

1973

A Rhetorical Analysis of Mrs. Coretta Scott King's Commencement Address

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A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF MRS. CORETTA SCOTT KING'S

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

(TITLE)

BY

Janice Kenney

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1973

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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This thesis is dedicated to the author's mother, Mrs. Ruby Lee Kenney, and father, Mr. James A. Kenney. Both encouraged her during her tedious hours of work.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Coretta King, known best as Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr., has been the new image of black womanhood for the black race since the days of the Montgomery bus boycott, which had its beginning on December 1, 1955.¹ Mrs. King represents the new image of black womanhood because she "is the first black woman projected into prominence by her husband."² She is a follower in her husband's footsteps. As Newsweek puts it, she "has taken up her husband's dream as her own and in the process has become a symbol in her own right."³

During the first few days after her husband's assassination, Phil Garland said, "her strength of will and control under extreme stress had led many to refer to her as a black Madonna."⁴ Even those who disagreed with her husband's nonviolent beliefs admired her quiet dignity. It was only the day before her husband's funeral that Mrs. King appeared at the Memphis march and rally that he promised to lead. In a speech she delivered, "How Many Men Must Die?", her thoughts were focused on the present and future of the American people. In that speech Mrs. King encouraged the followers of the fallen leader by saying:

"We must carry on because this is the way he would have wanted it

¹Octavia Vivian, Coretta: The Story of Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 1.

²Ibid.

³Dan Bernstein, "Keeper of the Dream", Newsweek, March 24, 1966, p.38

⁴Phil Garland, "Coretta King: in her Husband's Footsteps", Ebony, September, 1968, p. 154

to have been. We are not going to get bogged down, I hope, and this moment when we are going to go forward, we are going to continue his work to make all people truly free and to make every person feel that he is a human being. His campaign for the poor must go on."⁵

Garland observed that "no one could deny the image of heroic black womanhood that she has projected."

Origin of the Study

Originally the writer had planned to make a comparative study of selected speeches by Dr. and Mrs. King. After discovering that several studies had been made of Dr. King's speaking and that no thesis focused specifically on speeches given by Mrs. King, plans for the study were altered. The writer decided to study only the public speaking of Mrs. King.

Mrs. King has appeared throughout the nation and various parts of the world giving speeches. Her speeches follow a general theme of civil rights. The theme of her "Commencement Address" delivered on June 1, 1971 at City College, New York, is similar to other speeches. But the 1971 speech is also unique because it (1) reveals adaptation of themes to an audience concerned with education and (2) reveals Mrs. King's unique perspective on education in the American society. It is for these reasons that the writer is deeply interested in studying Mrs. King's speech on education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze and evaluate a speech entitled "Commencement Address" given by Mrs. King on June 1, 1971 at City College in

⁵Coretta Scott King, "How Many Men Must Die?", April 19, 1968, p. 34

⁶Garland, "Coretta King", p. 154

New York. A full text of the speech was provided by Mrs. King's office for this study.

The similarities and differences between this speech and others delivered by Mrs. King are significant:

1. A similar speech was delivered at Harvard University in 1968.
2. The City College speech of 1971 develops Mrs. King's arguments more fully than the 1968 Harvard University speech.
3. Both speeches point out social evils in the society.
4. The City College speech gives a more detailed description of those evils.
5. The "Commencement Address" at City College was delivered to a special kind of audience: the people were identified with education.

Hypothesis of the Study

The writer hypothesizes that a study of Mrs. King's "Commencement Address" at City College on June 1, 1971 will reveal possible relationships between social evils and formal education.

Significance of the Study

This study is highly significant for several reasons: (1) it is of rhetorical value, (2) it is of historical-educational value, and (3) it is of personal value.

The study is of rhetorical value because it marks a major contribution in the field of speech communication and it is unique. From Albert J. Croft's "The Functions of Rhetorical Criticism", we learn: "The rhetorical critic must discover the uniqueness of a given speaker's efforts at adaptation. Every speaker's adaptation will be relatively unique in terms of content."⁷

⁷ Albert J. Croft, "The Functions of Rhetorical Criticism", Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLII (October, 1936), 289.

This study is of historical-educational value. This is the very first time a thesis has ever been written on Mrs. King. It is even more vital historically because to this date none of Mrs. King's speeches focusing on education have been published. Both historians and educators should be interested in an analysis of a speech dealing with civil rights and education.

Marie Hochmuth Nichols said in Rhetoric and Criticism:

"The function of the rhetorical critic remains the same. He must serve his society and himself by revealing and evaluating the public speaker's interpretation of the world around him and the peculiar means of expressing that interpretation to his generation."⁸

The study is of personal value because the writer will be benefited from it. Such a study will give the writer personal satisfaction and pride. Here is what Wayne N. Thompson said about this matter:

"The preparation of the thesis can be a rich educational experience, which (1) provides training in research methods; (2) requires the interaction of the knowledge and the skills of several fields...; (3) makes the student an 'expert' within a defined area; and (4) leads to conclusions regarding the theory and practice of rhetoric in our ~~own~~ time."⁹

This thesis should therefore be of rhetorical, historical-educational, and personal significance.

Review of Literature

Several indices in the field of speech were checked in order to determine the originality of the study. After carefully checking Dissertation Abstracts it was discovered that two Ph.D. studies: "A Rhetorical Study of the Preaching of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Pastor and Pulpit Orator", by Mervyn

⁸ Marie Hochmuth Nichols, Rhetoric and Criticism (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), p. 78

⁹ Wayne N. Thompson, "Contemporary Public Address", Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXII (October, 1947), 277.

Alonzo Warren¹⁰ and "Martin Luther King, Jr.: Rhetorician of Revolt", by Donald Hugh Smith,¹¹ were done. No graduate studies on Mrs. King were discovered.

Several journals: Central States Speech Journal and Southern Speech Communication Journal were also researched. An article in Southern Speech Communication Journal entitled: "Martin Luther King, Jr.: in the Beginning at Montgomery", by Donald Smith¹² provided background for the study. Even though the article is not on Mrs. King, it briefly explains the events that led to the inauguration of Martin Luther King, Jr. as leader of the Montgomery (Alabama) bus boycott.

Criteria and Procedure for the Study

The criteria for rhetorical analysis of the speech "Commencement Address" is abstracted from Thomas R. Nilsen's "Interpretive Function of the Critic". In his article Nilsen states:

".....If the meaning of a speech is thought of as the response it explicitly seeks to evoke, then, to be sure, no interpretation is necessary. But within the meaning of the speech are included the many attendant responses, the more subtle understanding and conceptions evoked by the speech and their possible consequences, then interpretation is a much needed function of the speech critic."¹³

Nilsen goes on to say that the vital function of speech criticism is to state

¹⁰Mervyn Alonzo Warren, "A Rhetorical Study of the Preaching of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Pastor and Pulpit Orator" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1966).

¹¹Donald Hugh Smith, "Martin Luther King, Jr.: Rhetorician of Revolt" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1964).

¹²Donald Hugh Smith, "Martin Luther King, Jr.: in the Beginning at Montgomery", Southern Speech Communication Journal, LVIII (Fall, 1968), p. 18

¹³Thomas R. Nilsen, "Interpretive Function of the Critic," Western Speech, XXI (Spring, 1957), 70.

indirect implications of the speech in reference to man, ideas, and society. The function of the speaker, says Nilsen, is to move men to acts by which they are fulfilled. The critic's function "is to inquire into how the speaker is moving men and to what ends."¹⁴ Nilsen further explained what he meant by "ends" when he said: "The end or effect of primary concern to the speech critic is the pattern of attitudes and thought processes induced by the speech, particularly in relation to the terminal action it seeks to elicit."¹⁵

Another important task of the critic was discussed by Nilsen:

"Evaluating how well the speaker uses rhetorical techniques to accomplish his purpose is certainly an important task of the critic, but no less important...is an evaluation of the pattern of thought and action fostered by the speech...The rhetorical techniques, the means of persuasion are the speaker's response to the rhetorical needs of a particular situation, but as such they are also a reflection of the speaker's concept of man, in what he asks him to do and how; his concept of ideas, in what he presents and the manner in which he develops it; his concept of society, in what he implies about the relationship of man to man."¹⁶

Nilsen therefore says the critic should analyze a speech in terms of questions raised about the concept of man, the concept of ideas, and the concept of society. We will now view each of these concepts.

The Concept of Man

Allen Tate says the writer "must recreate for his age the image of man, and he must propagate standards by which other men may test that image, and

¹⁴Ibid., p. 89

¹⁵Ibid., p. 90

¹⁶Ibid., p. 92

distinguish the false from the true."¹⁷ There is a possibility that the speaker might never have seen his own image of man. Therefore, "it becomes the critic's function to reveal what manner of man the speaker sees in his listeners, so that they may distinguish the false from the true."¹⁸ In reference to the speaker's concept of man, Nilsen says the critic should ask the following questions:

I. What is the speaker's concept of man?

A. What concept of man is shown by:

1. The manner in which she speaks?
2. The language she employs?
3. The information she presents or fails to present?
4. The issues she chooses?
5. The questions she raises?
6. The faith she generates?
7. The doubts she implies?
8. The feelings she appeals to ?
9. The process of choice she inspires?

B. Does the speech reveal an image of man as a being of intrinsic worth, or of one whose worth as a personality derives from possessions, characteristics or creed?

C. Is the image of man that of a being with a capacity for wisdom and rational choice, the exercise of whose rationality in the light of growing wisdom it is the speaker's obligation to encourage?

D. Does the speech deal honestly with men?

1. Does it realistically relate them to the problems they face or does it raise spurious alarm or spurious complacency?
2. Does the speech imply that men must grow in understanding of themselves and the world about them or that they should forsake the dangers of thought for the safety of convention?
3. Does the speech falsely flatter men to their immediate gratification but long term peril?

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 88-9

E. Does the speech encourage respect for the spirit of free men?

The Concept of Ideas

From Nilsen we note: "The speaker's concept of ideas is inseparable from his concept of man. How he uses ideas will depend upon how he believes men should choose and act."¹⁹

We must point out that ideas may be used instrumentally or manipulatively by the speaker. At this time we will distinguish between these two terms.

"If you use ideas instrumentally your primary regard is for their validity, and for the creative action they will evoke through that validity, and for the social action that will result. If you view them manipulatively, your only regard is for the use you can make of them. They become instruments not for creativeness but for contrivance."²⁰

The following questions will be asked:

- I. What is the speaker's concept of ideas?
 - A. Are the ideas used instrumentally?
 1. Does the speech present ideas so that they take on added meaning?
 2. Does the speech present ideas so that they relate to other significant ideas?
 3. Does the speech present ideas so that the listener can see the world a little more as a whole and can use his own intelligence more effectively than before?
 - B. Are the ideas used manipulatively?
 1. Does the speech perpetuate narrow meaning?
 2. Does the speech isolate ideas?
 3. Does the speech avoid critical appraisal?
 4. Does the speech use ideas as pushbuttons to trigger off preselected responses?

¹⁹Ibid., p. 89

²⁰Ibid., p. 90

The Concept of Society

Since it is in a social context that man fulfills himself, Nilsen defines society as "a set of relationships among people, a pattern of interactions among men, that remains more or less stable."²¹ It is the function of the critic to point out that concept of society which the speech reflects. Through this revelation, the speaker shows his beliefs of how men should act and precisely how they will fulfill themselves through what he says in his speech. To paraphrase Nilsen, the speaker's concept of society will be seen through values that are included in the speech and the social milieu.

Nilsen says the following about the critic:

".....The critic's inquiry into the concept of society is fundamentally an inquiry into what the speech implies about the democratic values we have assumed essential to man's most adequate fulfillment of himself."²²

There are two views of democracy: (1) the substantive view and (2) the procedural view. According to the substantive view, John Hallowell says this: "True freedom requires both knowledge of the good and the will to choose the good when known. The denial of either is the denial of freedom, and the denial of freedom is the rejection of that moral agency in man which characterizes his humanity..."²³

Kurt Tauber suggests the procedural view. He says:

".....The values of an open society are not so much substantive

²¹Ibid., p. 92

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 93

as methodological or procedural....The problem of the open society is not the problem of error, but the problem of intolerance, of limiting the area of free inquiry, free criticism, and free choice."²⁴

The procedural values are the values that the speech critic is uniquely concerned about because unlike substantive values, men cannot differ on procedures and work and live together in harmony.

The following questions should be asked about the speaker's concept of society:

- I. What is the speaker's concept of society?
 - A. What does the speech imply about rationality, tolerance, and the moral autonomy of the individual?
 - B. What does the speech imply about the expression of opinions, deliberation, persuasion, free inquiry, free criticism, and free choice?
 - C. What does the speech imply about discussion and debate, the use of information, the interchange of ideas, the function of opposition, and attitudes toward what is orthodox and unorthodox in thought and action?

Even though Nilsen's criteria for analysis will be used some other standard rhetorical terms may be employed. Terms that may be necessary to the clarity of analysis and evaluation are defined as follows:

The Three Modes of Persuasion

In Sarett's and Sarett's Basic Principles of Speech, we note that the three modes of proving a proposition have been defined.

1. Logical Proof (logos)- "the argument appealed to the listener's reason."
2. Ethical Proof (ethos)- "the persuasiveness of the argument rested upon the character of the speaker himself as appraised by his

²⁴ Ibid.

audience." Aristotle said in his Rhetoric that the chief factors of a persuasive ethos are integrity, good will toward the audience, and intelligence.

3. Pathetic Proof (Pathos)-

"the appeal was directed to the emotions of the audience."²⁵

Stylistic Devices

From Wayland Maxfield Parrish we note that "It is style, the choice and arrangement of words, that determines in the main the value of a speech as enduring literature. And it is style that more than any other factor gives a speaker the uniqueness by which he is distinguished from other speakers."²⁶

A speech is expected to have vividness and vivacity in order to win and hold an audience's attention. "Such an effect may be obtained by concrete wording, effective descriptions..., the use of...examples, illustrations,...statistics...and rhetorical questions."²⁷

1. Concrete wording-- exact or definite wording in the speech.
2. Effective descriptions-- words that paint a picture of the point the speaker seeks to make.
3. Examples-- samples of what the speaker is talking about in the speech.
4. Illustrations-- "detailed examples of the idea or statement to be supported. They are narrations of incidents to bring out the points you are trying to make."²⁸ A hypothetical illustration is a narrative of what could happen. A factual illustration is a narrative of what has happened in reality.

