Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Christina Ocean April 7, 2020

Martin Luther King, Jr. the Dreamer: The Power Invoked by Dreaming in Black Literature and Culture

by

Christina Ocean

Valerie Babb
Adviser

English

Valerie Babb

Adviser

Michelle Y. Gordon

Committee Member

Walter C. Rucker

Committee Member

2020

Martin Luther King, Jr. the Dreamer: The Power Invoked by Dreaming in Black Literature and Culture

By

Christina Ocean

Valerie Babb

Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

English

2020

Abstract

Martin Luther King, Jr. the Dreamer: The Power Invoked by Dreaming in Black Literature and Culture

By Christina Ocean

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom gathered Americans from all over the U.S. to protest racial discrimination and demand economic freedom at the nation's capital on August 28, 1963. Approximately a quarter of a million protesters, most of whom were African Americans, gathered at the Washington Monument in Washington D.C. making the protest "the greatest demonstration of freedom in the history of [the] nation." Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. was *the* most anticipated speaker at the March. King composed each of his speeches carefully, making sure every word, every illustration, every idea was communicated in the most effective way possible; thus as a speaker and writer, King felt it taking a stance as a dreamer was the most effective way to bring forth his message. His dream was the medium he used to encourage the crowd to continue their fight for freedom with reassurance that they would live in a greater and freer America. It might appear to some that King is more of an optimist than a dreamer, just a wishful thinker who thought it would be grand if America was a great nation where everyone, regardless of background, lived together in mutual respect. King's dream is largely seen as a metaphor or trope of freedom and equality instead a lived experience. This paper analyzes dream testimonies from the WPA' slave narratives and other published slave narratives then applies these findings to selected pieces of black literature and King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

Martin Luther King, Jr. the Dreamer: The Power Invoked by Dreaming in Black Literature and Culture

By

Christina Ocean

Valerie Babb

Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

English

2020

Acknowledgements

This paper was made possible by my advisor, Valerie Babb, who patiently and safely guided me through uncertain times: writing during a world-wide pandemic, COVID-19.

Table of Contents

Introduction……1.

Chapter 1: African American Dreams……9.

Chapter 2: Dreams as a Writer's Literary Tool…….39.

Chapter 3: "I Have a Dream"……47.

Work Cited……55.

Appendix……60.

Introduction

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom gathered Americans from all over the U.S. to protest racial discrimination and demand economic freedom at the nation's capital on August 28, 1963. Leaders from various civil rights groups including the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) felt it was in the best interest of the Civil Rights Movement to take advantage of the heightened national attention that the Birmingham protests brought to racial and economic injustices. In 1963, Birmingham segregationists brutally attacked protesters with fire hoses and dogs. Photos from the protests revealed the horrific treatment of African Americans who were exercising their right to demonstrate. Trying to restore order and prevent similar, or worse, ordeals from occurring, the Kennedy Administration pressured Birmingham to give in to some of the demands of the protesters, resulting in officials desegregating parts of downtown Birmingham. With public sympathy and the support of the nation— perhaps small and only for a moment— the civil right leaders invited thousands to D.C. to respond to the attacks the happened in Birmingham and other places by peacefully demonstrating that they were an undefeated and unmoved community (Hansen 12,16).

Approximately a quarter of a million protesters, most of whom were African Americans, gathered at the Washington Monument in Washington D.C., making the protest "the greatest demonstration of freedom in the history of [the] nation." Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. was *the* most anticipated speaker at the March. While helping King draft a speech that King wanted to be five minutes long to remain in the recommended time limit for each speaker, Clarence Jones said to him,

> With all due respect to Roy Wilkins, James Farmer, John Lewis, Walter Reuther, Rabbi so-and-so, Reverend so-and-so, with all due respect to them, these people who came, they didn't come for them. They came for you. I don't care if they speak for five minutes, that's fine. You are going to take as much time as you need.

With an audience that would be the largest crowd he ever addressed, many of whom came just to hear his response to the nation on their behalf, the pressure was on King to deliver an uplifting speech to those who traveled far and near, those who had suffered violence, arrests and the loss of loved ones all for the cause of freedom and equality. This speech, the Dream Speech, was drafted within the four days prior to the protest but its most memorable lines, "I have a dream," were not present in the script that King brought with him to the podium that day. King diverted from his original text half-way through the speech and delivered a spontaneous message, his dream of a greater, freer America. Later in an interview with a student of rhetoric, King explained his decision to veer off from the text he was faithfully reading right before he introduced his dream to the crowd:

> I started out reading the speech and I read it down to a point, and just all of a sudden, I decided—the audience response was wonderful that day, you know—and all of a sudden this thing came to me that I have used—I'd used many times before, that thing about 'I have a dream'—and I just felt that I wanted to use it here. (Hansen 41, 52, 65-66, 95-97, 164)

