.[114] The dispute arose from a single paragraph near the close of his proposed speech that O'Boyle and the others regarded as provocative and potentially incendiary. Clarence Jones asserted that he believed the whole speech was proactive but he thought it was necessary. Lewis intended to clearly assert his position, pointing out police brutality, starvation wages for African-Americans, voter intimidation, and "the glaring weaknesses in Kennedy's proposed Civil Rights Bill."[115] Although O'Boyle strongly opposed the aggressive language in Lewis' address, Lewis felt

compelled to deliver the words that were written. He argued that he served a constituency that demanded this kind of intense rhetoric. In order for Lewis to compromise, it would require a great deal of persuasion. King attempted this task but could not get him to tone down his language. It seemed again that the only one among the organizers that could persuade Lewis was Randolph. He ended up changing Lewis' mind by reminding him that this march was something that Randolph had worked almost his whole life for and pleaded him not to ruin it.[116] Lewis changed the provocative language in his address and was still able to deliver a powerful address on the day of the March.

Although the organizers eventually agreed on the speaking schedule and the modifications to Lewis' speech, and in doing so, "paved the way for a chapter in American history that helped shaped the nation we know today," at the time it did appear that that their conciliation would have such an effect. As Jones describes, "The mood in the room was more one of resentment and capitulation than of understanding that we were marching into the dawn of a new era."[117] However, as the amount of media coverage the March was anticipated to receive became known, the organizers knew they had to set their disputes aside to smoothly execute their efforts. Aware that press reports of disorganization and confusion can contribute to negative reporting about the March, the committee considered it essential for the organizations not only to unify their approaches but also to coordinate an information program for the March and put it into effect as quickly as possible.[118] Although the organizers experienced quite a bit of conflict in planning the March, the smoothly executed event showed no evidence of such disagreement.

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

The larger context in which the March took place as well as the specific matters of planning the event influenced its materialization. While the larger factors are of vital importance, one must also turn attention to the particular setting in which the discourses emerged in order to assess the details that contributed to the nature of the March. The specific context in which a message occurs and the audience to whom the message is addressed produce rhetorical problems or rhetorical opportunities that define the margins to which a speaker must adhere.[119] As Andrews, Leff, and Terrill explain, a message "is not only occasioned by past and immediate events, by elements that make rhetoric imperative, but it happens at a given moment in time, in certain surroundings, on a discrete occasion."[120] This distinct moment informs the content of what is said and the manner in which it is spoken. It shapes the audience's expectations and creates a parameter for the speaker's address. The speaker then assesses the situation and attempts to meet those expectations through what they choose to include in their message. A look at the atmosphere of the March helps illustrate the boundaries of the speakers that day and how their messages attempted to reflect and encompass the situational details of the event.

About 250,000 marchers arrived in Washington on an "ideal summer day" to participate in the August 28th March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.[121] The event took place in excellent order with no trouble seen allowing for the capital to experience an unusually quiet Wednesday. Paula Pfeffer describes the city's peaceful day, "White Washington stayed home; fewer than half of the federal government and District employees went to their jobs. All liquor stores and bars were closed." As one observer

noted, the atmosphere was a "combination of church picnic and political rally."[122] The atmosphere drastically departed from typical protests of the movement, making it stand out not only as a massive demonstration but as one that differed in its peaceful appearance.

In an effort to achieve an event free from violence, participants were given instructions before beginning their trip to the capital. As marchers checked in, they were to sign a pledge stating, "I affirm my complete personal commitment for the struggle for jobs and freedom for all Americans," and promised to remain nonviolent and not "relax until victory is won."[123] Also, in order to ensure that marchers would continue their activism beyond the March, organizers asked them to pledge "to carry the message of the March to my friends and neighbors back home and to arouse them to an equal commitment and an equal effort."[124] The commitment participants made at the March generated a sense of responsibility to continue actions in their communities. In addition to the participants' dedication to ensuring a peaceful setting of the March, the audience's composition also influenced the atmosphere.

The audience at the March was significant in its size and diversity in age. Jones recalled that it was exhilarating to see different generations come together over such an important issue. There were people at the March who knew they would never live to see the day where complete civil rights progress was met, but they were fighting for those in the future. He said, "It was never about *me now*, it was always about *someone someday*. It could not have worked otherwise."[125] The size of the turnout was extraordinary, and the government had taken precaution to prepare for potential violence that could result from such a large crowd. Despite the fact that March leaders had previously called a press

conference primarily to stress the peaceful ideals embraced by the movement, the government's concern over potential hostility remained. As Jones explains, "They *hoped* for a peaceful day but they had to be *prepared* for a war."[126] Authorities believed that a show of force would both act as a deterrent to violence and the means to handle potential violence as well. Although this protection was provided, the peace with which the March unfolded rendered it unnecessary.

Conclusion

With about a quarter of a million participants, the March on Washington was a remarkable feat for civil rights organizations. The massive turnout demonstrated the growing support for social justice in the nation and gave marchers hope to continue their efforts. Emerging at a tumultuous time for the nation, the event stood out as a peaceful day that symbolized the prospect of change in the country. The March was an important milestone for African-Americans because it allowed many who "suffered the degradation and sometimes physical abuse of racism in relative isolation to share with a vast number of people their pain as well as their hope and optimism for a better day."[127] This milestone could only be achieved through the work and dedication of the organizations involved. While disagreements naturally arose during the collaboration of the event, the leaders of the March set those disputes aside to construct a demonstration that would unite their perspectives and illustrate a common goal of social justice in the nation. Despite current public perceptions of the March, the day was more than just a single speech delivered by King. It involved a great deal of communication by other significant organizations. Their efforts and messages were a large part of the success of this event

and these details should not be overlooked. To observe how the organizers created a perception of unity and community in their collective message at the March, Chapter Three analyzes the addresses that came before King’s and their contribution to the event.

Notes

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[10] Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement*, 52.

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[12] Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement*, 56.

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[17] Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement,* 77.

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CHAPTER THREE

CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY THROUGH THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON

"Never had so many organizations—big and small, national and local, religious, trade union, fraternal, professional and whatnot—joined together in such a massive demonstration in the Nation's Capital. Never had such a cross-section of the American people been united in such a vast outpouring of humanity."[1] With such a wide range of organizations represented, the discourse at the March on Washington provides a valuable rhetorical experience on which to focus critical attention. However, much of the scholarly and national attention thus far has focused on the most famous address of the day, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Bayard Rustin observes the changes that took place after the March and argues, "Clearly, no single demonstration and no individual civil rights figure was responsible for this change in attitude."[2] Although a somewhat obvious statement, many nevertheless attribute much of the success of the March solely to King and his well-known words.

One such example of focus on King is found in Mark Vail's work which examines King's role in merging the objectives of the March using integrative rhetoric. He observes the March as a dynamic spectacle and asserts that King's address harmonized with the nature of the event. Although King's address undoubtedly deserves critical consideration, attention to other presentations is equally important when attempting to understand the March as a whole. There are ways in which the dynamic spectacle works to construct community, yet there are limitations to attending to a single performance. Vail explains that the broader contextual forces that both constrained and shaped King's speech have only been addressed peripherally; however, while his essay

attends to several contextual issues, attention has yet to be paid to the remaining discourse of the day. Vail contends that King's address complemented the rhetorical situation and that the nature of the March on Washington itself reflected many of the characteristics of a dynamic spectacle; still, he fails to provide the detail necessary to reach this discernment fully. In order to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of the March itself, critical examination of the discourses preceding King is required.

Leland Griffin recommends that rhetorical critics pay somewhat less attention to the single speaker and more to multiple speakers.[3] Critics should strive to observe the patterns of public discussion, the arrangements of discourse, or simply the general forms of persuasion present in the movement through these rhetors.[4] In addition, Samuel Becker argues that rhetoricians need to redefine their conception of "message" by understanding that the communicative process operates within a "complex mosaic," and within this mosaic, "single message encounters" are an inadequate source for generating useful observations.[5] Wayne Brockriede also concludes that individual speech texts were "not (always) an appropriate unit of analysis."[6] Critics should go beyond the observation of a single rhetor and observe the broader features of a rhetorical experience. Furthermore, David Procter explains that communication is much more than a stylistic expression of ideas. Instead, communication theory is conceived as "a voice of social milieu rather than the symbolic property of a single speaker."[7]

The recommendation that critics observe more than just the single speaker leads to this project's foundation, the analysis of the overlooked speeches at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. These include speeches delivered by A. Philip

Randolph of BSCP, John Lewis of SNCC, Walter Reuther of UAW, Floyd McKissick of CORE delivering an address written by James Farmer, Whitney Young of the NUL, and Roy Wilkins of NAACP.

Throughout his address, Randolph emphasized the moral root of the country's issues and suggests that progress needs to be made first and foremost at this level. Additionally, he indicated that change can only be achieved through the work of activists themselves and that progress will necessarily follow that work. While Randolph spoke first and set the tone for the March, Lewis offered a more aggressive view of his dissatisfaction. He stressed that the source of the issues in the nation originated from the political leaders in charge of decision making, and, as a member of an organization who stressed the importance of nonviolence, Lewis regarded direct action as the primary means to achieve change. Reuther, whose emphasis complemented Randolph's, urged the idea that change must occur through organization and action within the community. He contends that this work is necessary to uphold the values of American democracy. The address delivered by McKissick also reflected the importance of working through small-scale actions in order to generate larger change. McKissick encouraged the use of direct action as a principal method to carry out their endeavors. Also stressing the necessity of taking action, Young highlighted the values of nation to justify the need to work together. He also emphasized that legislative changes need to be made in order to adhere to the nation's values. Additionally, Wilkins emphasized the country's values as a way to encourage action. However, to point out the gap between those values and the reality America faced, Wilkins compared the nation's foundation to the existing discrimination that brought the speakers to the March. From the observation of the content featured in

each speech, along with the different rhetorical devices to display the content, emerged a collective message that stressed the need for community building in the nation.

Although often disregarded, the texts described are valuable to our understanding of the civil rights movement. Scholar and activist Cornel West reminds us that King was a product of a certain context, and that "there is no King without a movement, [but] there is a movement without King."[8] Through this inquiry, knowledge about the intricacy of the movement and its various noteworthy leaders can be gained. An analysis of these leaders' words at a critical moment in the movement reveals the rhetorical strategies employed to create a sense of community at a time when little community was felt. The March, when viewed from the discourse of multiple speakers, is a dynamic spectacle that highlights the varying perspectives of different organizers yet maintains a sense of cohesion and community. Through its materialization as a dynamic spectacle, the arrangement of the discourse at the March, and its iconic representation of desired change, the March on Washington constructed community among civil rights activists. This sense of community helped urge subsequent action and can only be understood through the examination of multiple messages.