²⁵Alma Johnson Sarett and Lew Sarett, Basic Principles of Speech (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), pp. 291-2

²⁶William A. Linsley, ed., Speech Criticism: Methods and Materials (Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1968), Wayland Maxfield Parrish, "The Study of Speeches", p. 89

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Alan H. Monroe, Principles and Types of Speech (5th ed.; Chicago: Scott, Foresman, and Co., 1962), p. 162

Figures of speech may also be present in a speech. Some of these are defined as follows:

Simile-- "One thing is likened to another, dissimilar thing by the use of like, as, etc."²⁹

Personification--A thing, quality, or idea is represented as a person.

Metaphor--An implied comparison in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used of one thing is applied to another.

Hyperbole--Exaggeration for effect, not meant to be taken literally.

Onomatopoeia--Sound suggesting meaning.

Procedure

The lines below provide a brief account of what was done in the study:

- (1) The speech was read and outlined.
- (2) Each of the three units of criteria was applied categorically to the entire speech.
- (3) Some of the questions within each unit were not answered because (a) they tended to repeat a previous question or (b) the speech content did not supply an answer.
- (4) Some of the answers to questions were derived from background materials in Chapter II.

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into four chapters. All four chapters will be somewhat related to each other. But each chapter is unique in the sense that each one covers specific things.

Chapter I is the introductory chapter. In Chapter I a brief account of Mrs. King as "the new image of black womanhood", is presented. The origin of

²⁹Richard A. Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 137

the study, purpose of the study, significance of the study, review of literature, criteria and procedure for the study, organization of the study, materials used in the study, and a brief summary are also included.

Chapter II focuses on Mrs. King's background and social conditions out of which her speech grew. Emphasis is placed on her early childhood, her education, a history of the Civil Rights Movement, her support of Dr. King, and Mrs. King as a speaker.

Chapter III deals with an analysis of the June 1, 1971 "Commencement Address" made at City College in New York. The purpose of the analysis is to find out Mrs. King's views on education from the standpoint of man, ideas, and society.

Chapter IV provides the reader with a summary and conclusion of the thesis.

Included in Appendix A are the 1968 speech and the 1971 speech. Letters of correspondence and inquiry make up Appendix B. An extensive bibliography on both Mrs. King and Dr. King is also provided.

Materials Used in the Study

In order to complete this study, several sources were used. The writer found the following books to be most beneficial: Coretta: the Story of Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1970), by Octavia Vivian, My Life With Martin Luther King, Jr. (1969), by Mrs. Coretta Scott King, The Negro in 20th Century America: a Reader on the Struggle for Civil Rights (1967), by John Hope Franklin and Isidore Starr (editors), and Milestones Along the March (1965), by Lynne Ianniello.

Several articles were also useful. They are: "Coretta King: in her

Husband's Footsteps", (Ebony- September, 1968), "The Queen is With us" (Newsweek- November, 1964), "Keeper of the Dream" (Newsweek- May, 1969), and "How Many men Must die?" (Life- April, 1968).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the reader to the study. The following were included: (1) why Mrs. King is "the new image of black womanhood", (2) the origin of the study, (3) purpose of the study, (4) significance of the study, (5) review of literature, (6) criteria and procedure for the study, (7) organization of the study, and (8) materials used in the study.

In summary, the criteria is as follows:

I. What is the speaker's concept of man?

A. What concept of man is shown by:

1. The manner in which she speaks?
2. The language she employs?
3. The information she presents or fails to present?
4. The issues she chooses?
5. The questions she raises?
6. The faiths she generates?
7. The doubts she implies?
8. The feelings she appeals to?
9. The process of choice she inspires?

B. Does the speech reveal an image of man as a being of intrinsic worth, or of one whose worth as a personality derives from possessions, characteristics or creed?

C. Is the image of man that of a being with a capacity for wisdom and rational choice, the exercise of whose rationality in the light of growing wisdom it is the speaker's obligation to encourage?

D. Does the speech deal honestly with men?

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should forsake the dangers of thought for the safety of convention?

- 3.. Does the speech falsely flatter man to their immediate gratification but long term peril?

II. What is the speaker's concept of ideas?

A. Are the ideas used instrumentally?

1. Does the speech present ideas so that they take on added meaning?
2. Does the speech present ideas so that they relate to other significant ideas?
3. Does the speech present ideas so that the listener can see the world a little more as a whole and can use his own intelligence more effectively than before?

B. Are the ideas used manipulatively?

1. Does the speech perpetuate narrow meaning?
2. Does the speech isolate ideas?
3. Does the speech avoid critical appraisal?
4. Does the speech use ideas as pushbuttons to trigger off preselected responses?

III. What is the speaker's concept of society?

- A. What does the speech imply about rationality, tolerance, and the moral autonomy of the individual?
- B. What does the speech imply about the expression of opinions, deliberation, persuasion, free inquiry, free criticism, and free choice?
- C. What does the speech imply about discussion and debate, the use of information, the interchange of ideas, the function of opposition, and attitudes toward what is orthodox and unorthodox in thought and action?

Chapter II deals with the life of Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the social events around which her speech evolves.

Chapter II

The Civil Rights Movement and the Speaker

This chapter delves into the life of Mrs. King and the social events (the Civil Rights Movement) out of which her speech grew. In order for one to fully understand the life of the speaker, we will first consider the Civil Rights Movement.

I. The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement may be defined as... "a campaign by a number of organizations, supported by many individual citizens, to achieve equality for American Negroes."³⁰ From John Hope Franklin's and Isidore Starr's The Negro in 20th Century America: a Reader on the Struggle for Civil Rights, we noted that in the period 1900 to the present "the crusade for equality began to break through the curtain of public apathy."³¹ During this period of history people became discontent with laws that were imposed by a predominantly white society not only in America, but all over the world. As a result, they sought to change the situation.

At Niagara Falls, Canada in 1905, a program of vigorous action was proposed by Dr. W.E.B. Dubois to achieve equality and full citizenship for blacks. This Niagara Movement (as it was called) was the first important step which led to the formation of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement

³⁰ "Civil Rights Movement," Encyclopedia Americana, 1973, VI, 782

³¹ John Hope Franklin and Isidore Starr, eds., The Negro in 20th Century America: a Reader on the Struggle for Civil Rights (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), p. xxi

of Colored People) in 1910. The purpose of this organization was to gain equality for all persons in America. Roy Wilkins observed:

"The NAACP program is not confined to one technique or to one aspect of the struggle or to one section of the country. Every sort of method has been used since the earliest days--picketing, mass meetings, demonstrations, marches, court cases, legislative lobbying, sit-ins, persuasive education through all media, and selective-buying campaigns."³²

The beginning members of the NAACP were treated harshly and cruelly by many Americans. They suffered from lynchings, "riots, activities of the Ku Klux Klan, punitive acts by individuals (including police), and peonage."³³ Lynching, however, was beaten back in a campaign spread over thirty years. The chief weapon for fighting lynching was to have the Congress enact a Federal anti-lynching law.

One of "the many 'marches' of the Negro population took place in 1917 when 15,000 men, women, and children, headed by the officers and staff members of the NAACP, marched down New York's famed Fifth Avenue in a silent protest against mob murders."³⁴ An anti-lynching novel by Walter White, Fire in the Flint, received more than 12 translations of foreign languages. His writings were powerful in stamping out the crime. "His testimony before Congressional committees and his indefatigable one-topic lobbying in Washington, in state capitals, and in city halls, aroused both the conscience of the nation and the concern of the hard-boiled politicians."³⁵

Eventually the moral and political pressure won out and the annual lynching rate shrank to nothing.

³²Roy Wilkins, "Emancipation and Militant Leadership", 100 Years of Emancipation, ed. by Robert A. Goldwin (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1969), p. 31

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., p. 32

"Exclusion of Negroes from the jury was the basis of the reversal of a conviction won by NAACP attorneys in the Arkansas Supreme Court in 1920 in the Phillips County sharecropper cases."³⁵ In 1935 an Oklahoma conviction was reversed by the United States Supreme Court (*Hollins v. Oklahoma*) on the same ground.

Black teachers, assisted by NAACP attorneys, were successful in getting the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment invoked because of the salary differential. Differentiation was based upon race and color. Several of the Southern and border states participated in this type of discrimination.

In spite of all its efforts for equality for individuals, many whites and blacks have been suspicious of the NAACP. Some blacks felt it was manipulated by whites. Some whites, on the other hand, have said it was radical and a troublemaker.

The National Urban League, a year younger than the NAACP, concentrated on the working-class blacks. Its purpose was to help them adjust to urban areas. This organization also led boycotts against businesses in an effort to have Negroes employed, and provided leadership in relations with labor unions.

In 1941, seventy-eight years after the Emancipation Proclamation, the gates of defense industries were open by huge government contracts. Jobs and training programs were available for skilled workers after the long depression years. "There was an economic spurt--for white Americans. Negroes saw themselves shut out, barred from many unions, turned away from defense plants, refused 'wasteful' training when they would not be placed."³⁶ As a

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Lynne Ianniello, Milestones Along the March (New York, Washington, London: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1965), p. 3

result, the president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, A. Philip Randolph, proposed a March On Washington in order to demand the black man's right to work. The date of the march was to be July 1.

President Roosevelt became concerned about this matter. On June 25, he issued Executive Order 8802:

"There shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries and in government because of race, creed, color, or national origin...It is the duty of employers to labor organizations...to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers."³⁷

After this action was taken by Roosevelt, the march was called off. This action did tell the black man something. He came to realize that the threat of the march was effective. This threat made Negro leadership aware of what power and pressure could do.

In Chicago in 1942, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded. "This group believed that legalism alone would not bring uncompromising equality. It sought to end discrimination through interracial, nonviolent, direct action."³⁸ CORE was the first civil rights group to use the sit-in technique. But this was not the only type of activity it participated in. In 1943 this group staged sit-ins in Chicago, "bus rides and stand-ins at the Palisades Park pool in 1947 and 1948, and the 'Journey of Reconciliation' (the first Freedom Ride testing desegregation of interstate transportation) in the South in 1947."³⁹ In that year CORE had thought seriously about undertaking a major effort against lunch counters and other accommodations. The group, however, decided against it because they did not feel the time was right.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 4

³⁸ Encyclopedia Americana, 782

³⁹ Ibid.

On December 5, 1946, a group of distinguished citizens was appointed by President Harry S. Truman as members of the President's Committee on Civil Rights. This was a step toward racial justice. Almost a year later the committee made recommendations as to what should be done to secure rights for every citizen. "Even to this day, at least half of these recommendations have not been effectively acted upon."⁴⁰

The next breakthrough in the United States came on May 17, 1954. That year, "the Supreme Court reversed its ancient opinion that separate but equal educational facilities met the requirements of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution."⁴¹ "In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the court cited psychological and sociological data of Kenneth Clark and others and declared separate schools inherently unequal."⁴²

This decision was followed with another by the Court in 1955. Public educational facilities in the United States were ordered to be desegregated with "deliberate speed". In the South there were violent reactions to this. In an attempt to nullify the Court's decisions, Citizens Councils were organized. The Ku Klux Klan set crosses afire. The Supreme Court's decisions gave black people hope even though it was a while before something dramatic happened.

By 1957 a significant organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the most influential civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had emerged. Dr. King was appointed president of this group. The purpose of the organization was to act against discrimination of

⁴⁰Coretta Scott King, My Life With Martin Luther King, Jr. (New York, Chicago, San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969), p. 110

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Encyclopedia Americana, 783

the Montgomery, Alabama bus lines. From Robert M. Eleiweiss's Marching to Freedom: the Life of Martin Luther King, Jr., we observed that "SCLC asked all Negroes 'to assert their human dignity by refusing further cooperation with evil'."⁴³ A series of successful bus boycotts followed in the South.

By 1960, blacks grew tired of the bombings, beatings and lynchings that were taking place in the South. "One impatient Negro asserted his dignity on February 1, 1960, in Greensboro, North Carolina. On that day Joseph McNeil, a Negro college student, was refused service at a lunch counter in a Woolworth store."⁴⁴ Fed up with the system, McNeil angrily told his roommate about the situation. His roommate told him there was nothing he could do about it.

But McNeil did not buy this. Each day he and three of his friends returned to the lunch counter, determined to sit there until they were either served or arrested. Even though the sit-in technique was not new, a gigantic sit-in movement among college students was touched off by McNeil's sit-in.

Just eight days later sit-ins were staged by students in Charlotte, North Carolina. "The movement spread to other cities in North Carolina, then across the South. Day after day, the students sat at lunch counters, silently waiting to be served. They sat motionless while heckling whites poured catsup on their clothes and salt in their hair."⁴⁵ Many of these students were arrested and charged with trespassing. The students, however, refused to pay fines. They preferred the Thoreau tradition of going to jail.

In Tallahassee, Florida, a weeping mother begged her daughter to let her pay her fine. But the daughter insisted she was going to stay in jail. She

⁴³Robert M. Eleiweiss, ed., Marching to Freedom: the Life of Martin Luther King, Jr. (New York: The New American Library, Publishers, 1968), p. 77

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 81

⁴⁵Ibid.

assured her mother that she loved her but that she was not free because her mother's generation failed to act. Then she added that she was going to remain in jail because she wanted her children to be free.

As soon as the students got out of jail they started sitting-in again. These sit-ins spread to department stores, supermarkets, theaters, and libraries. "By 1961, 3,600 students had been arrested for sitting-in. As a result of their efforts, one or more lunch counters in 108 Southern communities had desegregated."⁴⁶

It was then decided by the SCLC officials that the students should form their own organization. In a conference which was held concerning this matter, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was formed (SNCC). Instead of following Dr. King's advice of nonviolence, the students used nonviolence as a technique but did not seek the friendship of the segregationist. Their main concern was power.

From Robert L. Scott's and Wayne Brockriede's The Rhetoric of Black Power, we noted that through nonviolent action "the 1961 Freedom Rides put an end to segregation in interstate travel."⁴⁷ No matter how many times their buses were bombed, the freedom riders refused to give up hope.

In 1963, a movement began in Birmingham, Alabama. Nonviolent direct action demonstrations were led by Dr. King. He regarded Birmingham as being the city with "more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches than any city in this nation."⁴⁸ Dr. King was arrested for his efforts but the Birmingham demonstra-

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede, The Rhetoric of Black Power (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1969), p. 56

⁴⁸ Ianniello, Milestones, p. 98

tions proved that the black man was using power to gain his Constitutional rights. "The climactic March on Washington (in that year) won passage of the most powerful civil rights law in a century."⁴⁹

During the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, two significant events occurred. On June 19, 1964 the civil rights bill was passed by the Senate. On July 2, the strongest civil rights bill was signed into law by the President. The bill made it clear that no person should be discriminated against because of race, color, creed, or national origin when it comes to voting, public accommodations (such as hotels, restaurants, lunch counters, etc.), education, housing, employment and the use of public facilities.