Noted accounts contradict King's explanation for deciding to leave his prepared speech and insert a refrain he had used many times before. While King insisted that he decided to use the dream refrain *while* delivering his speech, King's wife, Coretta, revealed that King strongly

considered using the “I have a dream” refrain for the March beforehand. While King drafted his speech, his advisors suggested topics that he should address, paying particular attention to imagery that would be well-received. S*everal* advisors suggested incorporating one popular phrase, a phrase King had used many times beforehand with much success: “I have a dream”; however, the “I have a dream” refrain would take up four minutes of the five-minute time limit recommended for each speaker. Jones may have insisted that King take as long as he needed to get his message across to a crowd that was eager to hear him, but King intended to stay within the time limit reserved for him so at the last minute, he decided not to speak about his dream. That King used of his dream refrain many times before August 28th is corroborated in written documents and by witnesses. By the summer of 1963, the refrain was King’s go-to line for many speaking arrangements. Since most of King’s speeches were not transcribed, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when King first began using the refrain. Drew Hansen writes in his book, *The Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*, that 1962 is most likely when King first began using the dream phrase; it was while he was addressing an audience at an Albany campaign that King admitted to creating the phrase during a speech to get through to a tired and discouraged audience. Additionally, Wyatt Tee Walker said that he remembered King using the dream refrain at least two years prior to the March on Washington. A transcribed speech serves as proof that King incorporated the phrase in his November 27th, 1962 address in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. The “dream,” used alongside Biblical metaphors and scripture verses, songs and spirituals, ignited visible passion from crowds prior, during and after the March. King composed his speeches carefully, making sure every word, every illustration, every idea was communicated in the most effective way possible; thus as a speaker and writer, King felt taking a stance as a dreamer was the most effective way to bring forth his message. His

dream was the medium he used to encourage the crowd to continue their fight for freedom with reassurance that they would live in a greater and freer America. It might appear to some that King was an optimist by taking a stance as a dreamer, just a wishful thinker who thought it would be grand if America was a great nation where everyone, regardless of background, lived together in mutual respect, but his telling of his dream reveals he was more than a wishful thinker; he was a dreamer. King's dream is largely seen as a metaphor or trope of freedom and equality instead of a lived experience. This thesis will explore King's dream refrain and its relationship to the world of dreams of African Americans. By examining the interactions between African Americans and their dreams, a cultural understanding of dreams is revealed as well as a better understanding of why King decided that sharing a dream was an effective means to reach his audience (Hansen 95, 109-111, 115).

Scholars of different fields have extensively researched the Civil Rights Movement and its leaders with special attention given to King, and especially, his "I Have a Dream" speech. A historical analysis of the speech usually focuses on the construction of, the national response to, and the political nature of the speech. Literary analysis of the speech ensures that every religious, political, and social metaphor and reference within the speech is successfully traced back to a specific origin. King often drew from various sources such as black literature and other speeches he heard in passing to construct speeches and sermons. One question scholars have posed is: what influenced King's use of the dream image? There are reports that King may have overheard Prathia Hall, a SNCC staff worker, use the phrase "I have a dream" during a prayer service on the grounds of a burnt-down Mount Olive Baptist Church in Sasser, Georgia on September 14, 1962. Dorothy Cotton, a staff worker of the SCLC, remembered hearing a young white woman using the phrase "I have a dream" in her prayer during a meeting at a church in Albany. So

inspired by her words, Cotton relayed this phrase to King when she picked him up from the Albany airport the next day. According to Cotton, "King instantly recognized the beauty of the imagery and began to use it in his speeches." Also noteworthy is Langston Hughes's influence on King's rhetoric. W. Jason Miller, an associate professor of English at North Carolina State University, draws on archival material to argue in *Origins of the Dream* that Langston Hughes, who incorporated dreams within some of his poetry, influenced King's use of dreams in his known dream speeches. King openly voiced his admiration for Hughes' writings, so Miller examined both Hughes' poetry and King's speeches, finding many instances of strong parallels between Hughes' language, especially his use of dream imagery, and King's speeches that followed the publication of Hughes' poems. Coincidently, Miller's research and analysis reveal a greater connection between King's and Hughes' use of dreams that transcends literature and appreciation for the arts: a cultural connection. While Miller proves the influence that Hughes' poetry had on King's speeches, and Ms. Cotton may have given King the phrase used to speak about his dream, it still leaves unanswered the question: why did King settle on dreams for a political addresses and why use a phrase that Hughes did not explicitly use? I argue that King's dream refrain and assuming the role of dreamer reveal that King had a cultural understanding of dreams being predictive in order to use them as a means of defense for the Civil Rights Movement. By exploring how African Americans view and interact with dreams and applying this to King's dream, I hope to provide the information needed for a deeper understanding of how we perceive King's dream, the impact of his words, and ultimately his legacy (Hansen 114-5). This thesis does not further the work of historians rather it combines cultural studies with the work of literary criticism to show how King's knowledge of African American culture allowed him to exert force over the Civil Rights Movement.

According to King, his dream is an America where people of all backgrounds have an equal opportunity to live out the American Dream. Within his speeches, King expressed that his dream was "deeply rooted in the American Dream." While the American Dream has had different meanings over time, its longest meaning is one of freedom in America. In *The American Dream* Jim Cullen lists a few versions of the dream over time: the dream of religious freedom, the dream of an America according to the words of the Declaration of Independence, the dream of upward economic or social mobility, the dream of equality, the dream of home ownership, and finally, the dream of personal fulfillment. But King's dream aligns with the longest standing meaning of this national ethos (11). In his "American Dream" sermon delivered in 1965 at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, King described the Founding Fathers as dreamers who dreamed of a nation where all people would be seen as equal and in possession of rights, ordained by God: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This is the American Dream according to King, a dream that is not simply a metaphor but a lived experience. In addition, King's dream is largely seen as a metaphor or trope of freedom and equality instead a lived experience of dreaming.