To comprehend how the March as a whole constructed a sense of community, an examination of the discourse preceding King follows. First, community building rhetoric is explored as a foundation for the remaining critical principles. Second, the concept of dynamic spectacle is described in theory and how it is reflected in the March. Third, the notion of arrangement is discussed to determine how the order of the speeches at the March was significant. Finally, the term iconicity is examined in both theory and as it

relates to the March. Each of these concepts is delineated in relation to how they assisted in building community through the March.

Community Building and Civic Communion

The theoretical principles mentioned are applied to the six speeches at the March on Washington that came before King's to assess how they formed a dynamic spectacle from which to view the values and dynamics of the movement, how they iconically symbolized the unity they desired, and created, from this unity, a sense of community and identity. An exploration of the rhetoric of community is laid out to provide the foundation for what follows this description. Once the conception of community building is in place, attention turns to the functions of dynamic spectacle, the arrangement of the speeches delivered before King addressed the March, and the role of the collective discourses as an icon for subsequent movement rhetoric.

Although the concept of community is not easily defined, most scholars agree that language is a crucial component in creating a sense of community.[9] Language influences human behavior and provides the foundation for a community. David Procter explains that a vital element in understanding the role of language in community is "the belief that society arises, exists, and finally decays through communication, that symbolism constructs the social forms through which people learn to live."[10] Symbols constitute the basis for action and interaction and are necessary components for community building. As Hugh Duncan asserts, "language determines society. It *orders* experience because it creates the forms which make possible the communication of experience."[11] Community members can recount their shared and individual experiences and construct meaning from

those interactions. J. Michael Hogan indicates that a sense of community is constructed from “that repository of shared purposes, values, and traditions” which defines a culture.[12] It involves “a sense of identity and unity with one’s group and a feeling of involvement and wholeness on the part of the individual.”[13] Therefore, not only does community result from the social construction of meanings and communicative practices of individuals, it helps individuals understand themselves and form perceptions of their identities. The symbolism of community then fosters significant interdependence among citizens as they find mutual meanings for experiences and identities. Since symbolism and interdependence are largely constructed from and dependent upon communication, communication becomes an essential, defining feature of community.[14]

For example, Hogan contends that communities are fundamentally defined by the language they employ. Communities are constituted and sustained by the words of those leading the group.[15] However, a sense of community, asserts Hogan, has unraveled in American society. He expounds, “Wars invariably have led Americans to question their nation’s identity and purposes, as have conflicts over immigration, ethnic differences, and religious doctrines.”[16] In the midst of dissension, community building becomes essential to the sustenance of a culture. Many view the result of defiant moments as a threat to the United States’ “bonds of national cohesion.”[17] This instability leads to a fragmented culture in need of community building to help shape its identity as a nation, and Hogan maintains that nowhere are the issues of community more evident than in public discourse.[18] The language of a collective group gives insight into the practices and values of the community and reveals how they function to maintain the community.

However, while some see the dissension of a collective as a threat to its cohesion, others argue that out of these turbulent times emerge even stronger conceptions of national purpose and character.[19] Hogan cites James Davison Hunter's conclusion that the loss of civility in the national dialogue can actually serve to unite certain communities. Hunter claims that when opposing an adversary, a community expresses a common dissatisfaction toward the opponent's wrongdoings. This corresponds to what was seen in the civil rights movement as organizations began to communicate their frustration with the existing practices of the United States. Hunter affirms that when this common discontent is expressed, "not only is the community drawn together, united as a collectivity, but it is reminded of its heritage, its duty, and its mission to the larger world."[20] Creating a sense of community is essential for marginalized groups as it helps to define themselves and relate rhetorically to the dominant culture. The group's identity becomes reflected in its language, traditions, experiences, and the ambitions shared with others in the larger culture.[21] Communities may become united around common experiences or shared visions of the future which are rhetorically projected through several strategies and give individuals a sense of identity.

Procter asserts that community helps develop one's sense of self. People develop and understand their identity as it relates to their role in the community. Their learned identity then reciprocates an element of a larger identity to the community as these individuals contribute and communicate their views to the public. This participation in their community leads to the development of civic values. Values such as tolerance of diversity, generosity of spirit, fairness to others, and grace are exhibited by their presence or absence in communities.[22] Additionally, Kenneth Wilkinson explains that "people, by

the nature of being human, engage in social relationships with others on a continuing basis" and through these interactions they develop their identity.[23] From these interactions relationships are defined and the structure of the community is formed.[24] Certain interactions bear more meaning than others in their contribution to individual identity and community building, one such interaction being what Procter identifies as "civic communion."

Procter calls significant community interactions, or powerful community moments, "civic communions" and argues that they are "fundamentally a rhetorical and performative civic sacrament functioning to bond citizenry around the social and political structures—local ways of life, community goals, and political operations—of a specific locale."[25] He explains that civic communions differ from communities. While community can be seen as a state of connectedness resulting from common interests in a shared location, civic communions are "symbolic moments which create or celebrate those existing communal structures."[26] In other words, communities are the structures created by symbolism and language, and civic communions are events or moments in which the values of those communities are constructed or highlighted. Civic communions are "performative community moments that transform citizens' latent responses to a locality into collective, emotional, and rhetorical support for local communal structures that eventually become recognized as 'community.'"[27] As citizens work to create and participate in these community performances, they communicate with their fellow citizens and this communication demonstrates that they are important agents in the community.

Their role as agents in the community contributes to the public, collective nature of communions. Procter explains that just as religious communion involves the congregation of a spiritual community passing bread and drink from one to another and listening and responding to religious leaders, civic communions involve groups of citizens performing and interacting together to create and celebrate secular community.[28] Since civic communions are collective, they are dependent upon the voluntary and emotional participation of a group of interested people.[29] Wilkinson argues that the larger the number of participating citizens, local groups, and associations involved in civic communions, the greater sense of legitimacy results for the celebration of communal structures.[30] Moreover, subsequent action among citizens is more likely when discussed in the setting of a community. Citizens have the greatest opportunity to influence political change at the community level and, therefore, are likely to view their community "as more politically efficacious than their state or national political system."[31] The collective participation of citizens in civic communions is a fundamental aspect of their dynamic and evolving nature.

Rather than viewing communions as a given or static condition, civic communions should be viewed as rhetorically constructed as they are an emergent process. A community and the significant interactions, such as civic communions, that take place in a community are continually in flux.[32] They change over time as the values of a community and the language used to express those values evolve. The dynamic nature of civic communions demonstrates the importance of citizens and their communication in the development of a community. With its dynamic nature and the various values developing within a community, it needs some "discursive common

place," or a center of interest, to help shape its overall character. Civic communions serve as this common center where people voluntarily come together for civic association. They are the rhetorical "space" where civic relationships occur.[33] As Procter asserts, "Civic communions are community-coalescing events that establish an open and ethical rhetorical space for creating, crystallizing, and organizing community-building talk for brief and intense moments."[34] These events bring together members of the community to reflect on or to build new community values and structures.

Civic communions function to both connect and solidify internal community groups. The result of civic communion is often a sense of connection and affinity and a mutual sense of belonging.[35] This solidarity results in the creation of communal bonds, which are generated in part by the act of citizens gathering and working together on some collective project, resulting in feeling a sense of connection toward one another.[36] Civic communions highlight certain symbols, histories, values, and experiences that cause citizens to feel a kinship or identification with some communal group.[37] The outcome is an increased camaraderie and group identity. The heightened connection among citizens develops from their shared experiences in the community and their agreement upon the symbols with which they communicate.

The symbolism surrounding community and civic communion gives the participants in a community a vital role. Individuals shape community experiences and relationships through their communication, and, as a result, form the foundation upon which their community is built. Procter suggests that because of the symbolic function of language, the critical focus should be on the rhetorical processes of transforming experience into social forms that subsequently organize community. He contends that the

critic must study the ways in which rhetoric converts experience into culture and history.[38] Community events that encapsulate the values and experiences of a community provide the critic with a focus on which to base their analysis. One “common center” of community that highlights these values is David Procter’s concept, the “dynamic spectacle,” which is a type of civic communion.

Specifically, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom serves an exemplar for such study as it encapsulates various core principles of the civil rights movement through the discourse of several key organizations in the movement. The critical precepts of dynamic spectacle are explored to provide a thorough understanding of the concept. An examination of the March on Washington as a dynamic spectacle follows. The remainder of the chapter attends in detail to the contributions of dynamic spectacle, arrangement, and iconicity to the construction of community in civil rights advocacy.

The March on Washington as a Dynamic Spectacle

Theoretical Precepts of Dynamic Spectacle

Procter explains that we do not experience most events personally, but rather learn of them through the spoken, written, or visual constructions and reconstructions of these events from others.[39] He argues that “society as we know it essentially is spectacle.”[40] Communities are constructed through symbolism and language and certain events serve to signify the essence of communities. These spectacle events are rhetorical constructions and can be observed through their symbolic features. By examining how the rhetoric of a community transforms some event into a demonstration of social order, scholars can observe the symbolic process of establishing, maintaining, and destroying

community. Procter explains that critics should study rhetoric “not as the tool of an individual whose purpose is persuasion, but as the molder of a community, functioning to shape and reinforce values, goals, and actions.”[41] The role of the rhetorical critic from this perspective is to go beyond recognizing that symbols create, sustain, and destroy community and to discuss how symbols accomplish these functions.[42] Not only should critics understand the function of rhetoric in creating communities, they should seek to comprehend the role of the multiple participants working together to form and maintain communities. As a type of civic communion, a dynamic spectacle is a “coalescing event” that encapsulates “a constant flow of arguments” and exemplifies “the way rhetors in a community transform some event into enactment of their social order.”[43]

Procter explains that to accomplish this, spectacles embody a dramatic form. They “evoke a dramatic setting that impinges upon private lives: a scene comprised of effective and ineffective leaders managing the effort to cope with distressing problems and to defend the polity against external and internal enemies.”[44] Thus, spectacles are dramatic accounts of material experience that occurs beyond personal experiences and which is understood only through the symbols developed by some interest group. They are inherently symbolic and help explain the social dynamics of a community.[45]

To illuminate this meaning, Procter observes the dynamic sense of rhetoric. He explains that the view of rhetoric as dynamic suggests that we are surrounded by various judgments of the community and how to properly conduct affairs within the community.[46] While a constant flow of argument exists in community, some uniting event is necessary to bring the arguments together for a brief moment. Such events provide a moment in which the dynamic nature of rhetoric may be studied. These events

form as a result of the combination of multiple views of community members and help reveal the values of a community.[47] For an event to be considered a dynamic spectacle it must contain a fusion of material event with the symbolic construction of that event and with audience needs.[48] The speakers at the March revealed the importance of equality and justice by fusing together their unique approaches to highlight the values of the civil rights movement specifically and the nation broadly. The concept of dynamic spectacle provides critics with a rhetorical frame through which to examine the communicative processes of community-building.