The legislative branch had finally caught up with the executive and judicial branches. "An act of Congress had brought America's 20 million Negro citizens under the umbrella of the Constitution. The Civil Rights Act... would provide the firm legal foundation upon which freedom must stand."⁵⁰

In 1965, blacks were still disfranchised by evasion tactics, or discrimination, by whole counties. In Selma, Alabama, out of 15,000 blacks, only 355 were registered to vote. "Civil rights leaders organized a protest march from Selma to Montgomery, the state capital, to dramatize demands for voting rights. Outside of Selma, the march was halted-with-bloodshed by mounted policemen and helmeted state troopers."⁵¹

On March 15, 1965, President Johnson went before a joint session of Congress. In a nationally televised address, he demanded immediate action on legislation to remove discrimination against citizens who were trying to regi-

⁴⁹Scott and Brockriede, The Rhetoric, p. 56

⁵⁰Ianniello, Milestones, p. 99

⁵¹Ibid., p. 100

ster and vote. He used the Negro freedom hymn "We Shall Overcome", for his rallying cry. Roughly put, President Johnson informed the American people that their mission was to right the wrongs of society.

Even though this action was taken by Mr. Johnson, it did not reach the hearts of the ghetto. A typical example is the Watts area of Los Angeles. Rioting took place between August 11 and 15, 1965. As a result there were 34 deaths, over 1,000 injuries, approximately 4,000 arrests, and property damage amounted to \$40 million. The riot grew from frustration: "high unemployment, stalling of poverty programs, miserable housing, exploitation by business establishments, ill health...insufficient efforts to channel frustration..."⁵²

One month later, a split in the Civil Rights Movement occurred over the term black power. While leading a march in Mississippi, James Meredith, the first black to enter and graduate from Ole Miss College (in Mississippi), was shot by a sniper. Stokely Carmichael, who had just been appointed leader of SNCC, began to talk of black power. Because of this incident, many members (both black and white) withdrew from the Movement. CORE and SNCC were in favor of the term and they became radical. Floyd McKissick said the Civil Rights Movement was dead and the black revolution was on the way. Roy Wilkins of the NAACP reportedly said: "Black power can mean, in the end, black death. We of the NAACP will have none of this."⁵³ Dr. King criticized persons on both sides. He made it clear that one does not have to use violence to gain equality. On the other hand, he criticized Wilkins for not understanding

⁵²Encyclopedia Americana, 785

⁵³Eleiweiss, Marching, p. 144

why the cry was uttered.

Between 1968 and 1970 blacks became suspicious of President Richard Nixon's commitment to civil rights. As black unemployment rose radical tension grew. Violence increased between blacks and police. Several murders occurred. For instance, two leaders of the black panther party were killed in Chicago in 1969, six blacks were killed in Augusta, Georgia by police, and two were killed at Jackson State College in 1970. Therefore the Nixon administration was accused by blacks of creating violent repression in the United States.

We may conclude our discussion of the Civil Rights Movement by saying it came about as a result of the black man's struggle to eat, sit, vote, travel without being harrassed by others, and to be respected as an individual in society.

II. The Speaker

"One of three children of Obie and Bernice Scott, Coretta Scott was born in Heiberger, Alabama on April 27, 1927."⁵⁴

Even though the Scott family owned land since the Civil War, they were not well-to-do. This was proved during the Depression years. "Coretta's father added to the income from his country store by hauling lumber, and her mother drove a school bus. Coretta herself had to earn money by hoeing and picking cotton."⁵⁵

The Scott family firmly believed that their children should get a good education. This would prepare them for the competitive American society.

⁵⁴Charles Moritz, ed., Current Biography (New York: The H.W. Wilson Co., 1969), p. 239

⁵⁵Ibid.

Besides the fact that young Coretta was regarded as being a "tomboy", she "has been described as being highly intelligent and very aggressive by nature."⁵⁶ She also had a quick temper. In spite of this, "she always tried to excel in everything she did. And she made good marks."⁵⁷

"Her first years of schooling were spent in a one-room schoolhouse in Heiberger. As she walked the five miles to that school each day she would see the white children ride by in a school bus, and that experience, among others, made her determined that someday she would be 'treated as an equal'.⁵⁸ Crossroads (this one-room school), as Coretta put it, did not do much to prepare her.

She spent her next years at Lincoln High School in Marion, a private missionary institution, where she had both black and white teachers who were highly respected. She then decided that education was the answer for the narrow restrictions of her life. "At the Lincoln School she studied piano and voice with Olive J. Williams, and she sang as leading soloist in many school musical productions."⁵⁹

After graduating from high school as valedictorian of her class in 1945, Coretta left for Antioch College located in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Two years before this, her sister entered this college. The college's Race Relations Committee granted Coretta a partial scholarship. Although Antioch was considered to be a liberal college, both Coretta and her sister found that as

⁵⁶Vivian, Coretta, p. 21

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Moritz, Current, p. 239

⁵⁹Ibid.

token Negroes they fitted somewhat awkwardly into campus social life.

Coretta did not find college life to be easy. Her major was education and music. She worked in the college's work-study program. "As part of the program requirements, she worked as a camp counselor, settlement house worker, library assistant, and nursery school attendant."⁶⁰ She had no problems with racial prejudice in performing these assignments. The trouble started when she got ready to student-teach. "As a rule, Antioch students were assigned to the Yellow Springs public schools, but no Negro had ever taught there, and, consequently, Miss Scott was sent to the Antioch Demonstration School."⁶¹ Even though she protested against this, nothing was done about it.

In spite of this, Miss Scott was determined to press forward. In the meantime she concentrated on her musical training--both verbal and instrumental. "She sang in the Antioch choir and was a soloist with the Second Baptist Church in Springfield, Ohio, where she made her concert debut in 1948."⁶² Upon graduation in June, 1951, she decided to continue her music studies. "That fall she entered the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston with a fellowship from the Jessie Smith Noyes Fund."⁶³ The fellowship barely covered tuition. In order to remain in school Miss Scott found a part-time job working as a mail-order clerk and cleaned for a Beacon Hill family. This family gave her breakfast and a place to sleep. Coretta's financial condition began to improve after the first year. During this time she received

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

aid from the State of Alabama provided for Negro students not allowed in the State's white institutions. "She gave the premiere performance at the conservatory of *Motivos de Son*, a song cycle by the Cuban composer *Amadeo Roldan*."⁶⁴

"Coretta, rather reserved and introspective as a very young woman, had had many friends in Ohio but was somewhat isolated socially in Boston."⁶⁵ It was there that she was introduced to Martin Luther King, Jr., a brilliant young Atlanta minister who was a graduate student in philosophy. "On their first date King reportedly told her, 'You're everything I'm looking for in a wife', and on later dates he often confided to her his hopes for helping his race and humanity."⁶⁶ Coretta said she really did not want to marry a minister but after dating Martin she came to believe they did have similar goals in life. She gave up her musical career for marriage. She and Martin became husband and wife on June 15, 1953 in a ceremony presided over by the Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. and held in the garden of the Scotts' home in Heiberger.

After Martin received his Ph.D. degree from Boston University and after Coretta's graduation from the New England Conservatory, they moved to Montgomery, Alabama. There Dr. King became pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. "A little over a year later (1955), the Montgomery bus boycott first attracted attention to the young minister's nonviolent civil rights crusade..."⁶⁷ The boycott began when Mrs. Rosa Parks, an attractive woman wearing rimless glasses, refused to give up her seat to a white passenger. Because of her refusal, the

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Vivian, Coretta, p. 33

⁶⁶Moritz, Current, p. 240

⁶⁷Ibid.

bus driver immediately summoned a policeman who arrested Rosa Parks for violating the city's segregation laws.

"Rosa Parks triggered a chain of events that started the greatest black Civil Rights Movement in the United States, thereby giving rise to the greatness of Dr. King."⁶⁸ This movement was one of the most outstanding movements in history. During that time Mrs. King gave her husband moral support.

"In November, 1955, Martin was asked to assume the presidency of the local NAACP."⁶⁹ Mrs. King urged him not to do so, that he should concentrate on his church program. He agreed and later was appointed leader of the Montgomery bus boycott. The organization was called the Montgomery Improvement Association.

On the 47th day of the boycott, while driving three passengers home, Dr. King was followed by a policeman. One of the passengers cautioned him to drive slowly. "As Martin stopped to let out the three passengers, the policeman arrested him for speeding thirty miles an hour in a twenty-five-mile-an hour zone."⁷⁰

When he heard of Dr. King's arrest, Ralph David Abernathy (a good friend of Dr. King), immediately went to the jailer to see if a cash bond could be paid to get him out. In the meantime, a huge crowd of blacks gathered around the jail. The jailer hurriedly ushered Dr. King out and said his trial would be the following Monday.

"From that night on Martin's commitment to the freedom struggle was

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 3

⁶⁹Coretta Scott King, My Life, p. 110

⁷⁰Vivian, Coretta, p. 10

stronger than ever. Coretta reassured him that she was behind him."⁷¹

Just four days after Dr. King's arrest, the Kings' home was bombed. Even though Mrs. King, her oldest child, Yolanda Denise (who was only three weeks old), and a friend were there, no one was hurt. Outside, an angry crowd was waiting with sticks, guns, etc. But when Dr. King arrived, he told them to put away their weapons because their struggle was a non-violent one. In the meantime Mrs. King's father and Dr. King's father tried to persuade her to go to her father's home for safety. But her response was: "I really wouldn't be happy if I did go...I would rather stay here with Martin."⁷² That night Mrs. King lost fear of dying. She later commented that the night their home was bombed was the first night she realized how much she meant to Dr. King in terms of supporting him.

Two weeks later, Dr. King prepared himself for out-of-town speaking engagements. The decision was made for Mrs. King to visit her parents for a few days in Marion. While she was there she discovered that they were afraid and she felt uneasy around them. Her response to their reactions was: "I know we are right and we are going to have to stand up for what we believe."⁷³

On February 21, 1956, a grand jury decided that the bus boycott was illegal. While speaking in Nashville, Tennessee, Dr. King discovered that a warrant was out for his arrest. He arrived in Atlanta to pick up Mrs. King and their daughter, Yolanda. Mrs. King again told him: "I want you to know whatever you decide to do I'll be with you."⁷⁴ So the Kings returned

⁷¹Ibid., p. 11

⁷²Ibid., p. 15

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 16

to Montgomery and Dr. King voluntarily gave himself up.

The court found Dr. King guilty of violating the state's antiboycott law. His fine was five-hundred dollars or three hundred eighty-six days at hard labor in the county jail. "An appeal was filed, and Martin and the others were released on bond. Coretta and Martin left the courtroom smiling. They were cheered by a large crowd."⁷⁵

On May 11, 1956, the federal court held an appeal hearing. After three long weeks, "the decision was that the segregation laws governing city buses in Montgomery were unconstitutional."⁷⁶

Alabama's bus segregation laws were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court on November 13, 1956. Fifty thousand people in Montgomery had finally won against injustice.

In reference to her Montgomery experience, Coretta made the following comment:

"We were unable to predict success or failure. Faith was our guide and our future was a thing of conjecture. I am thankful that I am living in the second half of the twentieth century and that my life has been one of service and meaning. Not many people are fortunate enough to have something to which they can dedicate their lives."⁷⁷

A new image for black America was secured as a result of the Montgomery struggle and the King's determination to stick together. "Coretta's calmness under pressure and her strength forged for her an indelible place in the hearts of many people. She inspires her race magnificently."⁷⁸

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 16-17

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 17

The Kings moved to Atlanta in 1960. During that time Dr. King shared the pastorate of the Ebenezer Baptist Church with his father. In the meantime Mrs. King was devoted to her housework and their children: Yolanda, Martin Luther III, Dexter Scott, and Bernice Albertine.

Mrs. King's responsibility as a wife and mother increased as Dr. King was gone most of the time. Because her husband went to jail so many times for conducting civil rights demonstrations, Mrs. King found it difficult to explain this to her children. Since the word "jail" was commonly referred to as a place of punishment for wrong-doing, Mrs. King had to use simple phrases such as "Daddy goes to jail to help people."⁷⁹ Regardless of what it took to do it, she found a way to make them understand. She instilled in the children "a pride in their blackness."⁸⁰

Coretta King is a highly versatile individual in her own right. As one of her admirers said, "Coretta King could not be an ordinary anything."⁸¹ The Freedom Concert for the Civil Rights Movement was developed and performed by her. The concert includes lectures, music, and poetry. It also presents the history of the Movement. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC--which was organized in Atlanta in 1957 by Dr. King) gets the proceeds from the concert. During a time when Dr. King feared SCLC could not meet her payroll, a check came in the mail thanking Mrs. King for the performance of one of her concerts.

⁷⁹Garland, "Coretta King", Ebony, p. 160

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Vivian, Coretta, p. 18

Besides being a singer, "Coretta King is also a gifted speaker. She speaks with a quiet fervor of the Movement. Her sincerity of purpose rings through her words."⁸² From Kernona B. Clayton, we noted: "She never missed a convention or an important meeting or anything her husband asked her to do."⁸³ She walked faithfully beside her husband in marches "and fulfilled the speaking engagements that he found himself unable to keep."⁸⁴

While autographing his first book Stride Toward Freedom in a Harlem, New York shoe department store, Dr. King was stabbed with a letter opener by forty-two-year-old Izola Ware Curry. "Praying and crying black people watched television screens as Coretta King, wearing a dark turban hat, her face revealing her concern, deplaned in New York."⁸⁵ She was there to be at her husband's bedside. The letter opener was touching the main artery, the aorta. Doctors said if Dr. King had merely sneezed he would have died. The removal of the letter opener required three long hours of surgery. For several days Dr. King was on the critical list. "Coretta's calmness under pressure brought hope to the followers of Martin. She symbolized the strength of black womanhood and all that is fine and noble."⁸⁶ The business of the Civil Rights Movement was conducted by Coretta in an office on the first floor which was set up by hospital officials.

When Dr. King was well enough to travel back home to Montgomery, Mrs. King continued to carry on his work. She took over a youth march for him

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Moritz, Current, p. 240

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Vivian, Coretta, p. 40

⁸⁶Ibid.

in Washington, D.C. The march was led by Harry Belafonte and Jackie Robinson. She even read Dr. King's speech he had prepared for the occasion. Many involved in the Movement gave her credit for holding it together.