This thesis uses witness accounts from African Americans from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to explore a cultural understanding of dreams within the African American community. In 1935, President Roosevelt created the WPA to put over 8.5 million Americans to work during the Great Depression. One of the projects under this Administration was the *Federal Writer's Project* that produced *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives, 1936-1938*. The collection contains over 2,300 witness accounts of slavery in America. I use this particular source because it provides accounts of dreams, told by the dreamers themselves. Although edited, they are complete, transcribed interviews as opposed to secondary sources which allow

the dreamers to dictate how they want their dreams recorded, not just interpreted. Individual narratives include the emotions and attitudes of the dreamer which is vital for understanding the relationship and perception one has with their dreams. This research shows that King's refrain, "I have a dream," is more in line with a black tradition where dreamers begin sharing their dreams with the phrase "I had a dream" than with Hughes' "I dream a world" as Miller asserts (172-173).

Without collections of folklore and interviews, African American dreams might have been lost to the public since dreams are rarely shared with those outside the dreamer's community, but there is another source that features African American dreams which many communities have access to: African American literature. The dreams found with African American literature provide a glimpse on how African American authors utilize dreams to shape their narratives. The WPA materials illustrate the interaction between dreamers and their dreams, while the literature demonstrates a literary technique of structing novels via dreams, a technique that King as a writer and speaker executed in his oral addresses. This thesis consists of three chapters: the first begins by locating the origins of the cultural understanding of dreams for African Americans: West African societies. As an African American, King was under this sphere of influence especially in regards to his understanding of dream interpretation. The Christian faith that King and many of his listeners practiced was also influenced by the West African cultural perceptions of dreams. I thus give particular attention to the Black church to argue that King was strategic in choosing this phrase because he knew it held a deeper meaning within this culture. This chapter reads the witness accounts of dreams as told by African Americans to show that King is not alone as an African American dreamer. The dreams are organized into categories according to how African Americans interact with what they have seen in their dreams. This will

be useful in analyzing King's dream. The second chapter examines selected works of African American literature—Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Toni Morrison's *Paradise* (1997), and Tayari Jones' *An American Marriage: a Novel* (2018)—all of which include dreams that control the lives of their characters and the events of the narratives. These writers will provide context for showing how King as a writer and speaker applied a broad cultural understanding to influence the Civil Rights Movement. The third chapter re-reads King's speech to shed new light on his use of the concept of dreaming. Overall, I hope to present this research to change the perception of King as a dreamer. King was not an optimist dreaming of a better future; he was a dreamer that attempted to control the events of the future by invoking the power of dreams. By doing this, we will try to understand what it meant for the Civil Rights Movement and to America that King dreamed.

Chapter 1: African American Dreams

King draws on many influences in his speeches. American cultural influences are evident in his references to the Emancipation Proclamation, the Declaration of Independence, the Founding Fathers, and the American Dream. Christian influences are visible in direct and paraphrased Biblical verses and narratives familiar to his audience. Concluding his D.C. speech with the Negro spiritual "Free at Last" reignited the collective unconscious memory of a time when African Americans sung about a day of freedom, singing with immense joy when the day finally arrived. While African American cultural references are American bred, they were influenced by the cultures of the nations where American slaves originated. Making the treacherous journey across the Atlantic, slave ships carried captured and enslaved Igbos, Yorubas, Akans, and Angolans who were determined to retain their cultural practices and rituals upon arriving in America (Stuckey 3). Unfortunately, little is known about the beliefs of slaves during the 17th and most of the 18th century due to lack of writings from this time on the subject, but many of these peoples came from societies that held similar basic principles and modes of perception which over time became cemented into one prominent culture: African American culture (Genovese, "Black Conversion" 292; Raboteau, *Slave Religion* 7). Former slave Henry Bibb had this to say of the slaves living during the late 18th, early 19th century:

> There is much superstition among the slaves. Many of them believe in what they call 'conjuration,' tricking, and witchcraft; and some of them pretend to understand the art, and say that by it they can prevent their masters from exercising their will over their slaves. (Bibb 77-78)

What Bibb termed as superstitions is actually evidence of the survived West African beliefs, perceptions and rituals that can be seen in African American music, dances, and folklore. For

example, “foot-tapping, rhythmic preaching, hyperventilation, antiphonal (call and response) singing, and dancing” can be seen in gatherings of praise (Raboteau, *Slave Religion* 65). Cornel West, a philosopher, political activist and author, writes, “the ‘holy dance’ of Protestant evangelical conversion experiences closely resemble the ‘ring shout’ of West African novitiate rites: both are religious forms of ecstatic bodily behavior in which everyday time is infused with meaning and value through unrestrained rejoicing” (85). Another example of this influence is the West African adopted perception of health: physical and mental health requires a balance of the mind, body and spirit, and also, camaraderie with those within the community and the spirits of the dead (Long 75). It is sometimes difficult to distinguish the practices and beliefs of African origins from those of European origins since certain beliefs and superstitions are similar worldwide (Raboteau “Death of the Gods” 269). American slaves encountered people from over Europe who held similar beliefs to theirs, e.g., folklore relating to witches and spirits; supernatural signs and omens; charms and magic (Levine 60); however, some identifying patterns do exist.