The March on Washington typifies the notion of dynamic spectacle. Mark Vail contends that the March was a dynamic spectacle; however, his article does not delve far enough. Spectacle events are rhetorical because they result from the construction of different rhetors that encourage the audience to acknowledge the salience of a particular issue and perceive the issue or event from the rhetors' perspectives.[49] What makes the spectacle dynamic is the several perspectives offered by different rhetors. The March on Washington provided several interpretations of the event, and looking solely at King's rhetoric does not allow these perspectives to be understood. The March encapsulated the arguments at the height of the civil rights movement. As a socially constructed event containing a variety of perspectives, it represents a dynamic spectacle in which the values of the activist community were revealed to an audience of approximately 250,000 people. This event highlighted the principles of different organizations while maintaining a sense of connectedness and interdependence. The speakers at the March provided several accounts of how to confront the enemy, or the injustices in society and the segregationists that maintain these injustices. They offered a wide range of perspectives for how to

achieve social change in the nation, yet when viewed as a whole, the event demonstrated a sense of unity that contributed to the March's peaceful atmosphere. Although unique in their approaches to change, the connectedness of the speakers' messages created community and exemplified what they wanted the audience to do once the March concluded.

Building Community through a Spectacle Event

In line with Mark Vail's contention, this project seeks to demonstrate how the March served as a dynamic spectacle in which the values of the larger American community were highlighted and the desired values for the African-American community were shaped. Vail asserts that the March was most certainly a "coalescing event" that, for a brief moment, encapsulated the flow of arguments and brought together rhetors with different ideological interpretations of the civil rights movement.[50] However, where Vail ends his argument, with the observation of primarily King's role in the dynamic spectacle, this project begins, with the observation of the speeches that preceded King's to determine their contribution to the creation of this spectacle event as well. Vail argues that perhaps King's address is so well remembered because it accurately reflected the mood generated by the March.[51] However, vastly ignored are the factors that created this mood, including the other speeches' contribution to the atmosphere. Viewing the March through the various discourses provided that day allows an exploration of how the different organizers of the March merged their messages into a cohesive event contributing to the peaceful atmosphere of the day and forming a sense of community. Discussed here are the various perspectives that encapsulated a flow of arguments,

followed by how those views, while distinct, fused in a spectacle event to create the perception of unity and community.

While civil rights movement activists held similar ideas about the need for progress in the nation, there was great diversity among movement leaders for how to go about achieving this progress. The divergence within the movement can be illustrated through the examination of the discourse offered by six March organizers. Although change was their overall goal, each speaker viewed the means for achieving change in a unique way. A. Philip Randolph indicated in his address that changes to the morals and the underlying philosophies of the nation must take place before any other change, such as economic or legislative, can be made. John Lewis, however, believed that legislative change was chief among the adjustments that needed to be made. He maintained that for any meaningful legislation to take place, the nation must take revolutionary action. Walter Reuther argued that mobilization is necessary for change and attempted to bring the audience together for this mobilization by using inclusive language throughout his address. Floyd McKissick emphasized that nonviolent direct-action was the most suitable approach for change. Whitney Young underscored the importance of passing legislation as method of making progress. Roy Wilkins additionally urged legislative action; however, he offered the view that the current bill before congress needed to be strengthened as a way of passing meaningful legislation. The distinct perspectives of the appropriate means for change provided the audience with several views through which to understand their surrounding atmosphere. These views contribute to the dynamic nature of the event as they capture a variety of ways in which to interpret the goals of the March the aims of the movement.

The March emerged at a tumultuous time for the nation with violence seen at almost every demonstration and protest. This instability calls for explanation which is often provided by various leaders or individuals. Procter discusses the type of rhetoric surrounding turbulent times that leads to the creation of dynamic spectacles. He maintains that crises literally "burst upon the public consciousness, [and] present a rhetorical exigency—society must talk about such events to develop a contextual placement that defines their cultural meaning."[52] These events, whether turbulent or celebratory, demand explanation and contextualization. Rhetors with different ideologies provide various interpretations of the event.[53]

The March on Washington was a response to the rhetorical exigency of events prior to the March, such as the violence in Birmingham, the civil rights bill before Congress, and the general atmosphere of segregation and discrimination. Six different speakers each from separate organizations presented their interpretations of the particular circumstances of the nation. The various views at the March offer audience members a range of interpretations of the instability of the nation and contribute to the dynamic nature of a spectacle event. Provided with multiple explanations for the same atmosphere, listeners can reach a broad understanding of the preceding events and their role in the community to mend the damages of its division. Rather than looking at each perspective individually, a thematic observation of the speakers' views is provided, including the following topics: change from a moral perspective, change from an economic perspective, and the March as just a first step in the action the nation needs to take. While their ideologies differ, the ultimate impression of the March was one of unity, and an examination of how this impression was created follows.

Change from a Moral Perspective

One view apparent among several speakers is the perception that the nation needs to undergo a moral transformation in order to progress as a united country. A. Philip Randolph, for example, makes several moral references in his address. He refers to the March as a "massive moral revolution for jobs and freedom."[54] In addition, he asserts, "The sanctity of private property takes second place to the sanctity of the human personality." These statements demonstrate the importance Randolph places on the morality of the movement and indicates that he sees this as central to the movement's success. As the first speaker, Randolph sets up the significance of understanding the movement in terms of its moral foundations. Reaching this understanding is crucial to comprehending the following views. It is from a moral perspective that most change must occur. Activists must realize the ethical roots of movement advocacy early on since what follows stems from this view. Randolph continues, "It falls to the Negroes to reassert this proper priority of values."[55] The fact that these values need to be reasserted implies that they are, at the moment, improper. Randolph expresses that the value system as it currently exists is not morally right, and it is up to the activists to make changes in the nation's value system.

John Lewis discusses the values of the nation as well, but in a much more fervent tone that expresses his dissatisfaction with the current political system. He explains that it is not right to allow only certain citizens to vote and expresses, "One man, one vote is the ethical cry. It is ours too. It must be ours."[56] He explains that it is ethically appropriate for every citizen to have a vote. He also discusses the corruption of the political system as

"dominated by politicians who build their career on immoral compromising and allowing themselves an open form of a political, economic and social exploitation."[57] The skepticism of those in power results from their moral wrongdoings. Lewis stresses that not only is it morally wrong to have corrupt individuals in the political system, but he emphasizes that the system is "dominated" by this type of politician. From this view, activists can see the immorality of the nation's current leaders. Activists may be more inclined to take subsequent action knowing that their current political structure is unethical. The corruption of their current system heightens the importance of their role in the community and demands their attention and action in order to be fixed. He then asks, "But what political leader can stand up and say my party is a party of principle?"[58] This question not only suggests that there are no existing ethical political parties, but that the nation requires such a party to remedy the issues for which civil rights activists are fighting.

Roy Wilkins additionally refers to many American values but with a much more optimistic view. He praises the potential of the nation and says of the nation's leaders, "They know from their vantage point here of the greatness of this whole nation, of its reservoirs of strength."[59] Walter Reuther also refers to morals in many areas of his speech. For example, he states, "To me, the civil rights fight is a moral fight, which transcends partisan politics."[60] He implies that the moral components of the movement are far more crucial than issues of partisan politics. Appealing to this sense of morality allows groups to rise above their differences and unite in a common belief for the good of the country. He talks about mobilizing "the moral conscience of America."[61] He then argues that the political system in America lacks in its efforts for civil rights. Reuther

states, “American democracy has been too long on pious platitudes, and too short on practical performances in this important area.”[62] Here he emphasizes a contrast between ideals and the negative reality in which they actually live. This reference to a lack of moral practices in America also contains alliteration, enhancing its potential influence over audiences. Moreover, he maintains, “It is the responsibility of every American to share the impatience of the Negro Americans.”[63] This sense of shared responsibility is a moral obligation of citizens and working together toward achievement should be a common value among community members. The moral dimensions of these addresses give the audience one way in which to interpret the dynamic spectacle, and the several perspectives on morality allow a versatile view to emerge, permitting the audience to reach their own conclusions about an often ambiguous subject.

Change from an Economic Perspective

Another perspective apparent in the discourse of the March is that change should come as a result of economic equality. One of the objectives of the March was to demonstrate the need for jobs among African-Americans. To express this demand, several speakers spoke about Congress and civil rights legislation. This view offered audience members another interpretation from which to view the current social and political atmosphere of the nation. An additional perspective contributes to the dynamic nature of the March and demonstrates that there are several aspects of the movement that needed attention and those highlighted by the leaders indicated a higher need for attention. While several leaders emphasized this view, Wilkins and Randolph serve as exemplary illustrations of the consideration for economic change. Their ideas are

explored in detail while an overview of other speakers' similar perspectives is provided to illustrate the range of interpretations within this position.

Several March leaders maintained that change needed to occur economically. For example, Lewis asserts that one of the primary reasons for marching was for a growth in jobs. He defends this by asserting, "Of 100 and 1,000 of our brothers are not here, for they're receiving starvation wages, or no wages at all."[64] He continues to discuss the inequity in wages that must be adjusted for progress to be made. While Lewis describes the unfair wages in the nation, Reuther also argues that fair employment must be reached. He contends, "Our slogan has got to be fair employment, but fair employment within the framework of full employment, so that every American can have a job."[65] He describes the unjust economic state and urges that action must be taken to change it. McKissick also offers a perspective of economic equality. He maintains, "We will not slow down. We will not stop our militant, peaceful demonstrations. We will not come off of the streets until we can work at a job befitting of our skills in any place in the land."[66] He emphasizes the need for equal opportunities for jobs as a primary concern. Each of these speakers provides their own interpretations for how economic change should be enacted; yet those whose texts reflect in detail the theme of economic change are Wilkins and Randolph.

