



From the archives of the Simon Wiesenthal Center

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. “I Have a Dream” Speech
Lincoln Memorial, Washington DC, August 28, 1963**

Now Is the Time...

“In a sense we’ve come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects... wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note... that all men - black... as well as white... would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness... It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked insufficient funds... But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt... Now is the time... to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God’s children...

“Let us not wallow in the valley of despair... even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream... that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed... that all men are created equal... I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood... I have a dream that one day even... Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice,... will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character... I have a dream that one day down in Alabama... little black boys and girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and girls as sisters and brothers... And when we see this happen, when we allow freedom to ring,... we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Nobel Peace Prize Speech, Oslo, December 10, 1964

We Shall Overcome...

“Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen: I accept the Nobel Prize for Peace at a moment when 22 million Negroes of the United States of America are engaged in a... battle to end the long night of racial injustice... I am mindful that only yesterday in Birmingham, Alabama, our children, crying out for brotherhood, were answered with fire hoses, snarling dogs and even death. I am mindful that only yesterday ...more than 40 houses of worship in the State of Mississippi... were bombed or burned because they offered a sanctuary to those who would not accept segregation... Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace... I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind... I believe that what self-centered men have torn down other-centered men can build up. I still believe that. ‘And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid.’ I still believe that We Shall overcome!... I accept this prize on behalf of all men who love peace and brotherhood...”



**Abraham Joshua Heschel, “Race and Religion” Speech
Worcester, MA, January 14, 1963**

The Exodus... is Far from Having Been Completed

“At the first conference on religion and race, the main participants were Pharaoh and Moses. Moses’ words were: ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to me.’ While Pharaoh retorted: ‘Who is the Lord, that I should heed this voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover I will not let Israel go.’ The outcome of that summit meeting has not come to an end. Pharaoh is not ready to capitulate. The exodus began, but is far from having been completed. In fact, it was easier for the children of Israel to cross the Red Sea than for a Negro to cross certain university campuses...”

“God is every man’s pedigree. He is either the Father of all men or of no man. The image of God is either in every man or in no man.... God’s covenant is with all men, and we must never be oblivious of the equality of the divine dignity of all men... The universe is done. The greater masterpiece still undone, still in the process of being created, is history. For accomplishing his grand design, God needs the help of man... God needs mercy, righteousness; his needs cannot be satisfied in space, by sitting in pews, by visiting temples, but in history, in time. It is within the realm of history that man is charged with God’s mission.”