

**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DELIVERS HIS  
“I HAVE A DREAM” SPEECH ON THE STEPS OF THE  
LINCOLN MEMORIAL**

**W**hen U.S. President John F. Kennedy proposed the Civil Rights Bill to Congress, Southern representatives blocked it. To build political pressure for the bill, civil rights leaders staged a march on Washington on August 28, 1963 that drew over 250,000 people. Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the key speakers on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Although it is hard to discern from the film, one account states that after delivering his prepared speech, King was about to sit down when gospel singer Mahalia Jackson called out, “Tell them about your dream, Martin!” What is certain is that King then delivered his “I have a dream” speech, which became so famous that many say it still defines the civil rights movement.

“I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character,” King said. He ended with his wish to let “freedom ring” throughout the United States. And when it does, he said, Americans “. . . 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!’”

Although President Kennedy was assassinated less than three months later—before the bill was passed—President Johnson ushered the bill into being on July 2, 1964, thus fulfilling a dream nurtured by both Kennedy and King.

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