Wilkins illustrates his view of economic change and lays out what the marchers desire, "We want employment, and with it, we want the pride, and responsibility, and self-respect that goes with equal access to jobs. Therefore, we want an FEPC bill, as a part of the legislative package."[67] Wilkins is very specific in his address about what the marchers seek to achieve and what they wish Congress to do to help accomplish this

change. He then targets the hypocrisy of the government, “It is simply incomprehensible to us here today, and to millions of others far from this spot that the United States government, which can regulate the contents of a pill, apparently is powerless to prevent the physical abuse of citizens within its own borders.”[68] This statement calls attention to the government’s duplicity and the immorality surrounding their actions. Wilkins’ view places blame on the government, which can incite activists to take measures directed at officials in order to make changes.

Wilkins also describes the weakness of the bill that is currently before Congress, he asserts, “The president’s proposals represent so moderate an approach that if it is weakened or eliminated, the remainder will be little more than sugar water.”[69] Due to this empty bill, Wilkins proposes, “Indeed, as it stands today, the package needs strengthening, and the president should join us in fighting to be sure that we get something more than pap.”[70] Here the activists’ role in their community becomes critical as it is linked to building the bill that is before Congress, a bill that can potentially transform the nation. This perspective allows them to see their importance in bringing about change, and connecting their actions to those of President emphasizes the weight of their role. Wilkins then suggests, “We declare that rules are made to enable the congress to legislate, and not to keep it from legislating, and we’re tired of hearing rules cited as a reason why they can’t act. We expect the passage of an effective civil rights bill.”[71] Throughout his address, Wilkins clearly articulates the aims of the marchers and their purpose for being there. Not only does he emphasize the organizers’ aim for economic progress, he asserts that they want effective legislative change as well to help achieve that aim.

Randolph also discusses the economic change that needs to take place for progress to be made. His view broadens the scope of the problem of unemployment. When discussing their economic justification for the March, he asserts, "But this civil rights revolution is not confined to the Negroes, nor is it confined as civil rights. Or our white allies know that they cannot be free, while we are not."[72] He continues, "And we know that we have no future in a society in which six million, black and white people, are unemployed, and millions more living poverty."[73] Connecting the economic struggle of African-Americans with all American citizens amplifies the extent to which the problem reaches. This provides listeners with an understanding of the seriousness of the economic issues the speakers discuss and that they are not limited to African-Americans. Randolph then explains that economic change must be accompanied by a larger transformation of the economic system. He contends,

> Nor is the goal of our civil rights revolution merely the passage of civil rights legislation. Yes, we want all public accommodations open to all citizens, but those accommodations will mean little to those who cannot afford to use them. Yes, we want a fair employment practice act, but what good will it do if profit geared automation destroys the jobs of millions of workers?[74]

Randolph explains that economic change is required along with legislative change. He connects several topics of change throughout his address and clearly explains that they are interdependent. Moreover, he asserts that the marchers will not be satisfied with change in simply one area, as other areas require just as much attention and the change made in one area will be rendered useless so long as they continue their old ways in another matter.

These views of change from an economic perspective give the audience an additional interpretation of their surrounding environment and contribute to the dynamic element of the March as a spectacle event.

The March as Just the Beginning

A further interpretation of the event is that the March on Washington is just the beginning of the action that needs to be taken to achieve the organizers' goals. Lewis espouses this position and demonstrates that the marchers will not be content with the slow progression they have seen thus far; they want to see change immediately and will not stop protesting, speaking, marching, etc. until change is reached. He contends that the March on Washington is not the end of their demonstrations and that they will continue to march through the streets of the South. Lewis stresses the importance of prompt action throughout his address and maintains the position that they will not back down until progress is achieved.

Young also discusses the March on Washington as an initial step for the movement. For instance, he talks about how marchers must continue their efforts when they arrive home, "We must work together, even more closely back home where the job must be done to see that Negro Americans are accepted as first-class citizens, and that they are enabled to do some more marching."[75] He recognizes that a single March will not change the entire nation. Young maintains, "How serious our national leaders are will be measured not by words, but by the speed, and sincerity, with which they pass necessary legislation."[76] He concludes by explaining that until the nation's leaders begin to take the steps necessary to correct the damage that has been done, "this is the real

significance of our march today, August 28, 1963. Our march is a march for America. It is a march just begun."[77] Speaking of the March as just a beginning indicates that there will be more demonstrations, marches, protests that follow this event, and the audience must take on an active role in their communities to make this happen.

Reuther also mentions that the March is merely a first step in the effort for progress. He states, "This rally is not the end, it's the beginning. It's the beginning of a great moral crusade to arouse America to the unfinished work of American democracy."[78] He also asserts, "this rally today should be the first step in a total effort to mobilize the moral conscience of America."[79] Not only does Reuther discuss the March as just a first step toward progress, he talks about the government's role as well. He contends, "Now, the president, President Kennedy, has offered a comprehensive and moderate bill. That bill is the first meaningful step."[80] Reuther's discussion of these "first steps" suggests that there is still much work that needs to be done and more steps that must be taken. He then concludes, "So let this be the beginning of that great crusade to mobilize the moral conscious of America, so that we can [achieve] freedom, and justice, and equality, and first-class citizenship for every American."[81] Reuther indicates that the March is not their end goal, it is only the beginning of what they wish to accomplish and it will be used to energize activists, but they are nowhere near being finished in their attempts to seek change in the nation. This perspective emphasizes the audience's role in their community. If an event as large as the March is simply the first step in a series of action that needs to take place, even more effort will be needed to execute subsequent steps, and the audience plays a critical role in ensuring their communities will take collective action.

Unity among Perspectives

The organizers offered a variety of interpretations of the event and the audience's surrounding social and political atmosphere. These different views contributed to the March's diversity and reflection of the numerous values within the community, which is instrumental to its function as a dynamic spectacle. The March served as a rhetorical space in which community could be discussed and constructed. The speakers' messages encapsulated the arguments of the movement and reflected the essence of subsequent action. Although organizers offer a variety of perspectives through their speeches, the tone of the March as a whole remains united. In collaborating for the March, organizers often mentioned that their overall goal was unity. The way in which this was achieved was through the Marchers' similarity in objectives and language. While each believed in a different route for change, all agreed that, broadly, change was the ultimate goal. As can be implied from the desire for change, each speaker also believed that the current state of the nation is unsuitable. Emphasizing a common purpose allowed Marchers to express their individual views and remain dedicated to their unique visions while maintaining the unity necessary for such a large event. Though many themes emerged within the speakers' messages, they conveyed a universal message that prevailed over individual sentiments, and that message was one of cohesion and community.

Providing these varying perspectives encapsulated the "constant flow of arguments" of the time and offered several interpretations for the audience to consider. Although each speaker provided a unique interpretation of the event and factors that led to the event, the collection of views demanded change and reinforced this demand with each new perspective offered. The variation among perspectives signified the acceptance

of diversity while the underlying cohesion promoted unity. This dynamic aided in the communicative process of community building as it revealed a variety of values and judgments on how to properly conduct affairs within the community. The fusion of material at this event reflected the importance of agency within the community and its function in transforming the nation. Viewing the March as a dynamic spectacle aids in understanding its contribution to community building among activists, but in treatment with an analysis of the arrangement of collective speeches, the understanding of how community was created through the March is strengthened. The theoretical principles of arrangement and how these principles relate to the March's presentation follow in order to comprehend their role in creating community.

Arrangement of the March on Washington

Theoretical Tenets of Arrangement

In addition to observing the various interpretations offered by the speakers, an examination of the arrangement of the elements within the March is necessary to understand how the March functioned as a whole to construct an impression of unity and cohesion. Not only did the content in the speakers' messages demonstrate a sense of community, the way the discourse at the March was arranged bears significance to community construction as well. The order in which the speakers presented their ideas built up to King's address, making his the grand finale of the event. King repeated many messages from the earlier speeches, producing repetition of generally the same content and emphasizing the need for change and subsequent action once the March concluded. This reinforced the overall message of the March and created cohesion among a variety

of groups, demonstrating a sense of community action and the need to work cooperatively to achieve change.

The sequence of the components found in a speech and the way in which an argument is arranged can influence its success as a rhetorical tool. Richard Whately uses the term arrangement to refer to "the ordering of logical, ethical, and emotional proofs within the body of a speech."[82] These elements refer to the internal composition of a text. The suitable order of the elements in an address should be determined by the rhetor who will then construct their message in a way that is necessary to achieve their goal. Ordering the elements in an appropriate manner will make the appeal to listeners more captivating.[83] The arrangement, or form, of an argument involves the recurring patterns in discourse or action. These patterns can include: the repeated use of images, metaphors, arguments, structural arrangements, configurations of language, or a combination of such elements.[84] The recurrence of these patterns enhances the audience's likelihood of remembering the message. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson explain that repetition is a rhetorical strategy that implies that a key idea needs to be established and emphasized.[85] The key idea is seen as a recurrent theme throughout the message, indicating its importance to the overall implication of the message. Campbell and Jamieson maintain that the repetition of an argument increases the receiver's ability to decipher the appropriate information and enhances their understanding of the meaning behind the message.[86] The vital elements of the discourse are emphasized through the reiteration of certain words and phrases, heightening its meaning. When words and phrases are repeated, their significance is amplified for listeners and they are more likely to be remembered. Understanding the meaning behind the communication of a movement

is crucial to a group's commitment to the movement and subsequent action in the community.

Essential in the arrangement of an argument, particularly if the argument is repeated, are the introductory parts of the text. The introduction demonstrates the importance of the subject, its interesting qualities, and shows that the subject has been neglected, misunderstood, or misrepresented.[87] It tells the audience the rationale behind the message and demonstrates the key components of the argument to follow. The beginning of an address prepares the audience for the reasoning to be employed and presents a description of what is to come later in the composition. Whately maintains that there is a close relationship between the invention, use, and arrangement of proofs, or the propositions and arguments of a text.[88] Speakers formulate their argument and present it in a way that appeals to listeners. Thus, the manner in which the components of a text are presented likely influences the audience's reception to the message. The way the components, or addresses, at the March on Washington were arranged allowed the audience to become familiarized with the themes presented and prompted a favorable reception for the final speech of the day, King's "I Have a Dream" address. That is not to say that the messages before King determined his success, but simply that the preceding speeches built up to his address and their similar and repeated components influenced the sense of community that was constructed at the March.