In reference to the Movement, she stated consistently:

"I have taken my responsibility as a wife and mother seriously, as I take my role of wife and mother seriously, as I take my role of wife to the leading symbol in the Civil Rights struggle.....At every point I have believed that the cause was most important, and I have been willing to make the necessary sacrifices."⁸⁷

Mrs. King toured Europe and Asia with her husband in 1959 and sang before various groups in India. "Long active in the peace movement, she was a Women's Strike for Peace delegate at the seventeen-nation Disarmament Conference held in Geneva, Switzerland in 1962."⁸⁸ During this time Dr. King made speeches throughout the country in order to gain moral and financial support for the Movement. Mrs. King "was giving concerts and also making speeches to help (the) Cause."⁸⁹

In 1963 Dr. King made his famous "I Have a Dream Speech" at the Lincoln Memorial. Mrs. King sat on the platform with him. Just three months later, a church in Birmingham, Alabama was bombed and four little girls were killed. Numerous killings took place during these intense times.

Around the first of February (1966) Dr. King and Ralph Abernathy "led a march of two hundred fifty blacks and fifteen whites from Brown's Chapel A.M.E. Church to the Selma Courthouse to protest the difficulty of

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 41

⁸⁸Moritz, Current, p. 240

⁸⁹Coretta Scott King, My Life, p. 208

registering Negro voters."⁹⁰ All of them were arrested. During their first five days of imprisonment Mrs. King went to Selma to visit them and participate in the struggle.

Upon her arrival at Brown's Chapel for a mass meeting, she was asked to speak. Her speech was short and inspirational "emphasizing the nonviolent approach and urging them to continue."⁹¹

Several days later the marches camped on the outskirts of the Capital city, Montgomery, Alabama. Harry Belafone, Nina Simone, and others performed beautifully for the marchers. Mrs. King was asked to speak. The speech she made was centered around the future of black children. In her concluding remarks, she spoke directly to the mothers. She challenged them with Langston Hughes' poem, "Mother to Son":

"Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor-
Bare.

But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.

So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 256

And life for me ain't been no crystal stair."⁹²

From 1964 - 1966, riots such as the Watts Riot in Los Angeles and the Chicago Riot, broke out. As a result, many places were burned, stores were looted, and people were killed. At a time when this was going on (in 1966) Mrs. King addressed a women's meeting at the YWCA on the North Side of Chicago. The speech was centered around unity. The purpose of the speech was to speak against all the violence that was going on.

In March, 1968, Dr. King went to Memphis, Tennessee to support "the nonviolent protest of the garbage collectors in Memphis."⁹³ He had no intention of staying there. He was mainly interested in "his Poor People's Campaign which was to climax in a March on Washington in April."⁹⁴ He, however, never left Memphis, Tennessee alive. It was there that he delivered his last speech, "I've Been to the Mountaintop". On April 4, 1968, the day after the speech was made, Dr. King was assassinated by James Earl Ray outside of the Lorraine Motel.

After Dr. King's death Mrs. King continued to speak for his causes. In 1968 she delivered a speech concerning the Poor People's Campaign. Coretta spoke at the Lincoln Memorial to 50,000 demonstrators. Even though this number could not compare to the 250,000 marchers who were there in 1963

⁹²Ibid., pp. 266-7

⁹³Vivian, Coretta, p. 79

⁹⁴Ibid.

to hear her husband's "I Have A Dream Speech", "their cause, eradication of the common human blight of poverty"⁹⁵ was much broader. In this speech, while speaking against the three evils of our society (poverty, racism, and war), she challenged the women to join in a "campaign of conscience" when she said:

"Women, if the soul of this nation is to be saved, I believe that you must become its soul. You must speak out against the evils of our time as you see them...we have a common concern for the happiness of our children and their families, to unite our efforts throughout the world."⁹⁶

New York Times television reviewer, Jack Gould, felt that Mrs. King's presence that day was so important that he wrote:

"The presence of a woman champion of equality...adhering tastefully to the views of her assassinated husband was something new and touching...Mrs. King was easily the major figure of an occasion inevitably evoking remembrance of past nations' tragedies."⁹⁷

This was the first dramatic public appearance of Mrs. King.

"Mrs. King has much the same charisma as her husband. Everywhere she goes, a mob of ardent admirers, black and white alike, seems to materialize almost at once,"⁹⁸ said Dan Bernstein.

At first the message of Mrs. King was carried with Dr. King's words. But she has now developed her own ideology. "This rooted in what she understands to be King's developing philosophy--which linked the fight for civil

⁹⁵Garland, "Coretta King", Ebony, p. 154

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Bernstein, "Keeper", Newsweek, p. 38

rights and a better life at home with the struggle of the developing nations and the need for peace throughout the world."⁹⁹

Mrs. King was named to the board of directors of the National Organization for Women and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference soon after her husband's assassination. Other organizations that she is a member of are as follows:

1. The National Council of Negro Women
2. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
3. The Women's Strike for Peace
4. Links, Inc.
5. The United Church Women

She was named Woman of the Year in 1968 by the National Association of Television and Radio Announcers.

Mrs. King's "Commencement Address" of June 1, 1971, was delivered to an audience who was identified with education. This particular address took place at City College in New York. It gave a detailed description of social evils in American society.

The speech will be analyzed in Chapter III.

⁹⁹
Ibid.

Speeches are meant to be torn apart so that they can be chewed and digested. When a speech is taken apart, it provides thorough understanding of its content.*

*

These statements were made by the writer in a term paper: "The Life of Thomas Corwin" for an American Public Address class at Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois, 1973.

Chapter III

Analysis and Evaluation of the Speech

The purpose of this chapter is to report the analysis and evaluation of "Commencement Address" given by Mrs. King on June 1, 1971 at City College. The speech was analyzed and evaluated by applying Nilsen's criteria: the speaker's concept of man, ideas, and society.

The Speaker's Concept of Man

1. What concept of man is shown by the language she employs?

Through the use of language selection man is seen as an individual who has power and force in the world. This is revealed in the following:

"I think it must be seen that in the swiftly evolving technological societies of today, students, faculty, graduates and all intellectuals are playing a new role. They are not only contributors, as in the past, of ideas and new concepts to the masses, no longer merely rationalizers of the status quo, but in the nature of modern industrial society they have become a mass force themselves."

The speech reveals that rhetorical adaptation is present in the sense that (1) the speaker's task is to communicate effectively with her audience and (2) the audience is able to respond and identify with the language.

The language Mrs. King employs is focused on her audience. Her choice of words is simple. For example, consider these lines: "I want to thank you for honoring me with the Martin Luther King, Jr. medal. All I can say is that I hope I can show you in the future my gratitude for this very special honor."

*For the convenience of the reader a complete text of Mrs. King's speech appears in Appendix A.

Audience adaptation is effected when Mrs. King shows that she feels the same as the audience does in certain instances. For example, she said the main reason she liked to be identified with young people was because they are the ones who will determine in the future what kind of nation we will have. This nation, she said, is depending on the youth.

Further in the speech Mrs. King identifies with her audience by stating: "In this period of social, political, economic and religious transformation, not one of us can be spared the luxury of withdrawing from the arena of action." She appeals to her audience by saying every man's duty is to concentrate on restructuring the whole world order.

In the latter portion of the speech identification through language also occurs. She points out that she feels the same as the young--that officials have not responded to the terrible assassinations which have occurred in America. She believes, like many of the young, that those in authority have not done all they could and because they have not, their responses have been inadequate. This denotes that Mrs. King believes something more should be done in dealing with the assassination problem.

When Mrs. King uses such phrases as "none of us", "our nation", and "we are" she is also identifying with her audience. By using these phrases, the audience understands that she is with them. They know she shares their same ideas and beliefs. Such language as this suggests that Mrs. King seeks to establish rapport with her listeners.

Descriptive language paints a picture of Mrs. King's ideas in reference to the problems man faces in society. Some usages are "fierce hurricanes", "status quo establishment centered institutions", "political scene", "modern industrial society", "technological apparatus", "complex society", "computer

dynasty", and "bearers of firebombs".

Besides using audience contact language, Mrs. King makes use of two figures of speech, personification and the metaphor. Personification is a figure of speech in which a thing, quality, or idea is represented as a person. A metaphor is an implied comparison in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used of one thing is applied to another.

Several words were personified in the speech. For example, the word "pendulum" is personified in a subtle way when she says: "This year the pendulum swings to an overwhelming pessimism". While speaking of the violence which shocks all of us, the word "media" is personified. To support this, Mrs. King makes the following statement about such violence: "It is a reflection of the violence our media celebrate". Further personification occurs through Mrs. King's use of the words "cities", "city", and "town". Speaking as though cities were people, here's what she said in one instance: "The cities cannot be permitted to die". Another instance occurs when Mrs. King added that the cities are enduring pain. The following indicates this: "The cities are suffering neglect because so many of its residents are black". To go beyond this statement, Mrs. King mentioned the city and the small town. Here is what she said concerning this matter: "Beyond this the city is in a struggle with the small town and suburban political power which are at present stronger than urban resources".

Mrs. King also used metaphors in her speech. A metaphor was used when she regarded students as being an edge. She said: "Therefore, and beyond this, I think the students of today are the sensitive edge of society that is pressing against the dehumanizing elements of technocracy". When Mrs. King referred to the suburbs as being "children of the cities" she was using a

metaphor. She said no suburb could serve as a substitute for the cities.

Note her comment: "Suburbs, which are children of the cities, cannot replace them."

3. What concept of man is shown by the information she presents or fails to present?

In reference to the information presented by Mrs. King, man is viewed as one who is useful and capable of historical action and understanding. He is seen as one who does not at all times, face reality. He is equally seen as one who makes foolish mistakes but he is able to profit by them. Despite the fact that his actions are somewhat immature, he is able to use his intelligence in making decisions. When Mrs. King speaks of the young, this is revealed: "Some of the objectives of the newly organized young may be immature and even somewhat divorced from realities, but there is nothing childish about their focus on the horrors of war and barbarities of race prejudice and inequality that seam and scar our society."

In order to forget their problems, some students (said Mrs. King) participate in promiscuity and drug usage. "But if this were all they championed, their cause would long since have withered into a peculiar isolated sect without influence of numbers and also without threat."

According to other information presented by the speaker, man's time for action is now. He has no time to waste. He therefore must use rationality in acting. The rationality of youth protest has influenced others in society to agree with them. Note this comment: "But the rational essence in their protest has aroused sympathetic chords in large elements of the population who also want an end to war, to inequality and the fragmentation of personality."

In order for laws to be just in society, man has to use his creativity and independence. He has to spend his time making this dream come true. The following point was made about tax revenues and priorities:

"I think a just division of tax revenues, and reordering of priorities will not occur until the people are fully involved lending the passion of their spirit and the power of their numbers to this critical struggle. It may involve mayors leading hundreds of thousands of their urban constituents in massive demonstrations to say to those with disproportionate power, we will not go silently to a suffocating doom."

Mrs. King does not fail to present any needed information.

4. What concept of man is shown by the issues she chooses?

The issues Mrs. King chooses are (1) the role of students in society, (2) racism, (3) the Vietnam war, (4) poverty, and (5) the generation gap. Mrs. King suggests what should be done when dealing with each issue. It is man's moral responsibility to deal honestly with each issue.

The role of students in society is the chief issue. In the body of the speech, Mrs. King speaks to the college students by saying they are the ones who will hold the future in their hands. Whatever happens in the future will rest in large measure on their judgments. They will have to use their own discretions in making meaningful changes in society. To further support this concept of man, the following quote is necessary:

"In numbers and in the key role they occupy in the technological apparatus, the millions of young highly trained individuals are strategically placed to affect all of society. They count. They are crucial. As the old union song has it, without their brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn."

Another issue is racism. In connection to this, Mrs. King appeals to the youth by saying they will solve this problem by wiping hatred from their minds. The young generation, she said, will strive harder than any other

generation to eradicate racism. For example, this is obvious when she says: "I am aware that tension between black and white still exists--that white racism has not conveniently evaporated. But, I have confidence that in this generation the greatest strides to solutions in decades will be found."

The Vietnam war, poverty, and the generation gap were then mentioned. The Vietnam war was referred to as "the most cruel and evil war" in American history. She further commented that it was time for the president to stop it. She then said the Vietnam war along with poverty and the complaints of the young in reference to these two issues would remain on the conscience of America until she decided to do something about them. She asserted that the young (in the past) had made mistakes and in the future they will make more. In defending them, however, she clearly said the older generation had not only made mistakes but it was also a failure to American society. Then she added that this is the reason why the young refuse to pay attention to them.

5. What concept of man is shown by the questions she raises?

According to four questions asked by Mrs. King, man has been dehumanized by his fellow man. Each question will be discussed. The first question was "How can we explain the depth and scope of the student movements and the social upheavals they evoke?" In response, she said the reason why students demonstrate and riot is because the elements of technocracy are dehumanizing ones. In other words, students feel they are treated less than human. She further commented that the students have lost faith in America because of her participation in the Vietnam war which she considered "a losing war." Then she said machines and materialistic things have taken the place of the individual personality thus causing a loss of identity. Instead of America

being a "person-centered" society, Mrs. King said it was a "thing-centered" one.

In dealing with this problem, another question was asked: "Why have students been more sensitive to this assault on personality?" Her answer was the young generation of today is the first generation who was taught that each person is an individual. They were encouraged to be both creative and independent. But they discovered that the larger society did not have much room for individuals because each person was a computer number. When they rebelled against such a system they found out what the word prejudice meant. In reference to the student and youth protest, the following comment was made:

"The student and youth protest is a demand for decent human values and individualized expression, as the impersonal and increasingly computerized society intensifies regimentation and standardization in people and things in the home, school, office, recreation, and culture."

It was brought out that black youth have been regarded by society as being violent. Concerning the matter, this question was asked: "Who noticed before the fact that their hands were idle, their pockets empty, their hopes frustrated and their hearts broken by indifference and contempt?" To this question she said everybody seems to notice that many of the black students have resorted to violence and she appealed to her audience when she added: "But how many know that the unemployment rate for black youth in major urban centers has soared to between 35 and 50 per cent?" A reason for violent protest was given when Mrs. King said blacks have been deprived. For example, they live in the lowest forms of housing--slums. The educational system has discriminated against them. "They cannot hope for normal lives, and they can expect more diseases and earlier death than their white counterparts."