The current scholarship on dreams consists of two parts, the psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams and the cultural exploration of dreams (Bourguignon 262). The psychoanalytic study of dreams within black African nation may involve directions on how to engage with black participants who have differing dream culture beliefs from that of the psychoanalytic conducting the study. The cultural exploration of dreams includes research about certain cultures and their interactions with dreams, if at all. While one culture may have an extensive list of dream signs, e.g., African American culture, another black society may embrace only one or two dream signs. Research on West African nations seldom includes an extensive detailed account of the culture’s perceptions of dreams, i.e., a list of dream signs and their meanings, but a 2011 study conducted

among ethnic groups in Southern Nigeria, reports that Southern Nigerians believe dreams convey both spiritual and physical information and that dream characteristics derive their meaning based on indigenous knowledge. The study concluded that:

> in all ethnic groups that fell into the research, the dreamer [believed he or she] receives information in dreams from outside of their subconscious mind's scope of knowledge. Even though they did not specifically solicit the dream state for the information that they received, they were made the beneficiaries of freely available indigenous knowledge." (Ossai-Ugbah 152)

This 2011 study serves as contemporary example that the peoples from whom African Americans descend may have perceived dreams as a source of information during the 17th and 18th century and established it within the culture of American-born and African-born slaves. It is not only Nigerian who believe that dreams are a trusted source of information. There is strong evidence of a widespread, West African understanding of dreams being predictive in nature and serving as a way to communicate with spirits, i.e., ancestor spirits (Shafton 9-10). Proof that this understanding survived and is held by some African Americans, many of whom would be the ancestors King and his audience, is found in Newbell Niles Puckett's *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* which includes commentary on dream signs, their meaning, and the same sign/meaning within a West African society's dream culture. King and his audiences, as Southerners[1], were exposed to this (possibly regional) perception of dreams as evident in his modification of a phrase ubiquitously used by the dreamers from the WPA's slave narratives, "I had a dream." With the use of the modified form of the phrase, "I *had* a dream," King brings to

[1] It is debatable if whether Washington D.C. is a part of the South. For the purpose of this paper, it is.

mind dreaming as a lived experience and the knowledge it bestows upon the dreamer as he spoke during the March and other occasions. By changing only the tense of "had" to "have," King communicated a message that calls forth and requires this understanding of dreams as a gateway into the future and further reveals that he changed the phrase to show he was dreaming *while* giving his speech and not sometime in the past. He chose to dream while speaking, as he did times beforehand, since being a dreamer granted him insight into the inevitable future. Later, we will see why King's language of dreaming in the present tense and not the past tense provides evidence that he is invoking the power of dreams.

This phrase, "*I* have a dream," introduces listeners to King the Dreamer in *contrast* to King the Preacher and King the American. The promises that King the Preacher makes are trusted solely based on their attachment to the words of the Bible, the infallible Word of God. Quoting the words of Biblical prophets that God made come to fruition establishes assurance that justice will "roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream" as King assures it will (*King James Version*, Amos 5:24). King the Preacher charged the audience to "pledge that [they] shall march ahead" and return to their states with the faith that they receive what the Movement is fighting to achieve if they do not "wallow in the valley of despair" (Psalm 23:4). The promises that King makes are celebrated and accepted since the audience can perceive them as being principally rooted in a credible source of information, the Bible, and this is a technique, establishing credibility with the audience through credible sources, is how King built trust between him and his audience, so they could place their faith in all his promises. While King the Preacher evokes Biblical authority, King the American began his speech noting that he and all others who gathered there that day stood in the "symbolic shadow" of Abraham Lincoln, "a great American." By symbolically standing in the shadow of the Lincoln monument, which was right

behind King, the entire audience was covered by Lincoln, covered by his words, his promise. Lincoln, the "great American" because his promise of liberation in the Emancipation Proclamation, declared slaves in the Confederacy free. Lincoln's Emancipation is juxtaposed with the mention of standing in his shadow to conclude that while blacks stood in Lincoln's shadow they were free; outside of his shadow, African Americans were still "crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination." Gathering together protesters, particularly African Americans, to stand in Lincoln's shadow and then directing their attention to the Emancipation Proclamation created reassurance that the words of Lincoln had be realized once more like they were between 1863-1865. Lincoln's Proclamation, a source of credible information, a promise and a guarantee, is used alongside the Founding Fathers' promises made to all Americans in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. Safe in the words (shadow) of Lincoln, King says that the protesters came to a cash a check and would "refuse to believe that the bank of justice [was] bankrupt." It could not be bankrupt since the words of the Founding Fathers could be trusted; their words were a credible source of information; their inalienable rights could not be taken away (Hansen 52-53, 57-58).