Arrangement of the Addresses at the March

Whately asserts that the sequence of ideas in a speech can influence the power of the message. This project, however, focuses on the ordering of the components within the

body of the March rather than within a single speech. The way in which the March was assembled lends a valuable opportunity for critical examination. Although the determination for the order of speakers before King is not clear, the fact that King spoke last and that this decision was intentional bears significance. The speakers that came before King established the magnitude of the March and indicated a sense of importance for King's address and the March as a whole. Mark Vail contends that "the spectacle and [King] exhibited a consonance that fostered a favorable reception of King's message."[89] Although this correspondence is present, a closer examination of the March's discourse and arrangement is required to comprehend sufficiently how it is reached. Explored here are the ways in which earlier speeches foreshadowed King's message, prompting audience members for ensuing arguments. Next is a look at the configuration of language among speeches, including creating a sense of urgency for action and constructing community from this action.

Foreshadowing King

As Whately laid out, the introductory components of a speech can set up the audience to become more receptive to an argument. The speakers that came before King foreshadowed several parts of his address, prompting the audience to listen for these elements and contributing to the overall sense of unity at the March. While several leaders served to preview King, Reuther and Lewis provided the most representative examples of this theme. Their words are attended to in detail while the others are summarized to depict their connections to King.

Randolph foreshadows a segment of King's address when he asserts, "This revolution reverberates throughout the land, touching every city, every town, every village…"[90] His words are similar to what King expresses about letting "freedom ring." He declares, "When we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city…"[91] Randolph's address acquaints the audience to a component in King's speech which heightens their receptivity to the message. The similarity between their words allows the audience to become familiar with a prominent point in King's address before it is delivered by King himself. Wilkins also foreshadows an element of King's speech. When discussing the lack of legislative progress he asserts, "The attorney general must be empowered to act on his own initiative in the denial of any civil right, not just one or two, but any civil right, in order to wipe out this shameful situation."[92] This serves as an introduction to King's depiction of the nation. King states, "One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition."[93] Although minor, the similarity in their view of the nation helps to emphasize the state of the nation for audience members as it is repeated. These examples provide smaller instances in which King's address is foreshadowed, but those whose addresses more closely reflect a foreshadowing of King are Reuther and Lewis.

Reuther previews King's "I Have a Dream" speech in several areas. First, at the beginning of his speech Reuther declares, "For 100 years, the Negro people searched for first-class citizenship."[94] While this is a small resemblance of King's well-known repetition of the phrase "One hundred years later," it nonetheless serves as a precursor to King's speech. It sets up the audience for a significant element in King's address by

serving as an introduction to the phrase. Whitney Young also makes this connection when he asserts, “That we meet here today is a tribute also to all black Americans, who for 100 years have continued in peaceful and orderly protest to bear witness to our deep faith in America.”[95] The emphasis on the amount of time the African-American community has been struggling to achieve equal status as Americans amplifies the significance of the day.

Another reference surfaces when Reuther states, “And we need to join together, to march together, and to work together…”[96] This statement reflects King’s vision, that “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.”[97] Not only is there repetition within the phrases spoken by each rhetor, the parallelism that results from both speakers ending their expressions with “together” likely heightens the audience’s reception to this message. It emphasizes the need to work together as a collective group, demonstrating their interconnectedness as a community. Reuther also foreshadows King when he asserts, “This rally is not the end, it’s the beginning,” which corresponds to King’s antithetical remark, “Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning.”[98] Additionally, there are similarities in their visions for freedom that extend to the entire nation. They both broaden their views for change and explicitly state how far they wish this change to reach. Reuther contends that freedom should be seen by all citizens and “not only in certain parts of America, but in every part of America from Boston to Birmingham from New York to New Orleans, and from Michigan to Mississippi.”[99] In a similar fashion, King famously concludes his address by calling out the phrase “let freedom ring” from a range of places around the United States,

including “the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire,” “the mighty mountains of New York,” “the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania,” “the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado,” “the curvaceous slopes of California,” “from Stone Mountain of Georgia,” “from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee,” and “from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.”[100] Although not as ornately expressed as King, Reuther similarly discusses freedom being reached in all parts of the nation. This prompts the audience’s reception to a key part of King’s address. Moreover, the mention of these places is found at the end of both addresses, adding another point of similarity.

Lewis also previews King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. It is unclear whether these references were intentional but they are evident nonetheless. For example, Lewis asserts, “Get in and stay in the streets of every city, every village and hamlet of this nation until true freedom comes.”[101] This serves as a preview to King’s statement about letting freedom ring. King illustrates, “when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city…”[102] Since the audience hears this message multiple times, they are more likely to remember it. Similarities in argument, argues Whately, reinforce the audience’s understanding of the subject and create a favorable reception of the repeated messages. The content offered in the speeches before King foreshadowed his message and acquainted the audience with several themes that were significant not only to King’s address but to the collective message of the March. Becoming familiar with these themes early in the March leads to greater reception of later arguments that align with those themes.

Community Construction through Language Configuration

Not only do the introductory parts, or addresses, at the March familiarize the audience with arguments that are to come, but the alignment of themes among speeches encourages the audience's acceptance of the collective message. As Whately asserts, the arrangement of a message can be constructed through the configuration of language and messages. Through the examination of the texts at the March, an alignment of the language used and message behind that language becomes evident. The texts coordinate with King's address as well as each others' addresses. Examined here are two prominent themes that emerged in language configuration. One view offered through the marchers' messages is that the action necessary for change is urgent. Another view is that through this action and working together the audience can successfully build their community.

The speakers emphasize the need for prompt action once the March concludes. For example, in reference to the often suggested approach of gradualism, John Lewis asks, "How long can we be patient?"[103] In response to this suggestion from his opponents, Lewis questions, "You're talking about slow down and stop? We will not stop, all of the forces of Eastland, Barnett, Wallace and Thurmond will not stop this revolution."[104] These challenging questions add a compelling element to Lewis' address that likely stimulate thought and become more memorable to the audience. His message, like others that stress the importance of subsequent action, emphasizes the urgency of taking part in community efforts.

Additionally, Lewis establishes the importance of taking immediate action, which is also another point of similarity between Lewis' address and King's. This connection appears when Lewis contends,

> If we do not get meaningful legislation out of this Congress, the time will come, but we will not confine our march into Washington. We will march through the south, through the streets of Jackson, through the streets of Danville, through the streets of Cambridge, through the streets of Birmingham.[105]

This closely resembles King's assertion that the year 1963 is not an end but a beginning, and that efforts need to be continued after the March. King warns, "And 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."[106] This "rude awakening" is similar to what Lewis refers to when he indicates that the activists will continue marching after the March on Washington concludes if they do not "get meaningful legislation." Whitney Young also establishes this link. He stresses the urgency of remaining active once the March is through, and this is similar to King's caution that the nation will be in for a rude awakening if they return to "business as usual" after the March. Young explains, "One should not seek here to atone for his past failures, as a responsible citizen of the majority group. The evils of the past, and the guilt about it cannot be erased by a one-day pilgrimage, however magnificent."[107] He asserts that there is much more work to be done if the nation is to make up for its history of wrongdoings and immorality. He stresses,

> And so this March must go beyond this historic moment for the true test of the rededication, and the commitment, which should flow from this meeting will be in recognition that however impressed or however incensed, our congressional representatives are by this demonstration. They will not act because of it alone.[108]

Just as other speakers emphasized, Young recognizes that a single March will not change the entire nation and the communities must continue acting once the March is over.

Aligning with the other messages of urgency, McKissick also stresses the importance of immediate action in his address. For example, he calls attention to the fact that some demonstrators have died as result of their efforts and some may die in the future, but that this will not stop them from taking action. He maintains, "Some of us may die like William L. Moore or Medgar Evers, but our war is for life, not for death, and we will not stop our demand for freedom now."[109] He indicates that the activists' work must continue and will not end until they reach their goals. Not only is urgency stressed here, but the message is also one of persistence. He explains, "We will not stop our marching feet until our kids have enough to eat, and their minds can study a wide range without being cramped in Jim Crow schools."[110] This sense of determination and urgency is vital in building and maintaining communities and encourages activists to remain dedicated to their cause and their community.

In their attempt to build community, the organizers at the March on Washington also emphasized working together and maintaining strength as a community to achieve their goals. Randolph, for instance, urges, "In the struggle against these forces, all of us should be prepared to take to the streets the spirit and techniques that built the labor movement, founded churches, and now guides the civil rights revolution."[111] He concludes his address by advising that the struggle must be continued after the March when activists return to their communities. He insists, "When we leave it will be to carry on the civil rights revolution home with us, and to every nook and cranny of the land."[112] This indicates that activists must not only use this particular day in Washington, D.C. to demonstrate their commitment to the movement, they must act in their own communities

to continue their efforts, remain as active members of their communities, and ultimately reach their objectives.

Floyd McKissick develops the process of building community by emphasizing the role of the citizen in his address. In his portrayal of the audience as agents of change in the community, he heightens the urgency of their actions by characterizing such efforts as a struggle. He asserts, for example, "By marching on Washington, your trampin' feet have spoken the message, the message of our struggle in Louisiana. You have given notice of the struggles of our people in Mississippi and Alabama too."[113] McKissick legitimizes the audience's role in the March and emphasizes the importance of their measures. He also discusses the need to "carry on the battle" in order to achieve progress in social change. To highlight the aims for the movement, McKissick explains, "So we are fighting not only for our rights, and our freedom, we are fighting not only to make our nation safe for democracy it preaches, we are fighting also to give our old world a fighting chance for survival."[114] Characterizing the efforts of the movement as a struggle demonstrates the amount of effort activists must put in to achieve their goals and amplifies the seriousness of the movement and the need for community to aid in the process of change. Since they face a struggle, community members depend on each other for support. Their interdependence is intensified when such a powerful force confronts them. In order to overcome this struggle successfully, community members must work together to build strength and triumph in their endeavor. Faced with such a large task, McKissick instructs the audience how to participate in their communities, "Play well your roles in your struggle for freedom. In the thousands of communities from which you have come throughout the land, act with valor, and dignity, and act without fear."[115]

Framing the movement as a struggle implies that the activists must have a certain amount of strength and bravery to move forward and endure the struggle, which further validates their importance in the community. Walter Reuther, the only white speaker of the day, also contributes to this view when he proclaims, "I am here today with you because with you I share the view that the struggle for civil rights, and the struggle for equal opportunity is not the struggle of Negro Americans, but the struggle for every American to join in."[116] This further unifies the marchers and illustrates the connection among citizens in their communities.

