

# Living The Dream...Let Freedom Ring!!



## Martin Luther King, Jr. Speaks

1958

"The determination of Negro Americans to win freedom from all forms of oppression springs from the same deep longing that motivates oppressed people all over the world. The rumblings of discontent in Asia and Africa are expressions of a quiet for freedom and human dignity by people who have long been the victims of colonialism and imperialism. So in a real sense the racial crisis in America is a part of the larger world crisis.

"But the numerous changes which have culminated in a new sense of dignity on the part of the Negro are not of themselves responsible for the present crisis. Crisis developed, paradoxically, when the most sublime principles of American democracy--imperfectly realized for almost two centuries--began fulfilling themselves and met with the brutal resistance of forces seeking to contract and repress freedom's growth.

"The resistance has risen at times to ominous proportions. Many public officials are using the power of their offices to defy the law of the land. Through their irresponsible actions, their inflammatory statements, and their dissemination of distortions and half-truths, they have succeeded in arousing abnormal fears and morbid antipathies.

"History has trust upon our generation an indescribably important destiny--to complete a process of democratization which our nation has too long developed too slowly. How we deal with this crucial situation will determine our moral health as individuals, our cultural health as a region, our political health as a nation, and our prestige as a leader of the free world."

1963

"Due to my involvement in the struggle for freedom of my people, I have known very few quiet days in the last few years. I have been imprisoned in Alabama and Georgia jails twelve times. My home has been bombed twice. I have been the victim of a near-fatal stabbing. At times I have felt that I could no longer bear such a heavy burden, and have been tempted to retreat to a more serene life. But every time that temptation appeared, something came to strengthen and sustain my determination. I have learned now that the Master's burden is light precisely when we take his yoke upon us.

"My personal trials have also taught me the value of unmerited suffering. If, only to save myself from bitterness, I have attempted to see my personal ordeals as an opportunity to transfigure myself and heal the people involved in the tragic situation, which now obtains. I have lived these last few years with the conviction that unearned suffering is redemptive. God has been profoundly real to me in recent years. In the midst of outer dangers, I have felt an inner calm. In the midst of lonely days and dreary nights I have heard an inner voice saying, 'Lo, I will be with you.'"<sup>2</sup>

1964

"One hundred and fifty years ago, when the Negro was a thing, a chattel whose body belonged to his white master, certain slaveowners worked out arrangements whereby a slave could purchase himself and become a freeman. Hard-earned dollars were paid for a legal instrument of manumission which declared

its holder relieved of the bondage of physical slavery.

"As this movement grew, some Negroes devoted their lives to the purchase and liberation of others. 'Help me by my mother,' or 'Help me buy my child' brought the deep torture of black people's souls into stark focus for many whites to whom the horror of slavery had been emotionally remote.

"As one approaches the emancipation of today's Negro from all those traumatic ties that still bind him to slaveries other than the physical, this half-forgotten system that bartered dignity for dollars stands as a painful reminder of the capacity of society to remain complacent in the midst of injustice. There is a terrible parallel between the greedy hand of slave trafficker who sold a Negro his own person, and the admonishing finger of people who say, 'What more will the Negro expect if he gains integrated schools, public facilities, voting rights and progress in housing?'"

"What is implied here is the amazing assumption that society has the right to bargain with the Negro for the freedom which inherently belongs to him."<sup>3</sup>

1967

"White America would have liked to believe that in the past ten years a mechanism had somehow been created that needed only orderly and smooth tending for the painless accomplishment of change. Yet this is precisely what has not been achieved. Every civil rights law is still substantially more dishonored than honored. School desegregation is still 90 percent unimplemented



Dr. King receives the medal symbolizing the Nobel Peace Prize from Gunnar Jahn, chairman of the committee.

across the land; the free exercise of the franchise is the exception rather than the rule in the South; open-occupancy laws theoretically apply to population centers embracing tens of millions, but grim ghettos contradict the fine language of the legislation. Despite the mandates of law, equal employment still remains a distant dream. The legal structures have in practice proved to be neither structures nor law.

"We will be greatly misled if we feel that the problem will work itself out. Structures of evil do not crumble by passive waiting. If history teaches anything, it is that evil is recalcitrant and determined, and never voluntarily relinquishes its hold short of an almost fanatical resistance.

"Racism can well be that corrosive evil that will bring down the curtain on Western civilization."<sup>4</sup>



Elected, Dr. King hugs his wife, Coretta, after the announcement that he had received the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize.



Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr., leads the silent march through Memphis. From left: Harry Belafonte, Mrs. King's children, Mrs. King, the Rev. Ralph Abernathy and the Rev. Andrew Young. Behind them are SCME President Jerry Wurf, Bayard Rustin, UAW President Walter Reuther and AFL-CIO Civil Rights Director Don Staiman.