This is the underlining structure of King's March speech: uplift the audience and ensure their success by utilizing trusted sources of information—the Bible, the Constitution, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Declaration of Independence—sources with promises that must come true since part of their promises had been realized. Yet, African Americans were not free and did not have their inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness among other rights that accompany American citizenship; therefore, King wraps these words within his dream to force them to come true. Dreams as a source of information for African Americans would ensure that these promises were upheld for African Americans since they were a

community that did not see the promises fulfilled. They did not see the justice that the prophets saw nor the rights that many white American had. The people needed a source of information that was specifically and culturally theirs. King the Dreamer dreamed that promise for them. He dreamed that America:

> will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal [and] that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. (Hansen 58, 60; Isa 40: 4-5)

The reason dreams are trusted as reliable sources of information relates to the concept of the dream-soul (Puckett 340). The dream-soul comes from the West African folklore that a person's spirit can wander while the person sleeps (Raboteau, "Death of the Gods" 271; Spier 522). That dream-soul, essentially a person's spirit, wanders at night and enters into the spiritual realm, the realm that people with "second sight" can see as will be discussed later (Akesson 288). In this realm the dream-soul acts as eyes for the person and reports back to the dreamer the future dealings of their life or the lives of others. The spirits of ancestors exist in this realm and while time passes in this world, time does not pass in that world. Wandering and experiencing events of the present or future, the dream-soul does not have the ability to relay to the dreamer that the dream is a vision of the near future or thirty years into the future. The spirits of ancestors have access to higher levels of knowledge in this realm which is why, within a dream, they can guide and warn their descendants of events of the future. It is because the dream-soul is on adventure which makes dreaming a lived experience. The most important thing to note about the dream-soul is that the information received in the spiritual realm is regarded as truth. In order to

appreciate the deeper significance of King's use of dreams, an analysis of African American dreamers and their dreams is needed.

The iconic liberator Harriet Tubman was a "firm believer in omens, dreams, and warnings," and successfully escaped slavery, reaching the North and was adamant that she saw the places she visited and the Northerners she met in her dreams while she was still enslaved (Bradford 62). This is the supernatural power that dreams bestow upon dreamers: the ability to see into the future. Patsy Hyde and Ellis Ken Kannon from Nashville, Tennessee give respective glimpses of the widespread belief during slavery that dreams provided illumination: "In slavery time peoples b'leeved in dreams" and "de slaves wuz natur'ally superstitious en b'leeved in dreams, ole sayings en signs." According to Ms. Hyde and Mr. Kannon the belief in dreams as well as signs and sayings provides insights to life, and both would later imply that God communicates with folks through dreams to warn and reveal future events (Federal Writers Project, Tennessee, 34, 38).[i] While Mr. Kannon described these beliefs as superstitious, dreams had a profound reputation among slaves and, later on their descendants, as a means to communicate with ancestors, receive warnings, and gain insight into future occurrences of everyday life. Tubman's dream-soul ventured far through time and distance to see the Northern places and people Tubman would later meet in the future. Dreams are not simply the mind wishing of a better future but the dream-soul reassuring the dreamer of their future. King's dream includes images of future geographical places like Tubman's dream. He confesses that he dreams that Georgia will one day be desegregated and the oppressors and the oppressed will commune with each other amiably; he includes images of Mississippi and Alabama transformed into oases "of freedom and justice" with "little black boys and black girls [holding hands] with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers" (Hansen 58-59).

Tubman was just one example of a dreamer trusting the report of her dream-soul. Patsy Mitchner from North Carolina, and Susan Rhodes from St. Louis, Missouri are another. Neither were surprised when an interviewer from the WPA stopped by their homes to speak to them about their lives as a slaves; they had seen the occasion in a dream a while back, way before the interviewer ever arrived (FWP, MO, 284; FWP, NC, 2, 117). Ms. Rhodes confessed to knowing all the details as to why she would be visited by a staff worker from the WPA before they had the chance tell them themselves (FWP, MO, 284). I classify this dream as a literal dream[2], a dream that does not include symbols or signs within images or narrative presented in the mind but rather has a literal, straight-forward meaning. These two women had confidence in what they saw in their dreams and relied on these images as true indications of the future. Mose Minser of Arkansas said this of literal dreams: "Ah rrcollect [sic] one night ah dream a dream. De dream at ah dreamt, next morning dat dream come true. Jes like ah dreamt hit. Yes hit did" (FWP, AK, 5, 98). Dreams of this nature are not as common as indicative dreams, dreams with signs that the dreamer must interpret, as we will see later, but they are still a remarkable way for African Americans to see clearly and accurately into the future. These two women had confidence that what their dreams showed them would come to pass because their dream-souls brought to them a trusted account of their future. King harnessed this confidence from his audience when he decided to share his dream. After all that the crowd had been through leading up to that hot day in August why would King think it would be encouraging to tell a tired crowd that he had a dream? People came from all over, some of them had been traveling for days just to hear King speak, and he decided to leave his prepared speech and depend on a dream to liven their spirits? But King knew that in black expressive traditions, the belief in dreams would ease the nerves of

[2] Unless otherwise noted, the dream categories and their definitions were created by the author of this thesis.

the audience and give them hope that what he dreamed would come true, just like he dreamt it. Yes, it would. After he gave the illustration of his dream, King speaks on behalf of the crowd and says "this is our hope" and "with this faith" in his dream, they would "be able to transform the jangling discord of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood" (Hansen 60).