Young stresses the importance of developing community as well. He contends, "We must support the strong. We must give courage to the timid. We must remind the indifferent, and we must warn the opposed."[117] The repeated phrase emphasizes the actions the audience should take. He also explains, "We meet here today in common cause, not as white people nor as black people nor as members of any particular group, as a tribute to those Americans, who dared to live up and to practice our democratic ideals, and our religious heritage."[118] He indicates that this demonstration and their peaceful conduct "bear witness to our deep faith in America."[119] Young illustrates the common bond among audience members as American citizens and reminds them of the ideals they should value. This reflects not only the community among activists, but reminds the audience of the larger community to which they are connected.

Wilkins also urges the significance of community building. He asserts, "If those who support the bill will fight for it, as hard, and as skillfully, as the southern opposition fights against it, victory will be ours."[120] He compares the strength that community members require in their struggle as comparable to that of the opposition, which is a

powerful force. With this comparison, the audience can visualize the kind of vigor Wilkins discusses when he says they need to fight for the bill that is before Congress to pass. He then encourages the marchers to actively participate in their communities, "When we return home, keep up the speaking by letter, and telegram, and telephone, and wherever possible, by a personal visit."[121] Wilkins emphasizes the need for people to work together in their communities to realize their goals and demonstrates that greater unity will be achieved through communal efforts.

As discussed when observing the different perspectives offered by leaders, several other speakers refer to the March as the beginning step in a series of steps that must be taken when the March is completed if they wish to realize fully their vision for change. Not only is the reiteration of the idea significant, but the arrangement of the discourse symbolizes the meaning behind the idea as well. Since the speakers before King emphasized this assertion several times in their own addresses, when King spoke of the necessity of continued action, the audience was likely more receptive to the idea since it had been repeated several times. Not only do the speakers' description of the March as "just the beginning" indicate that there is still more work to be done until they reach their ultimate goal, the speeches at the March themselves seem to be "first steps" that lead up to King's address which portrays their ultimate vision for the future. With each speaker presenting some perspective for change, the audience is set up to hear several versions of how to bring about change within the community. Just as the March is only the first step in the major progress that needs to occur to achieve their ultimate vision for change, the speeches before King serve as steps that lead up to King's speech, or the presentation of

their ultimate vision for change. King's address acts as the grand finale to a series of performances and reflects the final unity that they wish to accomplish.

While the foreshadowing of King and the configuration of language and similar messages may be unintentional, their role in emphasizing the arguments of the March is significant when viewing the demonstration as a whole. The arrangement of the discourse at the March stressed the goals and values of the speakers by not only establishing recurring themes throughout their addresses, but also through the order in which these ideas were presented. The proposals set forth at the March were intensified through each reiterated phrase or concept. The configuration of ideas in the speakers' messages emphasized their overall call for community building. Just as the language of the speakers contributed to this message, the arrangement of the speeches demonstrates a sense of incremental community building through step-by-step action. In turn, the materialization of the March as a dynamic spectacle that encompassed the views of several leaders iconically represented the unified vision for the nation held by these leaders and drove subsequent movement rhetoric.

Iconic Representation of Agency in the Community

Theoretical Principles of Iconicity

Not only did the speakers' language of community contribute to an atmosphere of civic communion, the March's physical representation of community reflected elements of a collectivity as well that aided in the March's ability to build community. Just as meaning results from the way in which the words of a message are arranged, meaning in a rhetorical composition also results from the interaction between its form and content.

This interaction is identified in a phenomenon known as “iconicity.”[122] Iconicity is “a relationship between a sign and its object (often a linguistic pattern or another sign) in which the form of the sign replicates the object in some way.”[123] In other words, the form of the discourse emulates the meaning it represents. To elucidate this term, Michael Leff and Andrew Sachs explain that an icon is a sign that has a nonarbitrary relation to what it represents. As opposed to a symbol, an icon is a representational mark that holds an actual resemblance to what it signifies.[124] The word or representation imitates the essence of the overall implication behind the message. This code or representation, therefore, “is iconic to the extent that it imitates the meanings that it represents.”[125] This unique phenomenon emerges through the material representation of the meaning a rhetor conveys through his or her words.

Leff and Sachs explain that with the exception of a few onomatopoetic words, the symbols of language are not iconic and the relationship between words and meanings is arbitrary. Words typically do not imitate what they signify and have only an arbitrary relationship to their meaning.[126] While most word meanings are conventional, a rather different situation is encountered when words are combined in phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and discourses. Leff and Sachs explain that “above the level of the word, discursive form often enacts representational content.”[127] The form of the text symbolizes the rhetor’s meaning. When iconic representation emerges in a message, form and meaning overlap one another and interact cooperatively to produce a larger structure of meaning.[128] Iconicity, explain Leff and Sachs, has “a power much like metaphor: it rests on the intuitive recognition of similarities between one field of reference (the form of language) and another.”[129] The resulting impact enhances argument as it is reinforced not

only through words but through structure and embodiment. Bruce Mannheim explains that an effect produced from iconicity is that it fits the form of a speech event closely to the specific contours of its setting, making it compelling to the participants and providing the cues with which to interpret the argument presented. He explains that iconic expressions create a resemblance of reality that links the performance with the events being described.[130] Therefore, the words spoken represent the vision that they describe.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson provide an example to illustrate how iconicity functions. They explain that if one were to say someone is "very, very, very tall" it would convey a different meaning than if one said, "He is very tall."[131] The repeated words lengthen the sentence and change its meaning even though no further semantic content is added. The meaning changes because the form of the longer sentence iconically represents the person described.[132] This "imitative relationship" occurs generally because of our expectation that "more of form is more of content," or as Leff and Sachs write, "the bigger the linguistic container, the greater the matter it must contain."[133] This idea has particular significance for oratorical texts since a dominant stylistic feature in this area is the use of repetition. Leff and Sachs contend that this device seems to function "not only as an aesthetic embellishment, or an aid to memory, but as a way of adding 'content' to the discourse, and thus it assumes an argumentative function."[134] Repetition not only emphasizes a phrase or argument, but the material extension of the overall content gives that argument importance.

Overall, Leff and Sachs contend that iconicity is a regularly occurring phenomenon seen in language-use that reveals an interaction between form and meaning. They assert that as a rhetorical device, iconicity demonstrates the power of discourse to

combine form and meaning in unison which “invites audiences to experience that world as the text represents it.”[135] Mannheim concludes that,

> Iconicity can inhere in virtually any aspect of language, culture, and society, making reference to the world assumed to be outside of language; to aspects of the social situation; to crystallized patterns elsewhere in the language or culture; to essentialized social domains; and from one piece of a text or of a social performance and another.[136]

The presence of an iconically symbolic text helps listeners interpret the argument presented through its meaning in the context in which it appears. When a message is reinforced through not only its content but its representational form, audiences have multiple avenues of interpretation and the argument’s strength increases due to the cooperation of form and content. The audience is not only given a linguistic expression of the argument, the case is then reinforced through the structural representation of that argument making it more compelling and more memorable. The way in which the March transpired allowed audience members to interpret the addresses through more than their content alone. The structure of the March and its overall message of unity reinforced the speakers’ words that called for community building. As a dynamic spectacle representing multiple views of the community, the March served as an iconic moment imitating the desired subsequent advocacy urged through the leaders’ words.

Iconically Representing Community through the March

The organization of the March and the order with which it transpired symbolized how the speakers wanted the nation to act in order to achieve progress. The March was

comprised of a collection of civil rights groups representing distinct ideologies that came together in a single, united event. This spectacle event represents the unity for which the marchers strived. Mark Vail asserts that there is a conceptual integration that occurs in King's address not only from section to section but from sentence to sentence as well. This project extends that notion and examines the integration that takes place from speech to speech. This observation demonstrates how the discourse at the March and the way in which it was arranged iconically symbolized the unity for which the speakers fought.

The form of the March on Washington, produced by the combination of a variety of messages, embodied the goal of the marchers. When observed individually, each leader held a unique view for the means of social change. Yet viewed as a whole, the March symbolized a unified group of people arguing for the same cause. This representation holds an actual resemblance to what the leaders discuss. The presence of a united group of diverse speakers serves as a material representation of the meaning these rhetors are conveying. The simultaneous existence of several distinct views demonstrated tolerance for dissent and differing opinions, yet the tone of the March encouraged cohesion. The form of the spectacle event mirrors the meaning they wish to communicate. Not only did the discourse of the March communicate a sense of community building, but the March's form contributed to this sense as well. The March's messages and form overlap one another and interact cooperatively to produce a larger structure of meaning. The representation of community signified the overall objective of the March and called for subsequent demonstrations to achieve equality in the nation while allowing multiple views to coexist. The call for community is not only explicitly

stated through the speakers' words, but is enhanced through the organizers' embodiment of this argument. The content of the March as well as the way in which it was presented contributes to the speakers' call for community building.

The idea discussed by Leff and Sachs that "more of form is more of content" serves as a possible explanation for why there were multiple speakers at the March. The more "material," or discourse, there was at the March contributed to the impression that there was more content and, therefore, more significance. Though there was a large amount of material presented at the March, much of the content was repeated by each speaker and finally emphasized by King. Although not much original material was introduced, the reiterated content gave the impression that there was much more substance than was actually offered. The impression of added material signifies the importance of the March and validates further action. Since the March contained multiple messages and a variety of speakers, audience members get the impression that the event is meaningful. While several addresses were presented, the actual content of these messages emerged as recurrent themes among speakers. The duplicated content reinforced the arguments offered and created the appearance of further content. The repetition of messages is also perhaps why King was so well remembered. He reiterated many of the things the other speakers said, making his message more memorable overall. Furthermore, the unity the March symbolized and how it went about demonstrating this representation led to a sense of community building among organizers. Community and cohesion become essential in turbulent times and the March on Washington as a spectacle event demonstrated the possibility of community in spite of the instability of the time.

Although common values are developed and communicated through civic communions, conflicting views are often what encourages communions to occur in the first place. Procter asserts that organized community conflict is one form of social drama that functions as civic communion. This conflict involves community debates over economic issues, issues involving power and authority, or from differences over cultural values and beliefs that are public and of concern to a significant number of citizens.[137] These conflicts function to organize divergent rhetorical communities, generate emotional responses to community structures, and highlight diverse community views.[138] When a community faces some form of disagreement, disparate communities offer various responses to the issues being discussed and reveal their visions of community.[139] The larger American community faced various disagreements throughout the civil rights movement and several of these disputes were displayed at the March through the leaders' different perspectives.