6. What concept of man is shown by the faith she generates?

Mrs. King generates faith in man when she says youth are more mature intellectually than past generations. She said they are able to understand more about society than their elders are. She has faith that youth are capable of making wise decisions. Therefore, they are not apathetic. Faith is also employed when Mrs. King says youth will be able to solve the problem of racism. This is indicative when she states: "But I have confidence in this generation that the greatest strides to solutions in decades will be found."

In the latter portion of the speech Mrs. King maintains confidence and faith in the youth when she speaks of the urban crisis. She believes their help is needed in solving the problem. Here is what she said: "I believe this urban crisis will need their imagination and energy, and I believe they will win."

Lastly faith is generated when Mrs. King states that both blacks and whites are needed to eliminate racism. Again, the young are the ones "to develop the required coalitions." She said the only way to solve racial polarization is when each individual realizes that he has to put forth his best efforts to wipe it out. This, she said, is the only way for "a common survival" to be maintained. Then she added that in order for one to solve urgent problems he has to rid himself of hatred and suspicion.

7. What concept of man is shown by the doubts she implies?

Because of the three evils of society--war, poverty, and racism, Mrs. King doubts if the student of today is as free as the student of yesterday. In confronting these three evils she says they are not childish because they

want them to be stopped. She also added that they (the youth) cannot overlook these problems if they had the opportunity to do so.

Mrs. King also doubts that the experts of our nation have been right. As she stated: "No one wants to live in a computer dynasty as programmed people."

It was doubted further in the speech if many people are aware of the present tax and welfare structure. In reference to this doubt, she used statistics to point out differences between the rich man's earnings and the poor man's earnings. She said even though the welfare system has been reformed, the poor man who is on relief has to give the treasury 70 cents on the dollar after the first \$30.00 he makes a month in extra earnings. But the rich man only pays 25 cents. This is so, she said, even when the rich man's "normal income tax rate is more than 50 per cent."

Finally, Mrs. King doubts if police will be able to solve violence (anguish from ghettos, rural slums, battlefields) since society is immune to it.

8. Does the speech reveal man as a being of intrinsic worth, of one whose worth as a personality derives from possessions, characteristics or creed?

Throughout the speech man is revealed as a being of intrinsic worth. His worth as a personality derives from possessions, characteristics and creed. Everyone in society has a vital role to play. Everyone is held responsible for ridding the three evils of society. Not only are youth concerned about these evils, they also play a major role in politics. Without their support in this area, society would not be able to reach many of its goals. Note the following:

"The political scene in our country has never been so marked by

student and youth action, and it is not reckless to predict that this is no aberrant phenomenon but a fundamental shift in social patterns that will distinguish this era from others past."

When the youth protest was mentioned, Mrs. King pointed out that many in society go along with them because they speak out also against some of the same things.

9. Is the image of man that of a being with a capacity for wisdom and rational choice, the exercise of whose rationality in the light of growing wisdom it is the speaker's obligation to encourage?

The image of man is that of a being with a capacity for wisdom and rational choice. Mrs. King encouraged this exercise of rationality. She said because the students have been protesting from a rational standpoint, many in society have been aroused; they also want racism, poverty, and war to come to an end.

The youth are encouraged in the speech when Mrs. King says in nature they are serious people who constantly seek ways and means of coping with society's problems. They have no time to rest. They have got to hold up our democratic system. Because the student is so serious-minded, Mrs. King adds he "is now recognized as a significant political actor with amazing power to influence the course of societies all over the world."

10. Does the speech deal honestly with men and realistically relate them to the problems they face or does it raise spurious alarm or spurious complacency?

The speech definitely deals honestly with men and realistically relates them to the problems they face. This is shown when Mrs. King points out that members of the young generation as well as members of the old generation are confronted with the problems of racism, poverty, and war. Both want these

evils to vanish.

Indication of the speech dealing honestly with men also occurs when Mrs. King says black Americans have been victims of a loss of identity and alienation. She said that for most blacks "this is not a society of abundance but a society of want." She also stated that for years blacks have been deprived of their heritage.

11. Does the speech imply that men must grow in understanding of themselves and the world about them or that they should forsake the dangers of thought for the safety of convention?

The speech implies that men must grow in understanding of the world about them if their problems are to be solved. When the student is mentioned in the beginning of the speech this point clearly comes out. Consider these lines:

"His response to the challenge of this crucial period in the history of our nation and the world is indeed a sobering influence on all of us. What we have seen in the way of student protest is in large measure a reaction to status quo establishment centered institutions, of which students feel have allowed little or no voice in policy making decisions."

Toward the end of the speech, Mrs. King also makes it clear that men must grow in understanding of themselves and the world about them. Her comment was: "The world is in dire need of a spiritual awakening which will make those eternal values of love, justice, mercy and peace meaningful in our time."

12. Does the speech encourage respect for the spirit of free men?

The speech does encourage respect for the spirit of free men. In encouraging this respect, men are not falsely flattered to their immediate gratification. Instead, Mrs. King implies that the spirit of free men is for

the sake of long term solutions. Her concluding remarks illustrate this point:

"Finally, in struggling to give meaning to your own lives, as a new generation of graduates you are preserving the best in our traditions and are breaking new ground in your restless search for truth. With this creative force to inspire all of us, we may yet not only survive--we may triumph."

The Speaker's Concept of Ideas

This section reports the speaker's concept of ideas as shown by instrumentality and manipulation. If ideas are used instrumentally the speaker is interested in their validity and in the creative action that will result. On the other hand, if ideas are used manipulatively by the speaker they become instruments not for validity and creativeness but for contrivance. We will proceed to consider these two divisions of instrumentality and manipulation in various portions of this section. We will also consider ethical proof and pathetic proof which were defined in chapter one. Ethical proof (ethos) is the "appeal directed to the persuasiveness of the argument which rested upon the character of the speaker himself, as appraised by his audience." Pathetic proof is the "appeal directed to the emotions of the audience."

1. Are the ideas used instrumentally?

Ideas are used instrumentally throughout Mrs. King's speech. In discussing the problems of American society, she informs her audience that the youth are the ones who will play a major role in determining in the future the success or failure of the democratic tradition. She points out that because youth are in search of what is true, others in America and various parts of the world have been influenced by their actions. But not only this,

generations play an important role in history. This is seen when she states: "Along with classes and races and conventional pressure groups, generations are now useful and appropriate categories of historical action and understanding."

She goes on to say that everyone is responsible for preventing destruction in society. They have to use their imagination and creativity in order to save the world. She uses ethical and pathetic appeal as shown by the following:

"In this period of social, political, economic and religious transformation, not one of us can be spared the luxury of withdrawing from the arena of action. As members of the family of mankind we have an inherent moral responsibility to become participants in the greatest creative venture in the history of our world: that of remaking, reshaping, yes restructuring our whole world order. Each one of us is being called to help save our society and the world from destruction."

(a) Does the speech present ideas so that they take on added meaning?

The speech presents ideas so that they take on added meaning. Mrs. King gives the audience many things to think about in her speech. She lets them know that every man is an active participant in saving our world. None can rest. Their duty is to act. In the beginning of the speech, she informs her listeners that she is going to uphold the name of her husband when she tells them she hopes she can show them in the future how grateful she is for receiving the Martin Luther King, Jr. medal. The implication here is that she is going to act according to the principles of her husband.

When Mrs. King speaks of the generation gap, meaning is added to basic information. She says youth are vital because unlike the older generation, they are not set in their ways. They are more open minded than their elders and they don't believe in putting things off. They are demanding the right

to be heard. In connection with this, an additional meaning arises when she says the media are biased in presenting information concerning student protests. The implication is that more students are making trouble (or forcing the masses to think) than the media would have the public believe. To illustrate this suggestion her comment was:

"This conflict between students and administration has often been misinterpreted by the media, giving the impression that only a few leftist militants are making trouble. This is tantamount to skirting the real issues involved."

It can also be suggested that Mrs. King is glad there is a generation gap because evil ideologies of the past are separated from the free spirit of the contemporary student movement.

When speaking of politics Mrs. King suggests political candidates cannot do without youth support. If they leave the youth out, they will damage their candidacy. She also implies that society will have to listen to youth and all intellectuals unless they are going to be doomed.

Added meaning then occurs when it is implied that machines have taken over the creative thinking of the individual. Since machines are regarded as being first and people only second, she says this disaster has affected all of society.

Mrs. King later talks about government leaders and suggests they have not put forth their best efforts in eliminating poverty in the United States. They have done everything else but have done nothing about poverty. The following lines illustrate this point:

"It is extraordinary how well poverty has been concealed in the United States. For twenty-five years or more government leaders have boasted of economic progress and the miracles of production the nation accomplished. Yet few people have heard the groans of thirty-five million poor, black and white."

She also implies that Congress cares nothing for the poor because they do not give enough public assistance. Instead, they cut the welfare funds for headstart, etc.

In reference to the urban crisis Mrs. King suggests that the cities have not been treated fairly because many are moving into the suburbs. She hinted that the cities are dying because mayors are not doing their jobs. They are not talking to the people like they should.

- (b) Does the speech present ideas so that they relate to other significant ideas, so that the listener can see the world a little more as a whole and can use his own intelligence more effectively than before?

The speech does present ideas so that the listener can see the world a little more as a whole. Because of this the listener is able to use his own intelligence more effectively than before.

Mrs. King says that in the past people believed that students who graduated would have the opportunity to participate in a totally different world. They would be confronted with different situations all of which they would have to adjust to. But she does not agree with this concept. She says the world is no longer "a bright new world" because students of today are already confronted with existing problems in the world. In support of this she states the following:

"This year is certain to differ. This year the pendulum swings to an overwhelming pessimism. Yet, I am not going to go along with the pessimists because I think as grave as the problems are, the will to survive of ordinary people, is a force of stupendous strength and it is often gravely underestimated."

She then uses pathetic proof when she says the student is challenged by the problems of the world. How well he responds to these problems would not only have a bearing on his life, but it would also have a bearing on others.

Here is what she says to this effect:

"His response to the challenge of this crucial period in the history of our nation and the world is indeed a sobering influence on all of us. What we have seen in the way of student protests is in large measure a reaction to status quo establishment centered institutions, of which students feel have allowed little or no voice in policy making decisions."

Now, she says, the student is active in the political area not only in the United States, but everywhere. He is so powerful until he influences the course of actions of societies all over the world. Then she observes that American students at present, are "the prodding conscience to those in power and those aspiring to it."

She emphasized the fact that all intellectuals count when it comes to solving problems in societies. She said they themselves have power in the world. It is their duty to use it to the best of their ability. Note the pathetic proof used to express this idea:

"I think it must be seen that in the swiftly evolving technological societies of today, students, faculty, graduates and all intellectuals are playing a new role. They are not only contributors in the past of ideas and new concepts to the masses, no longer rationalizers of the status quo, but in the nature of modern industrial society they have become a mass force themselves."

Mrs. King went further to state that students of today are more mature intellectually than students of yesterday. But she said just like the Bourgeoisie in pre-revolutionary France, society has excluded them from playing major roles in decision making. This she said, is a conflict not only in the lives of the students but in the lives of everybody. Because of this, she said everybody has to rebuild the entire world.

Then Mrs. King said it would be folly for Americans to feel that the agitation of those students abroad is perfectly all right and at the same time say the agitators at home will have to straighten up. This she said was con-

tradictory in itself.

Mrs. King says violence results from racism, poverty, and war because its victims want something to be done to put a stop to them. Only those who have power and authority are able to do something about them. Evidence of this is revealed in these lines: "Has not power heard the grim tidings? The anguish from the ghettos, the rural slums, the battlefields abroad? The violence which periodically shocks us is a reflection of the violence to which we have become immune."

In using ethical proof (good character, good will, and authoritative-ness) Mrs. King says in order to save our society, new ideas and leadership will have to emerge. Then she tells how America as a nation has been saved by movements. This is indicative in the lines below. These lines paint a picture in the minds of the listeners:

"It is time for both fresh ideas and new leadership to come forth, because without it, our society is on sinking sand. Historians of the future may record that the alliance of the Civil Rights Movement with the student movement that began in the late 1950's and matured into broad political and social action in the '60's and '70's was the salvation of the nation."

Finally, Mrs. King points out that the world needs a spiritual awakening in order for love, justice, mercy and peace to be valuable in our time. Without this spiritual awakening, these eternal values will be meaningless.

Nilsen also said when some speakers use their ideas, they are only presented in a manipulative manner. They have no regards for instrumentality. The second question, then is:

2. Are the ideas used manipulatively?

In her speech Mrs. King would be regarded by Quintilian as being a good woman speaking well because of several reasons: (1) the speech does not perpetuate narrow meaning, (2) it does not isolate ideas or avoid critical ap-

praisal, and (3) it does not use ideas as pushbuttons to trigger off pre-selected responses. Therefore, manipulation does not appear in this speech.

The Speaker's Concept of Society

The speech analysis in this section of the paper focuses only on the speaker's concept of society.

1. What is the speaker's concept of society?

Throughout her entire address Mrs. King is firm in her convictions that American society has failed to stand up to its democratic philosophy. She emphasizes the fact that the only way for society and the world as a whole to survive is that they be rebuilt. She said this cannot happen if they fail to give support to their youth. The youth, she added, are vital in solving conflicting problems of the world. Without them the world would be "on sinking sand."

Out of all the societies in the existing world, America is regarded as being the most affluent one. She says no other nation can compare to the United States' wealth and power. But spiritually and psychologically, American society is impoverished. To this effect she makes the following statement:

"Our activities generate a bewildering array of material goods and no satisfactions. Our machines have grown so large that we have become small. We no longer ask for what purpose they are made. Instead of a flowering of personality, with the decrease in heavy labor there is such a loss of identity and growth of alienation that the distinctiveness of individuals has become blurred and homogenized."

Commenting further, Mrs. King said the American society is "thing-centered" instead of "person-centered". She implies that even though society is "thing-centered" mankind can work together in order to form a more perfect system.

She asserted that what is needed in the world is "a spiritual awakening which will make those eternal values of love, justice, mercy and peace meaningful in our time."

2. What does the speech imply about rationality, tolerance, and the moral autonomy of the individual?

Mrs. King's speech implies that the older generation must be both rational and tolerant when it comes to our youth because their "response to the challenge of this crucial period in the history of our nation and the world is indeed a sobering influence on all of us." She says students must be given the opportunity to have a voice in policy making decisions. Also, she points out that the student of today must be recognized as a "significant political actor with amazing power to influence the course of societies all over the world." She implies that society and the world cannot function properly without the young.