In her memoir, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Zora Neale Hurston provides another illustration of the uses of black dreaming. She recounts an extraordinary dream she had when she was seven-years-old. Sleeping on the porch of a vacant house, Hurston "saw twelve scenes flash before [her], each one held until [she] had seen it well in every detail, and then [was] replaced by another." "I knew that they were all true," Hurston proclaims, "a preview of things to come, and my soul writhed in agony and shrunk away." Hurston had seen her future-orphan-and-homeless self in those images and continued to see this dream for months going forward. Hurston writes that every one of the images she had seen in her dream came to pass in waking life, with each subsequent dream subtracting the image of the one that came to pass. As Huston saw each dream image as time passed, she knew that her life was coming to an end. This dream prepared her for what her future was sure to be, the same way Ms. Hyde's and Ms. Kannon's dream gave them a premonition of unexpected visitors. Hurston ends her chapter with these words: "It is one of the blessings of this world that few people see visions and dream dreams." Armed with so much power and knowledge that she initially did not embrace, she describes the weight of knowing what the future holds, the good and the bad, which is placed on a dreamer like a burden. In Hurston's hands, dreams can reveal daunting revelations about the future that the dreamer is powerless to stop, knowing the future, as they saw it in the dream, is inevitable (Hurston 596-598).

What effect, if any, does this dream have on her memoir? Had Hurston decided not to include this dream in her memoir her narrative would be void of any indication that she knew of the events of her life before they took place, the story would progress without any gaps; but as a writing technique, Hurston's dream structures her memoir to follow the order of the dream's images and readers are encouraged to believe that what she saw in her dream was actually a vision for the future. By the end Hurston has successfully led her readers on a journey of faith, to believe that her dream would come to fruition in its entirety. The reader's anticipation of each image is satisfied as each dream image becomes waking life. Within narratives, fiction or non-fiction, writers include dreamers and dreams to inform their readers of the spiritual realm. Reading Hurston's memoir resembles the journey the dream-soul took to gather the pictures of her life; thus, Hurston's memoir is told from the perspective of her dream-soul. This writing technique is employed by King to let the audience know that he had seen into the future. The speech as a literary body of work with the inclusion of a dream transcribed within the history of the Civil Rights Movement shows how King knew of the ending of the Movement while speaking just as Hurston knew of the end while she penned her memoir.

Citing the words of the prophet Amos gives Amos the credit when justice rolls down in America but by quoting them without a reference, those words become King's prophecy. King will receive the credit when God works to make sure that the prophecy comes true for African Americans. This technique of including his prophetic words in the form of a dream ensures that the audience knows the Lord has shown King the future through a dream. Occasionally, King confidently asserted himself as a prophet who could prophesy through the dreams he professed to having. In his last speech, "I've Been to the Mountaintop," King reassured the audience one last time of their coming freedom for he had been to the mountaintop, making reference to the

Biblical story of Moses the Prophet who saw the Promise Land from the top of Mount Nebo (Deut. 34:1-4; King, "Prophetic Last Speech"). The speech structures the Movement to resemble King dream, and the audience is encouraged to believe in what the spirit of God has shown his dream soul.

Mary Jane Drucilla Davis of Pine Bluff, Arkansas recounted a time when she dreamt of her deceased sister telling a friend of hers to tell Ms. Davis not to sign a contract. The very next day, the man who was installing "water" in her house asked her to sign a contract, and Ms. Davis refused to sign. After she told him the reason why, he responded with "you're just like my mother." She waited two days before she signed the contract since the men refused to continue working without a signed consent form. After the "water" was put in, it seems that the pipes burst. Ms. Davis said to her WPA interviewer, "now don't you thin [sic] that dream was a warning?" Ms. Davis understood her dream to be a warning, a sign of a certain future event that would end badly for her if she did not heed the warning and signed the contract. Even with the initial confidence to heed the warning of the dream she still signed the contract and thus, paid the price. Ms. Davis' words reveal she knew before and after she signed the contract that her sister came to her via a dream to save her home from damage. Ms. Davis' dream is a literal dream since the message was clear and not hidden within signs or symbols, but it can also be considered a warning dream, a dream that warns the dreamer about impending doom in the future. Ms. Davis' dream-soul wandered to witness the spirit of her sister communicating with the spirit of Ms. Davis' friend and not Ms. Davis' dream-soul. It could be possible that this friend may have had a dream of the conversation, but there is no report of that. If so, it is the friend that is charged in telling Ms. Davis not to sign any contracts but Ms. Davis trusted what her dream-soul witnessed enough to refuse to sign the contract, initially (FWP, AR, 2, 124-125).

In another example of a warning dream, Ann Ulrich Evans of Missouri tells of her husband's dream which warned that the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) were on their way to their house to kill him. Mr. Evans awoke from his dream that same night and instructed a large group of his friends to arm themselves with guns and meet at his house to await the KKK. Sure enough, they drew near the house and as they made their way over the hill, Mr. Evans and his friends began to shoot at them; "dem Ku Klux never did bother our house no more," said Mrs. Evans. "If it nadn't been for dat [the dream] dey would have killed everyone of us dat night" (FWP, MO, 116). This account reveals two things: 1) Mr. Evans' reliance on dreams as a means of protection since he quickly sprang into action to gather armed friends to defend his home instead of ignoring the dream or viewing it as a nightmare or paranoia; 2) Mr. Evans' perception of dreams gave strength to everyone who participated in protecting him and Mrs. Evans that night. This shows the power of dreams to galvanize a community. Even as Mr. Evans rounded up his friends, there had to have been a strong communal belief in dreams predicting the future for his friends to waken in the middle of the night, arm themselves and prepare for a violent fight. When the KKK did arrive, town residents may have heard the gunshots and wondered what happened. What was probably told to each of them was that a dream saved their lives. Dreams like these are why Ellis Jefferson of Arkansas believes in them; he believed that dreams were warnings (FWP, AK, 4, 37). Mr. Evans correctly interpreted the dream and then shared it with whom he must, his friends and wife. Not all dreams need to be shared with everyone but when they are, they are told to specific people who could help ensure that the intentions of the dream are implemented. Mrs. Evans noted that the KKK only bothered them at night, never during the day so while Mr. Evans was sleeping his dream-soul saw the KKK on their way to kill him. His spirit wandering at night

on an adventure ran into the KKK; thus Mr. Evans dreamed of the KKK moments before they arrived.