As discussed when referring to the dynamics of the March, the citizens at the March on Washington were provided with numerous responses to the issues of civil rights and a variety of visions for the future. The discourse at the March and the way in which it was presented fit the form of the event and closely matched the specific contours of its setting, and, as Bruce Mannheim argues, this makes the argument compelling to the participants and provides the cues with which to interpret the case presented. The atmosphere of the day surfaced in a peaceful manner and the addresses at the March reflected the same mood. Their peaceful arrangement signified the peace with which they desire future action to transpire. In addition, the fact that there were numerous groups each with different perspectives that organized this unified event, an event that occurred

pleasantly, demonstrates the positive outcome that can be achieved through working together as a community. The March itself symbolized the unity for which the speakers spoke. As distinct organizations with varying views for change, the speakers demonstrated not only the acceptance of diversity but how differing groups can work together and still achieve unity. Within the variety of perspectives also existed the shared view that the citizens must take action. Taking action was discussed as part of the audience's role as community members. Since civic engagement is not an isolated endeavor, citizens are more likely to contribute and remain as important agents in their community. As part of a collective, they are more likely to view their actions as essential for the community to work together successfully.

As previously mentioned, Kenneth Wilkinson argues that the larger the number of participants and groups involved in civic communions, the greater sense of legitimacy results for the celebration of communal structures.[140] With about a quarter of a million participants and ten civil rights organizations represented at the March on Washington, the legitimacy of this event was well-established. This legitimacy of the March could not have resulted had only the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and King been represented at the March. King needed the other organizations and speakers to give his own address more legitimacy. The speakers before King demonstrated the audience's role in the community and gave them a sense of self and identity through the description of their roles. King then ultimately served as the archetypal view that gave the citizens hope in achieving change through their roles as citizens.

The incremental presentation of the speeches at the March built up to King's address and provided the audience with several perspectives from which to view the

goals of the movement and their roles in the community. The discourse at the March as well as the performance of the March itself symbolized the action the speakers wished the audience to take. Through their own collective action in forming the March and ultimately presenting a unified message, the speakers physically represented the action they urged from the audience. This depiction invited audiences to experience collective action personally, allowing a more comprehensive understanding of what was expected of them than could be reached through words alone. Understanding their part in the community is essential to taking subsequent action and achieving cohesion in their community.

Conclusion

The March on Washington, when viewed as a dynamic spectacle, reveals the values of the organizers which reflect the values of the community as well. Through their divergent messages, the leaders of the March projected their vision of freedom and justice and invited participants to join their cause. Although unique with each speaker, the discourse at the March imitated the sense of unity the organizers desired in the nation. Their iconic representation of a community working together to achieve a common objective symbolized their vision for unity in ways that their words alone could not. Examining the discourse preceding the more well-known oration of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the arrangement of the March as a whole reveals the ways in which the event maintained order and cohesion in a time of turmoil in the nation and with disagreement even among the leaders who created such a unified and peaceful event. With their role in the community clearly described, audience members could understand their identities and

place in society. With this understanding and the need for change emphasized, audience members are more likely to partake in subsequent action as it is not only necessary but it is their role as community members to contribute to something with which they are affiliated. Observing the March as a whole through the discourse preceding King allows this assessment to be reached and illuminates the dynamics of community building in an unstable time in the nation.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

August 28, 1963

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom generated unprecedented attention from the media and from the nation as a whole. At a tumultuous time, the March emerged as a symbol of hope for the civil rights movement. This period exhibited much division and antipathy as the nation attempted to resolve a long history of racial inequality. Segregationists wished to maintain the current position of racial division while movement activists desired a united and equal treatment of all races. The conflicts that arose due to the issue of segregation and discrimination often led to brutal retaliation. The events prior to the March generated an overall sense of violence throughout the country. However, unfolding without disturbance, August 28, 1963, stood out as a peaceful day among the turbulent days the nation had seen prior. This project examined how the discourse at the March contributed to this atmosphere and helped construct a sense of community.

This project examined the texts that came before Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, their objectives, and the means for pursuing those objectives. The textual data suggested that while each speaker represented a separate organization with differing goals, their goals also overlapped. As mentioned, one common thread was the emphasis on the need for community. As the details in Chapter Three revealed, the aim for community included a range of tactics, three of which were illuminated using the teachings of dynamic spectacle, arrangement, and iconicity. While these reveal much about discourse as an

exercise in community building, the events of the remainder of the decade cannot be ignored. Despite the goals of community building and the fact that the March and its program for creating community became an anthem for the nation in the years immediately following, it would be naive to think that this sentiment remained permanent. For as anyone who studies the decade knows, 1963 may have been the pinnacle of nonviolent protests and hope for progress in the movement, but what followed did not live up to the hopeful precedents it laid out; violence persisted in the nation and internal conflicts in the movement arose in the years following the March. Still, to pay attention only to King, and to disregard what else happened at the March, provides an incomplete picture of the moment. Although the March did not permanently "cure" the nation and division still remained and even grew within the movement, it does not mean that the leaders' addresses should not be studied as an attempt in building community. David J. Garrow points out that although the ultimate aim of the March was far from fully realized upon the March's completion, there was a sense of renewed faith in the movement that motivated activists, as King urged in his address, to "go back to the South" and continue working toward their goals.[1] Although the community building function was not long lasting, studying the speakers' attempts to generate community is still valuable as it reveals possible strategies of unification during times of division. One particular view of community building can be seen through the March's presence as a dynamic spectacle, the arrangement of the speeches, and the March as an iconic representation of community for the nation, as this thesis demonstrated.

Review of the Analysis

This project sought to illuminate the rhetorical strategies employed during a critical moment in the civil rights movement and in the nation's history. Typically studied within the movement and at the March itself is the rhetoric of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. While he serves as an exemplar for movement rhetoric and remarkable oratory in general, viewing the March from solely his perspective omits crucial details of the March and rhetorical tools utilized by activists. As a supplement to existing research that primarily focuses on King's role in the March, this project aimed to highlight the perspectives of six leaders that played a crucial role in the organization and implementation of the March. In order to achieve this, an analysis of the collective discourse of the March was examined. Chapter One detailed the project's foundation and rationale, Chapter Two delineated the contextual factors that contributed to the materialization and influence of the March, and Chapter Three analyzed the six speeches that preceded King in relation to how they functioned in the March to create a sense of community in the nation.

Chapter One introduced the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and explained the lack of attention to the addresses of the day. This chapter oriented the reader to the civil rights movement and the activism surrounding this period. Along with familiarizing the reader with the general context of the movement, Chapter One discussed the rhetoric of protest and the rhetoric of social movements. Also provided was a literature review of previous studies of the March on Washington. The review revealed a deficiency in terms of the historical discussion of the March as well as rhetorical scholarship covering the event. Most studies focused on King's famous words and

overlooked the remaining texts, leaving an absence of inquiry about multiple speakers within social movement rhetoric. With consideration to these details, the chapter presents a rationale for the current project, maintaining that closer examination of the overlooked texts is warranted to understand the complexities of the civil rights movement and the rhetorical strategies employed through the March and how they contributed to building a sense of community.

The second chapter observed the situational factors that shaped the atmosphere in which the March took place and their potential influence on the speeches presented. The civil rights movement generated considerable activism that advocated change in the nation's current social and economic practices. The general atmosphere was one of discrimination and division. The African-American community lacked an identity and needed a sense of self. The March served as a response to the violence surrounding the movement and the absence of racial justice and gave the community a sense of self through their expected roles in subsequent action. Leaders of the March strove for economic and social equality among races. Their arguments stemmed from their discontent with a divided nation, which resulted from a long history of discrimination and socially prescribed inferiority among African-Americans. Frustrated with their unfair lot, activists began to voice their discontent through a variety of means, including boycotts, sit-ins, and Freedom Rides. These forms of protest generated a sense of agency in the community and activism that sparked the possibility for the March. Chapter Two detailed specific forms of protest that triggered movement advocacy and made a massive demonstration feasible. Following a look at what made the March possible, this chapter explored the details that went into planning such a massive event. The background of

each contributing organization was explored followed by an exploration of the objectives, goals, and provisions of the March. In order to comprehend the extent to which the planners collaborated, the chapter discussed the details that went into organizing the March, including the disputes among organizations and the sacrifices made to resolve those issues. Lastly, the chapter ended by observing the specific atmosphere of the day. Many attendees and observers indicated that August 28, 1963 took place in a notably peaceful manner. Illuminating the contextual details of the day helped demonstrate the possibility of the March and the influential factors in constructing the event and its overall message of community.

Finally, Chapter Three analyzed the addresses that preceded King's to understand the March's collective message and its contribution to the construction of community. With a lack of identity, the African-American community needed something with which to connect in order to develop their sense of self. The discourses at the March provided that connection and demonstrated that cohesion is not only attainable but necessary for future action. The March served as a dynamic spectacle that highlighted the values of a community and the role community members. This chapter argued that observing the March through the various discourses provided allows an understanding of how the different organizers of the March merged their messages into a cohesive event contributing to the peaceful atmosphere of the day and forming a sense of community.

To reach this understanding, the speakers' interpretations of the March were discussed to discern what messages the audience was offered and how a variety of perspectives were provided in order to help activists understand their identity through a range of lenses. The speakers not only promoted community through their language but

also through the embodiment of community at the event. Chapter Three examined how the arrangement of the March contributed to this message and contended that the March's arrangement helped reinforce the argument for community and built up to a final message of cohesion offered by King. The arrangement of the discourse at the March stressed the goals and values of the speakers by not only establishing recurring themes throughout their addresses, but also through the order in which these ideas were presented. The proposals set forth at the March were intensified through each reiterated phrase or concept. The configuration of ideas in the speakers' messages emphasized their overall call for community building. Not only did the speakers' language of community contribute to an atmosphere of community, the March's physical representation of community reflected elements of a collectivity as well that aided in the March's ability to build community. This chapter explored how meaning in a rhetorical composition results from the interaction between its form and content, or its iconicity. It concluded by arguing that examining the discourse preceding the more well-known oration of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the arrangement of the March as a whole reveals the ways in which the event maintained order and cohesion in a time of turmoil in the nation.

Implications and Value

Comprehending the rhetorical strategies employed in an iconic moment in our nation's history provides insight into the tools available to rhetors to generate change. Studying social movement rhetoric produces awareness about how social change can take place. The civil rights movement provides a valuable opportunity to observe the communicative strategies used to build community in unstable times. Specifically, the

March on Washington provides a unique moment of study. Examining the rhetoric of this event reveals how several key figures in the movement approached civil rights issues and attempted to generate change in the country. This insight is reached by observing multiple speakers rather than just one. Although the single speaker that is most often observed, King, employs a variety of compelling strategies that are still remembered and studied today, attention to his address alone does not provide a comprehensive view of the collaborative effort it took to construct the March.