Further implication about rationality, tolerance, and the autonomy of the individual occurs when Mrs. King states the young are serious and sensitive in their rebellions "against the dehumanizing elements of technocracy." Society has assaulted the personality of the students. While being taught during the early stages of their lives that each child is an individual, when they moved into the larger arena of action students discovered that society did not have as much room for individuals as she said she did. Students had tolerated this in the past but now they have become resistive. As a result, "they found themselves locked in a philosophical cage of prejudices and rigid standards." The implication is that societies must be rational in meeting the demands of the students. They must not divorce them from their activities.

3. What does the speech imply about the expression of opinions, deliberation, persuasion, free inquiry, free criticism and free choice?

The speech implies that youth should be allowed by society to express their opinions in the world. This would be a sure way of solving the major conflicts or evils (racism, poverty, and war) of our time. Mrs. King stresses the idea that students should be allowed the freedom to say how society should operate since they are part of it. Therefore she is firm when she says free will or freedom of choice is necessary for the progress of our nation.

Mrs. King definitely notes that deliberation is a sure way of solving the nation's problems. She makes it clear that youth and adults alike should get together so that they can find ways and means of healing the nation's wounds. Opinions should be openly expressed so that each individual can see where he stands with others.

Another explanation of deliberation is seen when Mrs. King speaks of student crusades behind United States senators and what they have done for the nation. An example follows:

".....The student crusades behind senator Eugene McCarthy and the fallen Robert Kennedy created a virtual political miracle by retiring an incumbent president, moving the government to the Paris peace talks, and inducing basic revisions in our foreign policy."

Mrs. King goes on to inform the listeners that none of us have the desire to be a number or live "in a computer dynasty as programmed people." Then she said all in society should get together and question the experts. She implies that even though they give the impression that they are authorities in certain areas, they, too, can be wrong. Criticism was used freely when she said:

"No abundance of material goods can compensate for the death of

individuality and personal creativity. This, it seems to me is what student protest is saying and I am listening with an open mind because I have children who will live their lives in the emerging society and it matters deeply to me how they will live."

Continuing to deal with the deliberation of problems Mrs. King said the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized the Poor People's Campaign in Washington. She asserted that her husband said this was the final hope for America to concern herself with racism and poverty. She then said the poor are entitled to a job in our nation.

Mrs. King also implies that the young do not understand that through the process of deliberation, the universities have become the most liberated of all the institutions in the world. However, like all the other institutions, these universities can no longer deny questions they have avoided in the past.

4. What does the speech imply about discussion and debate, the use of information, the interchange of ideas, the function of opposition and attitudes toward what is orthodox and unorthodox in thought and action?

The speech implies that from discussing and debating what to do about the conflicting issues in society, students, faculty, and the older generation as a whole, will be able to work with each other in order to arrive at set conclusions and goals. By airing their differences, and deciding what actions to take they will be able to work for the harmonious development of the good of society. This is the way to save society from destruction.

Mrs. King implies that in order to be ethical, nations and society are expected to act in an orthodox manner. It is hinted here that if nations act unethically, their behavior then is unorthodox. Mrs. King also implies that the United States has been participating in unorthodox behavior because it

has allowed racism, poverty, and war to exist. Using ethical proof and logical proof she cites the following as an example of unorthodox behavior:

"For me, as for millions of black Americans, there is a special dimension to our national crisis. We are not only caught up in all the evils of contemporary society. We are its lowest and most deprived component. For most of us this is not a society of abundance but a society of want. We are not newly victimized by the loss of identity and alienation. We have suffered for generations an imposed heritage of exclusion and frustration. Our future is doubly bleak as we face the unabated racism and deepened deprivation reserved for black Americans."

The speaker goes further to say that because of the color of their skin, blacks are not only deprived but they are also "personally humiliated." Then she used herself as an example when she said she was brought up as a second-class citizen and she knows the turmoil black students are going through.

Another example of unorthodox behavior is mentioned when Mrs. King says Congress has not dealt fairly with the poor. Congress, she states, has been very helpful in passing laws "which subsidize corporation farms, oil companies, airlines and houses for suburbia." But when the time comes for Congress to help the poor they "balance the budget and cut back on funds for headstart, medicare and mental health appropriations."

Mrs. King says because of society's oppression of blacks, the demands and goals of black students and youth are different from those of whites. Here is what she says:

"Blacks have quantitative demands; their emphasis is on jobs and opportunities to ensure elementary survival and progress. But they also have qualitative demands. And here the most hopeful alliance is forged between black and white. For the white student already possessing the material advantages puts perhaps greater emphasis on freedom from psychological taboos, participation in decision-making and creative restructuring of the social system. Each is legitimate and compliments the other."

Still another instance of unorthodox behavior is present when Mrs. King implies that the United States has participated long enough in the Vietnam

war. She points out that Nixon should withdraw troops from Vietnam.

In the end of the speech Mrs. King says orthodox behavior occurs as a result of the students' struggle to hold high the banner of freedom. She closes on this note:

"Finally, in struggling to give meaning to your own lives, as a new generation of graduates you are preserving the best in our traditions and are breaking new ground in your restless search for truth. With this creative force to inspire all of us, we may yet not only survive--we may triumph."

Conclusion

This chapter reported the analysis and evaluation of Mrs. Coretta Scott King's "Commencement Address" which she delivered to an audience identified with education at City College in New York on June 1, 1971. The writer used Thomas R. Nilsen's approach to criticism which focused on the speaker's concept of man, ideas, and society. Conclusions to the study are in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze and evaluate Mrs. Coretta Scott King's speech entitled "Commencement Address" of June 1, 1971, at City College in New York. Before analysis and evaluation of the speech could be made, it was necessary to consider the speaker's background and her outstanding achievements as the new image of black womanhood. Special attention was also given to the Civil Rights Movement since it was centered around the speechmaking.

The writer analyzed the speech according to criteria set forth in Thomas R. Nilsen's article, "The Interpretive Function of the Critic." The critic's function, said Nilsen, is to adhere to the speaker's concept of man, ideas, and society. Therefore, Nilsen raised three main questions:

1. What is the speaker's concept of man?
2. What is the speaker's concept of ideas?
3. What is the speaker's concept of society?

Ethical proof (ethos), pathetic proof (pathos), language selection, and figures of speech served as aids to our analysis.

The speaker's concept of man may be summarized as follows:

1. Man is an individual who has power and force in the world.
2. Man is responsible for preventing destruction in the world.
3. Man is capable of historical action and understanding.
4. Man is an individual who does not, at all times, face reality.

5. Man is capable of making rational and irrational choices.
6. Man is responsible for being honest with his fellow man.
7. Man should not dehumanize his fellow man.
8. Man is capable of making both wise and unwise decisions.
9. Man is a being with a capacity for wisdom and rational choice.
10. Man is responsible for eliminating racism, poverty, and war.
11. Man is a being of intrinsic worth.
12. Man is obligated to grow in understanding of himself and the world around him.

The speaker's concept of ideas may be expressed this way:

1. Youth will play a major role in determining in the future the success or failure of the democratic tradition.
2. The creative thinking of individuals has been replaced by machines.
3. New ideas and leadership will have to emerge in order to save our society from destruction.

The following were observed about the speaker's concept of society:

1. American society has failed to stand up to its democratic philosophy.
2. American society is thing-centered instead of person-centered.
3. Society must be rational in meeting the demands of students.
4. Society can only be saved from destruction when students, faculty, and the older generation cooperate with each other.
5. Because American society has allowed racism, poverty, and war to exist, she has participated in unorthodox behavior.
6. Because students in society have fought to hold high the banner of freedom, they have participated in orthodox behavior.

By language selection, Mrs. King was able to identify with her audience.

The purpose of such identification was to prove to her listeners that she was on the same level as they were in dealing with the world's problems. Her use of stylistic devices, such as personification, the metaphor, and effective

descriptions, enabled the listeners to get a vivid picture of important points she made in the speech. Through Mrs. King's use of personification and the metaphor, she was able to maintain audience attention. This was done in order to increase understanding about the elimination of war and racism. Through her use of ethical proof and pathetic proof, Mrs. King explained that mankind has to prevent world destruction.

The study revealed that there was a direct relationship between solving social evils and formal education: All intellectuals are crucial when it comes to solving conflicting problems in our world.

Conclusions

Because of its unique approach to criticism, the Nilsen criteria for analysis and evaluation was applied to Mrs. King's "Commencement Address". Unlike other criteria, the Nilsen criteria does not treat a speech as though it were divided. Instead, the entire analysis regards the speech as being one entity. In analyzing a speech according to the speaker's concept of man, ideas, and society, one is able to understand the relationship of man to man. One is also able to view Mrs. King's philosophy of man.

The writer discovered that the Nilsen criteria yielded a valid analysis when applied to this particular address. This being the case, other commencement addresses should also be analyzed by this method.

It is recommended that other speeches given by Mrs. King should be analyzed in light of her concept of man, ideas, and society. A study of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speeches by applying the Nilsen criteria would be of value.

Appendix A

CLASS DAY SPEECH - HARVARD UNIVERSITY (JUNE 12, 1968)

by Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is indeed a humbling experience for me to have been invited by you to give your class day address. In trying to perform this awesome task which my late husband would have done with great ease, I feel a deep sense of inadequacy. Nonetheless the confidence and faith which you have placed in me is a source of encouragement and inspiration. In these days when young people want so earnestly to make their own decisions, it is most comforting and gratifying for me to have been invited directly by you and not derivatively through administrative decision.

The tragic events of recent months, starting with the assassination of my late husband, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in Memphis, Tennessee, and followed in exactly two months by the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy in Los Angeles, California, cause us to realize that the very fabric of which our society is woven is being torn away. These men have been eulogized as great men, as loyal Americans and dedicated servants of humanity, one black and one white, both young men, both devoted husbands and loving fathers. By profession one was a minister who sought to change society by moral persuasion through love and non-violence, the other was a political leader who sought to change society through the political process. Both methods are necessary and highly legitimate. These two men addressed themselves to the burning issues of our times: they spoke out against great

evils in our society; racism, poverty, and war. They were great and effective actors on the stage of history. They played their parts exceedingly well, thus inspiring millions. They are a part of that creative minority which helped to move society forward.

As young people, as students, your lives have been greatly affected by the loss of these champions of freedom, of justice, of human dignity and peace. In a power-drunk world, where means become ends, and violence becomes a favorite pastime, we are swiftly moving toward self-annihilation. Your generation must speak out with righteous indignation against the forces which are seeking to destroy us.

The student today is not the carefree, frivolous young person of yesterday's college novels, and decisively he is not the acquisitive careerist we bemoaned as members of the silent and apathetic generation. Today's student is a serious minded, independent thinking individual who seeks to analyze and understand the problems of our society, and find solutions to these problems which are in keeping with the highest traditions and values of our democratic system. His response to the challenge of this crucial period in the history of our nation and the world is indeed a sobering influence on all of us. What we have seen in the way of student protests is in large measure a reaction to a status quo establishment, centered institution which students feel have allowed them little or no voice in policy making decisions. This conflict between students and administration has often been improperly interpreted by the media, giving the impression that only a few leftist militants are making trouble. This is tantamount to skirting the real issues involved. Today's student is now recognized as a significant political actor with amazing power to influence the course of

societies all over the world. In many ways, American students have now, with all their innocence and open generosity, become the prodding conscience to those in power and those aspiring to it. In the United States, candidates for the highest office in the land worry as much about their student support as formerly they concerned themselves with the farm bloc, organized trade union support or the backing of business men. Indeed, the enthusiasm of students in a political cause is a vestment of its legitimacy and honesty. The student crusades behind Senator Eugene McCarthy and the fallen Robert Kennedy created a virtual political miracle by retiring an incumbent President, moving the government to the Paris Peace Talks, and hepefully, inducing basic revisions in our foreign policy. The political scene in our country has never been so marked by student action, and it is not reckless to predict that this is no aberrant phenomenon but a fundamental shift in social patterns that will distinguish this era from others past. Along with classes and races and conventional pressure groups, generations are now useful and appropriate categories of historical action and understanding. It is a totally novel development and a paradoxical one that students, most of whom have no vote, emerge as a formidable political force for progressive change.

If student action has been dramatic in the United States its impact has been thunderous in Europe. In France, it was the spark that ignited a political conflagration engulfing the whole society and forcing it to confront long-delayed issues of economic justice and real political freedom. There, too, a government pursued foreign and military policies on the backs of its citizens. In Czechoslovakia the young have stimulated far-reaching developments that will in the end have irrevocably altered the face of Eastern Europe, another moment in the long struggle to liberate it from dogma.

How can we explain the depth and scope of the student movements and the social upheavals they evoke? I think it must be seen that in the swiftly evolving technological societies of today, students, faculty and all intellectuals are playing a new role. They are not only contributors, as in the past, of ideas and new concepts to the masses, no longer merely rationalizers of the status quo, but in the nature of modern industrial society they have become a mass force themselves. They count, they are crucial. As the old union song has it, without their brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn...mostly of course, their brain.

Therefore, and beyond this, I think, the students of today are the sensitive edge of society that is pressing against the dehumanizing elements of technocracy. Human personality and values have been in a losing war with the impersonal operation of a rapidly evolving complex society. We are a nation incomparable in wealth and power but impoverished spiritually and psychologically. Our activities generate a bewildering array of material goods and no satisfactions. Our machines have grown so large that we have become small. We no longer ask for what purpose they are made. Instead of a flowering of personality, with the decrease in heavy labor there is such a loss of identity and growth of alienation that the distinctiveness of individuals has become blurred and homogenized. My husband frequently warned us of a trend toward what he called the "thingification" of people, a thing-centered rather than a person-centered society.

Why have students been more sensitive to this assault on personality? This generation is practically the first to be brought up in the modern child rearing philosophy according to which each child is an individual. They were encouraged and stimulated to be independent, assertive and individually crea-

tive. This was the thesis of countless child rearing books. It may be doctor Spock's real conspiracy. Parents did the job well. Children no longer looked upon authority as sacred and beyond criticism, or upon themselves as submissive and conformist. Yet when they moved into the larger society it had less room for individuals. It had computer numbers for each and rules old men had made in a distant past. When they became resistive, they found themselves locked in a philosophical cage of prejudices and rigid standards. Finally, a clash was inevitable between their creative drive and the stultifying system. The student protest is a demand for decent human values and individual expression as the impersonal and increasingly computerized society intensifies regimentation and standardization in people and things in the home, school, office, in recreation and culture. As an additional irritant, the intellectual maturity of young people is incomparably greater in this generation than in the past, but they, like the Bourgeoisie in pre-revolutionary France, are excluded from any participation in decision making. These are some of the conflicts in their lives - in all of our lives.