Carrie Pollard tells the story of her Aunt Cynthia, a free woman and midwife in Gainesville, Alabama. Aunt Cynthia, referred to as "Aunt Cynthy" by Ms. Pollard, was married to an enslaved man and together they had nine children. A white woman sent for Aunt Cynthia, presumably to assist her with a birth, and while Aunt Cynthia was there, she dreamt that her husband and children were in trouble. She told the woman that she was nursing about her dream and the woman sent her to a fortuneteller to interpret the dream. The fortuneteller told Cynthia that her husband and children were gone but she could not say where they were. Cynthia returned home just in time to learn that her husband and her children were sent to Dekalb, Mississippi a few moments ago. For Mr. Evans, the KKK were probably already on their way to kill him when he had the dream and Aunt Cynthia's family may have been sold while she slept as well but their dream-souls witnessed all. Aunt Cynthia had to act fast. She shared her dream with the woman she was nursing since she needed assistance travelling back to her home as soon as possible. Before she could depart from the pregnant woman, she had to give a reason as to why she was leaving at such a time. Had it not been for Cynthia's dream, her husband and her nine children would have been sold far away from her, possibly without the chance of her ever seeing them again. Cynthia's dream gave her power to save her husband and children, but the power could only be harnessed via her faith in her dream, and dreams in general. Had Cynthia cast this dream aside as a simple nightmare, things might have turned out very differently. Aunt Cynthia's husband and their nine children were freed that day by Aunt Cynthia's guardian after they questioned her husband's master on her husband's and children's whereabouts. While they have Mr. Steele, Aunt Cynthia's guardian, to thank for their freedom, they also have the dream to

thank as well. It could have been in the middle of the night while her dream-soul was wandering that her spirit saw her husband and children being sold, about to be sold, or her husband's owner deciding to sell them. Either way, her dream-soul brought a message that she could trust and trust she did (FWP, AL, 318-319).

Like the warnings Aunt Cynthia and Mr. Evans received through their dreams, Fredrick Douglass also received a warning dream while he planned his escape from slavery. Unlike Aunt Cynthia and Mr. Evans, it was Sandy Jenkins who had the dream of Douglass, held in the claws a bird while a flock of angry, multi-colored birds pecked at him. This experience never happened in real life demonstrating that Jenkins' dream-soul did not wander through the world to experience Douglass being caught in the claws of a large bird. This warning was metaphoric, and since all dreams are either adventures of the dream-soul or communications between the person's spirit and another spirit, Jenkins' dream was a conversation between him and another spirit. The spirit gave the warning through a metaphoric narrative. Regardless the spirit, the message is valid and can be trusted. Unlike Aunt Cynthia and Mr. Evans, Douglass did not trust this dream as a warning, nor did he believe the dream spoke to his plan of escape. Douglass continued with his plan only to be discovered, arrested, and thrown in jail. By his account Douglass did not believe in dreams, omens and magic, but his writings demonstrate a desire for readers to see a connection between his botched plan and Sandy's dream. Sandy's dream caused uneasiness within Douglass, and he tried with no success to remove it from his mind. "I felt [the dream] "boded no good," said Douglass which shows he may have rejected omens, signs and magic, but he could not escape the daunting feeling that this dream had been accurate about his plan. This dream appears only in Douglass' second version of his autobiography (memoir), not in his first or third, and a possible explanation is that the dream serves a literary purpose; without it, the

story continues on without any gaps. With both Hurston and Douglass we see writers interpreting how dreams are used by black writers. Hurston's dream was a structural tool for her narrative, but Douglass' dream is used as a foreshadowing tool. It serves as an omen in real life but in crafting a narrative, it functions as a omen for the narrative (Levine 67-68).

Sandy did not keep what he saw in the dream to himself but told Douglass right away, showing that he feared that something bad would happen to Douglass in the future. Sandy did not try to persuade Douglass to abort the plan of escaping to freedom since the dream did not provide any detail as to when and why Douglass would be in trouble. While Douglass suspected that Sandy was the one who may have foiled their plan of escape (because Sandy was initially a part of the group to escape but did not end up in jail), there is no sure way to know if this is true. One way to find out might be tied up in Sandy's occupation. Douglass describes Sandy as:

> not only a religious man, but he professed to believe in a system for which I have no name [Hoodoo/Conjuring/Root Work]. He was a genuine African, and had inherited some of the so-called magical powers said to be possessed by the eastern nations (Levine 68).