As communication scholars such as Leland Griffin and Wayne Brockriede suggest, critics should go beyond the study of single messages from single rhetors. Going beyond individual messages helps us understand the patterns of public discourse and the complex mosaic that produces them. Observations of the communicative patterns of a community can more accurately highlight the values of a larger society than can the observation of a single address. Comprehensive examination can lead to a broader understanding of both the context in which the addresses occurred and the rhetorical strategies employed to address those contextual issues. Through the observation of multiple speakers, one is informed of the values and important issues of the time by examining the content of the addresses. What rhetors choose to highlight in their addresses reveals the pertinent issues of the day. Looking at more than one speaker, then, provides a better picture and wider interpretation of those issues as the examination is based off of several perspectives. This then displays, as David Procter suggests, "a voice of social milieu rather than the symbolic property of a single speaker."[2] The current project offers a broader understanding of the civil rights movement through the discourse

of several of its leaders, a look at social movement rhetoric, and an illumination of a few rhetorical strategies utilized as a means for social change and community building.

Observing the perspectives of multiple civil rights movement leaders allows a more expansive view of the movement to be reached. Critics execute their evaluations through historical lenses in order to comprehend fully the details and power of the discourse employed. The rhetorical aspects of a movement are not intelligible unless understood in relation to the situation in which they arose. Therefore, a significant task of critics of social movements is situating the rhetoric of a movement within the historical context of the movement. Rather than looking at a single charismatic leader, a look at the numerous organizations that played an instrumental role throughout the movement demonstrates the rhetorical devices employed by individual community members, rather than the leaders of those communities. Examining the symbolic behavior of several individuals within the movement and how they functioned collectively to convey a cohesive message reveals not only the various and distinct perspectives of numerous organizations, but also demonstrates how disparate groups work together and ultimately communicate a single message. The observation of multiple perspectives reveals the different values of the time period and provides different interpretations of a historical event. James Andrews explains that although theory often develops from basic historical research, theory can also stimulate and offer direction to historians and critics. Moreover, while theory contributes to historical understandings, history also enhances theory.[3] The current project sought to illuminate the complexities of a crucial moment in history that is often depicted in a simplified manner, reduced to a stage that allowed King to convey his dream. Observing the other speeches that day demonstrates the details and values of the

movement from a variety of perspectives, allowing multiple interpretations to be reached. As we move from this day in history our memory of the event fades, and examining the March with more precision helps generate more knowledge about the event and reminds us about the details of the movement.

In addition to learning more about the movement in general, this project allows us to comprehend the rhetorical tools available to social movement activists and highlights several particular strategies used by protestors that can be observed for their utility in future social movements. As historical and rhetorical scholarship tells us, in order to generate change, social movement supporters use a variety of methods to communicate their purpose. Activists can use speeches, demonstrations, protests, pamphlets, language, images, etc. to convey their objectives and attempt to persuade audiences. Each of these actions signifies something about the movement's goals and its desire for social progress. The study of a social movement should center around "the tokens, symbols, and transactions which unite or separate people who organize to produce change."[4] The current study examined the symbolic behavior of multiple leaders and how they produced meaning in the community. As Charles J. Stewart maintains, a social movement must "explain, defend, and sell its program for change."[5] Rhetorical critics then observe how movement members go about completing this task. This project analyzed how a variety of civil rights leaders explained, defended, and sold their programs for change, which entailed the construction of community. The overall objective was to build community, and the strategies observed were how the event was a socially constructed dynamic spectacle, the arrangement the addresses, and the leaders' iconic representation of cohesion and community building. Each of these concepts, as they are discussed in this

project, require multiple participants. The observation of how they worked to create a cohesive message illuminates how movement activists can maintain individual perspectives while promoting unity.

Making a contribution to rhetorical theory, this project reveals the utility of several theoretical principles. By observing how the concepts of dynamic spectacle, arrangement, and iconicity worked to construct community in a divided period of the nation, one can understand how these principles might be relevant in other movements. While it would be nice to say that the civil rights movement got rid of all discrimination and inequality, it is an unfortunate reality that prejudices still exist today. Knowing this, we can then apply the theoretical principles to similar contexts to see how community might be built in other divided scenarios. What we learn about rhetorical theory as it relates to a key historical moment provides support for the principles discussed and how they function to create meaning in society.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although what is accomplished through this project reveals the specific roles of a number of civil rights leaders and highlights the rhetorical strategies in community building, this is not to say this thesis is the final word on the movement. While the project completes the task as set out, there are some limitations that can be addressed and questions that can be answered through further research. One area in which this project can improve is its consideration of the audience and what represents and defines the community the speakers constructed. For example, not all civil rights organizations were represented at the March and further observation of how the dynamics may have been

different had other groups been part of the event may illuminate the extent to which community was built. Specifically, the Nation of Islam did not take part in the event as it regarded the March as futile and believed it to be run by the Kennedy administration. Since this group is not represented, further explanation is needed for how the speakers created community and demonstrated cohesion when certain groups were not part of that cohesion. Further research to determine how the speakers may have rhetorically constituted their audience, and therefore community, could be executed by observing the constitutive rhetoric employed throughout the March. Maurice Charland discusses this topic and asserts that audience and community identity are rhetorically created. He explains that audiences are not simply given; they are rhetorically constructed by the rhetor. Thus, to assume the general nature of an audience can be problematic. To illuminate this, he uses the *peuple quebecois* as an example of how an identity is called into being by discourse, which was accomplished during Quebec's movement for sovereignty.[6] Charland contends that the process of constituting an audience begins with identification and is followed by interpellation, or the "process of inscribing subjects into ideology."[7] He argues that an audience's identity is not inherent, it must be created, and rhetors often contribute to this construction. A look at how the rhetors at the March constructed the identity for the audience can further illuminate how community was built and account for those groups who were not represented at the March.

Another area of research that can be explored is the collective memory of the March on Washington. The way a society remembers its history can influence the perceptions it has for the future as a society and as individuals. There are significant omissions and exclusions in the historical treatment of the civil rights era. According to

Owen J. Dwyer, the mainstream narrative of the movement forces women's, working, and local histories to the margins in order to focus on charismatic leaders and dramatic events.[8] However, when we look at our history and only see only a single leader determining the success of a massive event, we may think that we only need one leader in social movements to generate change, when in reality it is a collective effort. Dwyer contends that consensus memory of the civil rights movement presents an easily consumable narrative of "living heroes, bygone villains, canonized martyrs, and steadfast success."[9] The triumphs of the movement are more often displayed than the failures, simplifying the movement and making it seem as though everything was much easier than the realities activists had to face to achieve their ultimate success.

Future research can observe the collective memory of the March to assess its accuracy and how it reflects current action. Collective memory is defined as, "a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future."[10] Individual and collective memories are tools through which social groups establish meaning in their individual lives. Social groups construct their own images of the world by continuously shaping and reshaping versions of the past.[11] According to Charles Conrad, within the countless values expressed in a society, a group of people finds some of the values to be more resonant with their experiences than other values. Upon recognizing the values that relate most to their experiences, groups form a view of the world which then generates a sense of stability and a feeling of solidarity with others who share the same experiences and produce meaning in similar ways.[12] Collective memory focuses on some sort of public articulation. Memory studies may focus on various forms of public expression such as

rituals, ceremonials, commemorations, and exhibitions.[13] Public memory can be expressed through "any form of symbolic action, material or discursive."[14] These symbolic acts materialize in a variety of ways giving individuals and the public several opportunities to shape their memory. The dominant focus of attention to the March on Washington is on King's "I Have a Dream" address. Since there was much more occurring on this day, the elements left out of examination are likely left out of public memory. The simplified version of the movement leaves out of memory the democratic vision that guided the civil rights movement.

Edward P. Morgan contends that if the consensus memory of the civil rights movement is accurate, it is the mass media that provides the enduring images to fix the simplified depictions of the movement in the "national imagination."[15] Perhaps the memory of the March is fixed on King because the media continually depicts King at the center of the March or as "the" march itself. Thus, in addition to looking at the collective memory of the March, an examination of the media coverage of the March could lend valuable insight into how this event is remembered by the public. This coverage can demonstrate how the public views its past as well as the decisions media outlets make in highlighting and maintaining the dominant view of history.

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom remains an iconic moment in the civil rights movement and in American history. While the March itself has not been forgotten, as we move further from the day, the details of the event become blurred. Although Martin Luther King, Jr. and his famous address endure as remarkable cases in the study of the civil rights movement and American history, the complexities of the movement should not be overlooked. The examination of the addresses that came before

King lends valuable insight into the details of the March and provides a broader picture of how the event unfolded. Observing the rhetorical strategies employed by multiple speakers helps us understand how community can be constructed even in the most turbulent times. Also illuminated is how community building can establish the identity of those who, due to the social construction of their inferiority as a race, have struggled to understand their sense of self. This reminds us that just as communication can destroy, communication can create, and that the tool for producing and mending social ills is often the same.

Notes

[1] David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986), 286.

[2] David. E. Procter, "The Dynamic Spectacle: Transforming Experience into Social Forms of Community," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 117.

[3] James R. Andrews, "History and Theory in the Study of the Rhetoric of Social Movements," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, ed. Charles E. Morris and Stephen Howard Browne (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001), 145-152.

[4] Robert S. Cathcart, "New Approaches to the Study of Movements: Defining Movements Rhetorically," *Western Journal of Speech* (1972): 85.

[5] Charles J. Stewart, "A Functional Approach to the Rhetoric of Social Movements," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, ed. Charles E. Morris and Stephen Howard Browne (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001), 152-159.

[6] Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Quebecois," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987), 134.

[7] Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 139.

[8] Owen J. Dwyer, "Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement," in *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 7.

[9] Dwyer, "Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement," 135.
[10] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper, 1950).

[11] Ruth Oren, "Collective Memory in an Age of Changing Media Environments: The Israeli Photographic Heritage at the National Institutions Archives," Romanian Journal of Journalism & Communication 4 (2009): 31-46.

[12] Charles Conrad, "Work Songs, Hegemony, and Illusions of Self," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 5, 3, (1988), 183.

[13] Oren, "Collective Memory in an Age of Changing Media Environments," 31.

[14] Stephen H. Browne, "Reading, Rhetoric, and the Texture of Public Memory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995).

[15] Dwyer, "Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement," 5.

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