In this period of social, political, economic and religious transformation, not one of us can be spared the luxury of withdrawing from the arena of action. As members of the family of mankind we have an inherent moral responsibility to become participants in the greatest creative venture in the history of our world: that of remaking, reshaping, yes, restructuring our whole world order. Each one of us is being called to help save our society and the world from destruction.

Legitimate questions may be raised about students' tactics and forms of protest. However, it would be folly to overlook the prophetic essence in the demands they are voicing. Most especially, it is unseemly for us to think that the agitation in prague is beneficial and that the agitators at

home should simply and quickly shape up. Some of the objectives of the newly organized young may be immature and even somewhat divorced from realities, but there is nothing childish about their focus on the horrors of war and barbarities of race prejudice and inequality that seam and scar our society. Some students may foolishly rationalize excesses in drug consumption and sexual freedom, but if this were all they championed, their cause would long since have withered into a peculiar isolated sect without influence or numbers and also without threat. But the rational essence in their protest has aroused sympathetic chords in large elements of the population who also want an end to war, to inequality and the fragmentation of personality.

None of us want to live in a computer dynasty as programmed people. We must all begin to question the experts. They have not really been right. No abundance of material goods can compensate for the death of individuality and personal creativity. This, it seems to me, is what student protest is saying and I am listening with an open mind because I have children who will live their lives in the emerging society and it matters deeply to me how they will live.

For me, as for millions of black Americans, there is a special dimension to our national crisis. We are not only caught up in all the evils of contemporary society, we are its lowest and most deprived component. For most of us this is not a society of abundance but a society of want. We are not newly victimized by the loss of identity and alienation. We have suffered an imposed heritage of exclusion and frustration for generations. Our future is doubly bleak as we face the unabated racism and deepened deprivation reserved for black Americans.

It is extraordinary how well poverty has been concealed in the United

States. For 25 years or more government leaders have boasted of economic progress and the miracles of production the nation accomplished. Yet few people have heard the groans of 35 million poor, black and white. Black youth are commonly depicted today as dangerous, carrying firebombs in their hearts. Who noticed before the fact that their hands were idle, their pockets empty, their hopes frustrated and their hearts broken by indifference and contempt? Everyone is aware that a relatively few young Negroes have resorted to violence, but how many know that the unemployment rate for Negro youth in major urban centers has soared to between 35 and 50%? They live in squalor in slums, they are cheated in education, they cannot hope for normal married lives, and they can expect more diseases and earlier death than their white counterparts.

To be Negro in the United States is to be the victim of a system of deprivation in a context of personal humiliation. I do not speak impersonally. I was reared in second-class citizenship and have known the sting of humiliation in countless days of my life.

The Poor People's Campaign in Washington was conceived by my late husband and the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference as America's last hope to deal with the twin problems of racism and poverty. The poor in this nation are entitled to a job or an income.

Few people realize that our present tax and welfare structure is such as to encourage the wealthy to speculate and the poor to vegetate. If a rich man wants to speculate, he is encouraged by preferential capital gains and loss provisions which give him a 25% cushion against losses and take less than half as much on his normal earnings. But if a poor man on relief took a part time job, he had until very recently to pay a 100% tax on his earnings in the

shape of dollar-for-dollar reduction in his relief allowance. Even now after a belated reform in the welfare system, a poor man on relief after his first \$30 a month in extra earnings must turn back to the treasury 70 cents on the dollar while the rich man need pay the treasury only \$.25 of every dollar he wins on the market even when his normal income tax rate is more than 50 percent. Such is the topsy-turvy morality of the internal revenue laws.

Our Congress passes laws which subsidize corporation farms, oil companies, airlines and houses for suburbia, but when they turn their attention to the poor they suddenly become concerned about balancing the budget and cut back on funds for headstart, medicare and mental health appropriations. The most tragic of these cuts is the welfare section to the social security amendments which freezes federal funds for millions of needy children who are desperately poor but who do not receive public assistance. It forces mothers to leave their children and accept work or training, leaving their children to grow up in the streets as tomorrow's social problems.

The accented oppression of the Negro has given rise to a difference in the demands and goals of Negro students from those of white students. Negroes have quantitative demands; their emphasis is on jobs and opportunities to ensure elementary survival and progress. But they also have qualitative demands. And here the most hopeful alliance is forged between black and white. For the white student already possessing the material advantages puts perhaps greater emphasis on freedom from psychological taboos, participation in decision-making and creative restructuring of the social system. Each is legitimate and complements the other.

I am optimistic about today's student. He is a vital force and on the whole a socially constructive one. No other white group in our society is as

relatively free of racist poison and materialist greed. No other group is more committed in its implacable hostility to the terrible war we are fighting against a small and outclassed people. The generation gap is a positive thing if it separates evil ideologies and customs of the past from the freedom spirit that animates much of the contemporary student movement. The young understand this society better than their elders think, and better perhaps even than their elders themselves. They listen to the preachments of authority on behalf of order against violence. And they know that the order evoked has been the very order which has done systematic violence to the poor and the colored for centuries. That violence is still being done today, in obviously cruel as well as in subtle ways. And so I must say, that many of the young feel, as I do, that official responses to the frightful and to the personally painful assassinations of these past months have been inadequate. Has not power heard the grim tidings? The anguish from the ghettos, the rural slums, the battlefields abroad? The violence which periodically shocks us is a reflection of the violence to which we have become immune. It is a reflection of the violence our media celebrate. I say, with all due respect to the office of the President of the United States, that even intense prayer and a new commission of notables will not ease the violence in our lives - though acting forthrightly on the recommendations of the Kerner Commission Report might help.

This is no time for business as usual, and strengthening the police is business as usual - a tried and false answer.

In the passions of recent weeks, I sometimes think that the best of our young do not always understand the extent to which our great universities are authentically the most liberal of our institutions. But the universities too

must face up to some very hard questions they have thus far avoided.

This war, which is the most cruel and evil war in our history, must come to an end. I call upon the President of the United States to stop the bombing in Vietnam now. This war and the cries of the hungry, and the young who have made these their causes, however, will not let them rest -- and that is good.

There is reason to hope and to struggle if young people continue to hold high the banner of freedom. They have made mistakes and will make more, but the older generation has failed America dismally and if it is discredited it has earned its disrepute. It is time for both fresh ideas and new leadership to come forth because without it our society is on sinking sand. Historians of the future may record that the alliance of the Civil Rights Movement with the student movement that began in the late 1950's and matured into broad political and social action in the 60's was the salvation of the nation. I am a religious person in the most unqualified sense of the word but I will say emphatically that there is more moral vitality and honest searching for values of life animating the campuses today than can be found in our churches.

The world is in dire need of a spiritual awakening which will make those eternal values of love, justice, mercy, and peace meaningful in our time.

Finally, in struggling to give meaning to your own lives, as students you are preserving the best in our traditions and are breaking new ground in your restless search for truth. With this creative force to inspire all of us we may yet not only survive -- we may triumph.

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS - CITY COLLEGE (JUNE 1, 1971)

by Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr.

President Marshak, students, friends, ladies and gentlemen. I am deeply privileged and consider it a very distinct honor to have been invited to share with you this commencement occasion.

I want to first congratulate your president on being selected the eighth president of City College. And, may I commend you, president Marshak, on the leadership that you have already exhibited and I anticipate that under your leadership, City College will become the relevant institution that this community needs.

I want to thank you for honoring me with the Martin Luther King, Jr. medal. All I can say is that I hope that I can show you in the future my gratitude for this very special honor. I especially like to be identified with students and young people because I feel that our greatest hope in the future is with the youth of our nation. The future is yours and if this nation is to move forward and if the kind of change that is necessary is to come about, you will play a very important role in effecting that meaningful change.

It was the tradition for decades to declare at graduations that a bright new world lay before the young men and women about to emerge.

This year is certain to differ.

This year the pendulum swings to an overwhelming pessimism. Yet, I am

not going to go along with the pessimists because I think as grave as the problems are, the will to survive of ordinary people, is a force of stupendous strength and it is often gravely underestimated. This is my basis for optimism even as we sense fierce hurricanes of our day.

The student and graduate today is not the carefree, frivolous young person of yesterday's college novels, and decisively he is not the acquisitive careerist we bemoaned as members of the silent and apathetic generation. Today's student is a serious minded, independent thinking individual who seeks to analyze and understand the problems of our society, and find solutions to these problems which are in keeping with the highest traditions and values of our democratic system. His response to the challenge of this crucial period in the history of our nation and the world is indeed a sobering influence on all of us. What we have seen in the way of student protests is in large measure a reaction to status quo establishment centered institutions, of which students feel have allowed little or no voice in policy making decisions. This conflict between students and administration has often been improperly interpreted by the media, giving the impression that only a few leftist militants are making trouble. This is tantamount to skirting the real issues involved. Today's student is now recognized as a significant political actor with amazing power to influence the course of societies all over the world. In many ways, American students have now, with all their innocence and open generosity, become the prodding conscience to those in power and those aspiring to it. In the United States, candidates for the highest office in the land worry as much about their youth support as formerly they concerned themselves with the farm bloc, organized trade union support or the backing of businessmen. Indeed, the enthusiasm of students in a poli-

tical cause is a vestment of its legitimacy and honesty. The student crusades behind Senator Eugene McCarthy and the fallen Robert Kennedy created a virtual political miracle by retiring an incumbent President, moving the government to the Paris Peace Talks, and inducing basic revisions in our foreign policy. The political scene in our country has never been so marked by student and youth action, and it is not reckless to predict that this is no aberrant phenomenon but a fundamental shift in social patterns that will distinguish this era from others past. Along with classes and races and conventional pressure groups, generations are now useful and appropriate categories of historical action and understanding.

How can we explain the depth and scope of the student movements and the social upheavals they evoke? I think it must be seen that in the swiftly evolving technological societies of today, students, faculty, graduates and all intellectuals are playing a new role. They are not only contributors, as in the past, of ideas and new concepts to the masses, no longer merely rationalizers of the status quo, but in the nature of modern industrial society they have become a mass force themselves. In numbers and in the key role they occupy in the technological apparatus, the millions of young highly trained individuals are strategically placed to affect all of society. They count, they are crucial. As the old union song has it, without their brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn...mostly of course, their brain.

Therefore, and beyond this, I think, the students of today are the sensitive edge of society that is pressing against the dehumanizing elements of technocracy. Human personality and values have been in a losing war with the impersonal operation of a rapidly evolving complex society. We are a nation incomparable in wealth and power but impoverished spiritually and psy-

chologically. Our activities generate a bewildering array of material goods and no satisfactions. Our machines have grown so large that we have become small. We no longer ask for what purpose they are made. Instead of a flowering of personality, with the decrease in heavy labor there is such a loss of identity and growth of alienation that the distinctiveness of individuals has become blurred and homogenized. My husband frequently warned us of a trend toward what he called the "thingification" of people, a thing-centered rather than a person-centered society.

Why have students been more sensitive to this assault on personality? This generation is practically the first to be brought up in the modern child rearing philosophy according to which each child is an individual. They were encouraged and stimulated to be independent, assertive and individually creative. This was the thesis of countless child rearing books. It may be doctor Spock's real conspiracy. Parents did the job well. Children no longer looked upon authority as sacred and beyond criticism, or upon themselves as submissive and conformist. Yet when they moved into the larger society it had less room for individuals. It had computer numbers for each individual while maintaining rules old men had made in a distant past. When they became resistive, they found themselves locked in a philosophical cage of prejudices and rigid standards. Finally, a clash was inevitable between their creative drive and the stultifying system. The student and youth protest is a demand for decent human values and individual expression, as the impersonal and increasingly computerized society intensifies regimentation and standardization in people and things in the home, school, office, recreation and culture. As an additional irritant, the intellectual maturity of young people is incomparably greater in this generation than in the past, but they, like the bourgeoisie in pre-revolutionary France, are excluded from significant participation in

decision making. These are some of the conflicts in their lives - in all of our lives.

In this period of social, political, economic and religious transformation, not one of us can be spared the luxury of withdrawing from the arena of action. As members of the family of mankind we have an inherent moral responsibility to become participants in the greatest creative venture in the history of our world: that of remaking, reshaping, yes, restructuring our whole world order. Each one of us is being called to help save our society and the world from destruction.

Legitimate questions may be raised about students' tactics and forms of protest. However, it would be folly to overlook the prophetic essence in the demands they are voicing. Most especially, it is unseemly for us to think that the agitation of students abroad is beneficial and that the agitators at home should simply and quickly shape up. Some of the objectives of the newly organized young may be immature and even somewhat divorced from realities, but there is nothing childish about their focus on the horrors of war and barbarities of race prejudice and inequality that seam and scar our society. Some students may foolishly rationalize excesses in drug consumption and sexual freedom, but if this were all they championed, their cause would long since have withered into a peculiar isolated sect without influence or numbers and also without threat. But the rational essence in their protest has aroused sympathetic chords in large elements of the population who also want an end to war, to inequality and the fragmentation of personality.

None of us wants to live in a computer dynasty as programmed people. We must all begin to question the experts. They have not really been right. No abundance of material goods can compensate for the death of individuality and

personal creativity. This, it seems to me, is what student protest is saying and I am listening with an open mind because I have children who will live their lives in the emerging society and it matters deeply to me how they will live.

I am aware that tension between black and white still exists--that white racism has not conveniently evaporated. But, I have confidence that in this generation the greatest strides to solutions in decades will be found.

For me, as for millions of black Americans, there is a special dimension to our national crisis. We are not only caught up in all the evils of contemporary society. We are its lowest and most deprived component. For most of us this is not a society of abundance but a society of want. We are not newly victimized by the loss of identity and alienation. We have suffered for generations an imposed heritage of exclusion and frustration. Our future is doubly bleak as we face the unabated racism and deepened deprivation reserved for black Americans.

It is extraordinary how well poverty has been concealed in the United States. For 25 years or more government leaders have boasted of economic progress and the miracles of production the nation accomplished. Yet few people have heard the groans of 35 million poor, black and white. Black youth are commonly depicted today as dangerous, bearers of firebombs in their hands and hatred in their hearts. Who noticed before, the fact that their hands were idle, their pockets empty, their hopes frustrated and their hearts broken by indifference and contempt? Everyone is aware that relatively few young blacks have resorted to violence, but how many know that the unemployment rate for black youth in major urban centers has soared to between 35 and 50 per cent? They live in squalor in slums, they are cheated in educa-

tion, they cannot hope for normal married lives, and they can expect more diseases and earlier death than their white counterparts.

To be black in the United States is to be the victim of a system of deprivation in a context of personal humiliation. I do not speak impersonally. I was reared in second-class citizenship and have known the sting of humiliation in countless days of my life.

It was in late 1967 and early 1968 that my late husband and the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference conceived the idea and organized the Poor People's Campaign in Washington. My husband felt that it was America's last hope to deal with the twin problems of racism and poverty. The poor in this nation are entitled to a job or an income.

Few people realize that our present tax and welfare structure is such as to encourage the wealthy to speculate and the poor to vegetate. If a rich man wants to speculate, he is encouraged by preferential capital gains and loss provisions which give him a 25% cushion against losses and take less than half as much on his normal earnings. But if a poor man on relief took a part time job, he had until very recently to pay a 100% tax on his earnings in the shape of dollar-for-dollar reduction in his relief allowance. Even now after a belated reform in the welfare system, a poor man on relief after his first \$30 a month in extra earnings must turn back to the treasury 70 cents on the dollar while the rich man need pay the treasury only 25 cents of every dollar he wins on the market, even when his normal income tax rate is more than 50%. Such is the topsy-turvy morality of the internal revenue laws.

Our Congress passes laws which subsidize corporation farms, oil com-

panies, airlines and houses for suburbia, but when they turn their attention to the poor they suddenly become concerned about balancing the budget and cut back on funds for headstart, medicare and mental health appropriations. The most tragic of these cuts is the welfare section to the social security amendments which freezes federal funds for millions of needy children who are desperately poor but who do not receive public assistance. It forces mothers to leave their children and accept work or training, leaving their children to grow up in the streets as tomorrow's social problems.

The accented oppression of blacks has given rise to a difference in the demands and goals of black students and youth from those of whites. Blacks have quantitative demands; their emphasis is on jobs and opportunities to ensure elementary survival and progress. But they also have qualitative demands. And here the most hopeful alliance is forged between black and white. For the white student already possessing the material advantages puts perhaps greater emphasis on freedom from psychological taboos, participation in decision-making and creative restructuring of the social system. Each is legitimate and complements the other.

I am optimistic about today's student and young people. They are a vital force and on the whole a socially constructive one. No other white group in our society is as relatively free of racist poison and materialist greed. No other group is more committed in its implacable hostility to the terrible war we are fighting against a small and outclassed people. The generation gap is a positive thing if it separates evil ideologies and customs of the past from the freedom spirit that animates much of the contemporary student movement. The young understand this society better than their elders think, and better perhaps even than their elders themselves. They

listen to the preachments of authority against violence on behalf of order. And they know that the order evoked has been the very order which has done systematic violence to the poor blacks and colored for centuries. That violence is still being done today, in obviously cruel as well as in subtle ways. And so I must say, that many of the young feel, as I do, that official responses to the frightful and to the personally painful assassinations of recent times have been inadequate. Has not power heard the grim tidings? The anguish from the ghettos, the rural slums, the battlefields abroad? The violence which periodically shocks us is a reflection of the violence to which we have become immune. It is a reflection of the violence our media celebrate. I say, with all due respect to the office of the President of the United States, that even intense prayer and new commission after commission of notables will not ease the violence in our lives -- though accepting and acting forthrightly on the recommendations of the Kerner Commission Report, I believe, might help.

This is no time for business as usual, and strengthening the police is business as usual -- a tried and false answer.

In the passions of recent years, I sometimes think that the best of our young do not always understand the extent to which our great universities are authentically the most liberal of our institutions. But the universities too, must face up to some very hard questions they have thus far avoided.

This war, which is the most cruel and evil war in our history, must come to an end. I call upon the President of the United States to stop the bombing in Vietnam now. This war and the cries of the hungry, and the young who have made these their causes, however, will not let them rest -- and that is good.

There is reason to hope and to struggle if young people continue to

hold high the banner of freedom. They have made mistakes and will make more, but the older generation has failed America dismally and if it is discredited it has earned its disrepute. It is time for both fresh ideas and new leadership to come forth, because without it, our society is on sinking sand. Historians of the future may record that the alliance of the Civil Rights Movement with the student movement that began in the late 1950's and matured into broad political and social action in the '60's and the '70's was the salvation of the nation. I expect the young generation to take on and find solutions to a problem that is baffling and stupefying the leaders of the nation. I am referring to the crisis of the cities.

The cities cannot be permitted to die.

Historically, they have always been the centers of civilizations.

Suburbs, which are children of the cities, cannot replace them. Nor can the rural countryside. The small farms have disappeared into corporate agricultural conglomerates. The cities must be saved because this is where people are impelled to live and the task is to make them habitable. Let us be candid. The cities are suffering neglect because so many of its residents are black. Beyond this the city is in a struggle with the small town and suburban political power which are at present stronger than urban resources.

I have for some time felt that while some forward looking mayors have shown creative disposition to pool their thinking and strength, a key ingredient is still missing. The mayors loudly have collectively confronted both state and federal governments with studies, arguments, and just sheer persistence. The result has been tragically barren. The missing ingredient is the people. The mayors have not called upon them to put their weight heavily into the battle.

I think a just division of tax revenues, and re-ordering of priorities

will not occur until the people are fully involved lending the passion of their spirit and the power of their numbers to this critical struggle. It may involve mayors leading hundreds of thousands of their urban constituents in massive demonstrations to say to those with disproportionate power, we will not go silently to a suffocating doom.

To state this as a possible eventuality, is to illustrate the role of the young. They have shown the capacity to effect many policies by their movements. I believe this urban crisis will need their imagination and energy, and I believe they will win.

Black and white are needed in this crusade and the young are the best group in the population to develop the required coalitions. In fact, I believe a good deal of racial polarization that has grown among the young will be dissolved when a common fight for survival calls for the best in each and each benefits from collective efforts. Hatred and suspicion cannot survive if urgent problems are being solved.

I am a religious person in the most unqualified sense of the word, but I will say emphatically that there is more moral vitality and honest searching for values of life animating the campuses and gatherings of the young today than can be found in our churches.

The world is in dire need of a spiritual awakening which will make those eternal values of love, justice, mercy and peace meaningful in our time.

Finally, in struggling to give meaning to your own lives, as a new generation of graduates you are preserving the best in our traditions and are breaking new ground in your restless search for truth. With this creative force to inspire all of us, we may yet not only survive -- we may triumph.

Appendix B

Room 158 Weller Hall
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois 61920
January 17, 1973

Mrs. Coretta Scott King
234 Sunset Avenue N.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30314

Dear Mrs. King:

I am a black graduate student at Eastern Illinois University. At the present time I am trying to pursue a master's degree in the area of Rhetoric and Public Address. In order for me to meet the requirements of the degree, I will have to write a thesis.

It is my desire to analyze selected speeches delivered by Dr. King. I have, however, been unable to find a cross section of speeches representative of Dr. King's public speaking from 1956 to 1968.

If at all possible would you provide a list of his public speeches? Hopefully, could you provide me with actual manuscripts of Dr. King's speeches that you believe to be particularly outstanding? I would be happy to reimburse you for any manuscripts provided. I would also be pleased to copy any manuscripts or tapes and promptly return the originals to you.

Please let me hear from you soon.

Mrs. Martin Luther King Jr.

234 SUNSET AVENUE, NORTHWEST
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30314

February 2, 1973

Ms. Janice Kenny
Room 158 Weller Hall
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois 61920

Dear Ms. Kenny:

Thank you for your letter of January 17, 1973 addressed to Mrs. King. As Mrs. King is out of the city for the week I have taken the liberty of answering your letter.

Please direct your request for information concerning Dr. King's speeches to Miss Joan Daves, 515 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022. Miss Daves is literary agent for Dr. and Mrs. King and hopefully will be able to supply you with the information you need to complete your thesis.

Mrs. King very much appreciates your interest and, on her behalf I extend best wishes for success with your master's thesis.

Sincerely,

(Ms.) Sand Brim
Staff Assistant

Room 158 Weller Hall
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois 61920
February 2, 1973

Miss Joan Daves
515 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Dear Miss Daves:

As I told you over the telephone on February 1, 1973, I am a black graduate student at Eastern. My purpose is to write my Master's thesis on the speaking of Dr. and Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr.

You mentioned that the library in Atlanta has some of Dr. King's speeches. Because of financial problems and the time factor involved in completing the thesis, unfortunately I will not be able to go there.

Our library at Eastern has a list of Master theses and Doctoral dissertations that have been written on Dr. King. I will be reading them through library loan. They are as follows:

1. "Dr. Martin Luther King's Intellectual Resources As Studied in Two Selected Speeches", by Richard L. Saunders
2. "The Influence of Black Power on the Rhetorical Practices of Dr. Martin Luther King", by Nurline Holmes Grice
3. "A Thematic Analysis of Twelve Sermons on Race Relations Delivered by Martin Luther King, Jr. Between 1954 and 1963", by Marvin Emil Ceynar
4. "Martin Luther King, Jr.: An Analysis of his Washington March Speech", by Marjorie Joe McGregor
5. "Rhetorical Techniques of Martin Luther King, Jr.", by Janeda Wilcox Stennet
6. "A Rhetorical Study of the Preaching of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Pastor and Pulpit Orator", by Mervyn Warren
7. "Rhetorician of Racial Revolt: A Burkeian Analysis of Speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr.", by Lucy Anne Melhuish

As you can see from the list of studies cited, many theses have been done on Dr. King. So far, I have found nothing on Mrs. King. This is the reason why I would like to analyze and compare their speeches. By doing this, a contribution will be made to the field of speech.

I would be very grateful if I could get full texts of two to five of Dr. King's speeches from 1956 to 1968, and full texts of two to five of Mrs. King's speeches since Dr. King's death. Hopefully, the speeches of both would focus on similar themes.

Please send those speeches that you consider outstanding and worthy of study. For each speech, information concerning time, place, occasion, and audience should be known and noted. Undoubtedly, most of Dr. and Mrs. King's speeches would meet those criteria.

If the speeches are in printed or manuscript form I will gladly remit for xeroxed copies. If tapes are available I would be pleased to purchase them.

I am looking forward to hearing from you in the near future.

JOAN DAVES

CABLE: JODABOOKS

515 MADISON AVENUE / NEW YORK, N. Y. 10022 / PLAZA 9-6250

February 27, 1973

Dear Ms. Kenney,

Upon receipt of your check in the amount of \$12.70, we shall be glad to mail you copies of the following speeches by Coretta Scott King:

"Class Day--Harvard University 1968"
"Fifth Avenue Peach Parade, Apr. 27, 1968"
"Commencement Address, City College, 1971"

Plus Dr. King's I'VE BEEN TO THE MOUNTAIN TOP

For the other Dr. King speeches, we suggest you contact your regional library for the following:

NEGROES ARE NOT MOVING TOO FAST published in SATURDAY EVENING POST 11/7/64

NEGRO IS YOUR BROTHER published in ATLANTIS MONTHLY July, 1963 also in AMERICAN SPECTRUM published by Wadsworth publishers.

TESTAMENT OF HOPE published in PLAYBOY 12/9/68

I'm sure your librarian can help you locate these magazines or books.

jc

Ms. Janice Kenney
Room 158 Weller Hall
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois 619.20

Room 158 Weller Hall
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois 61920
March 14, 1973

Miss Joan Daves
515 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Dear Miss Daves:

I was very appreciative when I received your letter dated February 27, 1973. Enclosed is the \$12.70 for Mrs. King's speeches:

"Class Day--Harvard University 1968"

"Fifth Avenue Peach Parade, Apr. 27, 1968"

"Commencement Address, City College, 1971"

Plus Dr. King's "I've Been To The Mountain Top".

Please see if you can find some commencement addresses made by Dr. King or any speeches he made dealing with education. If you can, I will be glad to send the amount due. If the speeches by Dr. King are available, I can then make a needed comparison between Dr. and Mrs. King's remarks about education.

I will be looking forward to hearing from you in the near future.

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A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF MRS. CORETTA SCOTT KING'S
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

by

Janice Kenney

B. S. in Ed., Jackson State College, 1972

Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
degree of Master of Arts at the Graduate School
Eastern Illinois University

Charleston, Illinois
1973

Coretta King, known best as Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr., has been the new image of black womanhood for the black race since the days of the Montgomery bus boycott, which had its beginning on December 1, 1955. Mrs. King represents the new image of black womanhood because she is the first black woman projected into prominence by her husband. She is a follower in her husband's footsteps. She has taken up her husband's dream as her own and in the process has become a symbol in her own right.

Statement of Purpose. The purpose of this study was to analyze and evaluate a speech entitled "Commencement Address" given by Mrs. King on June 1, 1971 at City College in New York.

Criteria and Procedure. The criteria for rhetorical analysis of the speech "Commencement Address" was abstracted from Thomas R. Nilsen's "Interpretive Function of the Critic." Nilsen stated that the critic's function is to inquire into how the speaker is moving men and to what ends. He also said that the vital function of speech criticism is to state indirect implications of the speech in reference to man, ideas, and society. Therefore, three basic questions were raised by Nilsen:

1. What is the speaker's concept of man?
2. What is the speaker's concept of ideas?
3. What is the speaker's concept of society?

Conclusions: The following concepts of man were discovered in Mrs. King's address.

1. Man is an individual who has power and force in the world.
2. Man is responsible for preventing destruction in the world.

3. Man is capable of historical action and understanding.
4. Man is an individual who does not, at all times, face reality.
5. Man is capable of making rational and irrational choices.
6. Man is responsible for being honest with his fellow man.
7. Man should not dehumanize his fellow man.
8. Man is capable of making both wise and unwise decisions.
9. Man is a being with a capacity for wisdom and rational choice.
10. Man is responsible for eliminating racism, poverty, and war.
11. Man is a being of intrinsic worth.
12. Man is obligated to grow in understanding of himself and the world around him.

The speaker's concept of ideas may be expressed this way:

1. Youth will play a major role in determining in the future the success or failure of the democratic tradition.
2. The creative thinking of individuals has been replaced by machines.
3. New ideas and leadership will have to emerge in order to save our society from destruction.

The following were observed about the speaker's concept of society:

1. American society has failed to stand up to its democratic philosophy.
2. American society is thing-centered instead of person-centered.
3. Society must be rational in meeting the demands of students.
4. Society can only be saved from destruction when students, faculty, and the older generation cooperate with each other.
5. Because American society has allowed racism, poverty, and war to exist, she has participated in unorthodox behavior.
6. Because students in society have fought to hold high the banner of freedom, they have participated in orthodox behavior.