The role of the priest/priestess, magician, or wise man/woman is a crucial role in many African religious faiths—since they were in charge of offering worship and ritual sacrifice to the gods (Equiano 15; Raboteau, *Slave Religion* 10). The priests/priestess, referred to as conjurers, were highly visible figures on a plantation with any given plantation having five or more (Chireau 13). William Wells Brown, an ex-slave and abolitionist, had this to say about wise men and women: "Nearly every large plantation…had at least one, who laid claim to be a fortune-teller, and who was regarded with more than common respect by his [or her] fellow-slaves" (Levine 69). Conjurers were one of the most powerful individuals on a plantation, exceeding the power that

even the most vicious slave holder or overseer had (Chireau 13). Priests inherited their powers that extended far past the natural world and into the supernatural; while a master or overseer only controlled physical elements, priests leveraged powers over the mind, body, and natural world. Sandy may have used his powers to protect himself from being discovered as one of those who attended to escape. George W. Little, a root doctor from Georgia, said he was born with powers to foretell the future through dreams (Joyner 53). Sandy may have conjured up this power as a means of defense against white people. The ability to foretell the future through dreams allows the conjurer to stay one step ahead of disaster and could explain why Sandy withdrew from the escape plan after he had the dream of Douglass in a bird's claw. If he could foretell the future, he would avoid the trouble Douglass and others were subject to: imprisonment.

In addition to literal dreams and warning dreams, the third category of dreams is instructional dreams: dreams that a contain a series of steps that should be conducted exactly how they appear in the dream. Randall Lee's grandfather, Levi Lee of Florida,

> had a dream while the [U.S.] soldiers were encamped round about the place. He dreamed that a pot of money was buried in a certain place; the person who showed it to him told him to go dig for it on the first rainy night. He kept the dream a secret and on the first rainy night he went, dug, and found the pot of money right where his dream had told him it would be.

Levi Lee hid the money in his cabin but Northern soldiers, in search of gold and silver money, robbed him of it. Lee "often told his grandchildren that he would have been well fined [sic] when freedom came if he had not been robbed of his money." Lee placed all of his faith in the dream and made sure to follow the instructions exactly how the "dream had told him." He did not share the dream with anyone, which suggests he was certain the money was there and feared someone

else would find it before he did. Finding the pot of money strengthened his faith in dreams. Like others, this account shows an understanding of dreams. Lee's grandson recounting the dream to the WPA indicates that Lee's dream turned into a family story, told to his children and grandchildren. Dreams become folklore, passed down from generation to generation, strengthening and teaching faith in dreams. A dream like this is possible because the dream-soul is allowed to wander through the night while knowing all, i.e., where money is buried (FWP, FL, 200).

Some instructional dreams are remarkable. Take for instance Adah Isabelle Suggs. She escaped from slavery with the aid of a dream. The WPA interviewer writes,

> A custom prevailed through the southern states that the first born of each slave maiden should be the son or daughter of her master and the girls were forced into maternity at puberty. The mothers natural resisted this terrible practice and Harriott was determined to prevent her child being victimized.

After one failed attempt to rescue her daughter Adah landed Harriott in an upstairs room to be "mildly punished" and imprisoned, Harriott received instructions on how to escape through a dream. She told Adah about the dream and instructed her to do exactly what she had seen in her dream. Adah pried open the room's door with a knife, and they successfully escaped from Kentucky to Evansville, Indiana and lived the rest of their lives as free people (FWP, IN, 190). The success reassures the dreamer that if they follow through with the instruction, they will gain what they seek. In a similar fashion, Shade Richards of Georgia recounted a time he dreamt he was walking on a certain road that he often traveled on and found a purse with $2.43 in it. The next day, Mr. Richards did exactly what he saw himself do in the dream, and sure enough, he found the purse with $2.43 in it (FWP, GA, 3, 205). Like the others, Mr. Richards followed the

guidance of his dream, finding the purse, and reinforcing his faith in dreams. While dreams reveal no expiration date, the dreamer must follow the instructions as soon as possible. Sandy Jenkins wasted no time to tell Douglass about his dream since he feared that Douglass would be hurt sometime in the future. Mr. Evans wasted no time to gather as much of his friends as possible. Harriott did not wait for a waking sign or to be released but saw the dream as her guide, a way out of slavery for her and her daughter that night.

Of the slaves arriving to the U.S., some were Christians who practiced a Christianity that included some West African rites (Sambol-Tosco). As long as the elements of Christianity were similar to those of West African spiritual beliefs, Christian converts could engage in some form of syncretism, and church services of black Christians effortlessly incorporated heterophony, dancing, hand clapping, and foot stomping, influenced by West African ritual ceremonies that were similar in nature (Du Bois, "Faith of the Fathers" 4; Raboteau, *Slave Religion* 74). Many African cultures and nations, not just those on the West coast, believed in a High God, a 'Supreme Creator' of the world who was "hands-off" and uninvolved in the day-to-day affairs of people (Raboteau, *Slave Religion* 8). The God of Christianity (and Islam and Judaism) mirrored the Supreme Creator of non-Christian West African beliefs, so the perception of an Almighty God was transferred from one faith to another. The subtle blend of African religious traditions within black styles of worship flourished within Baptist and Methodist churches, and occasionally the Roman Catholic church, as these denominations allowed slaves to have a bit more liberty to experience God in their own way (Genovese, "Black Conversion" 296). The Bible did not disrupt the belief in the supernatural for converted slaves since Biblical narratives, like the miracles of Jesus or Pharaoh's magicians turning their staff into snakes, reinforced the belief that Christians and magicians possessed supernatural powers (Exod. 7:10-11; Levine 57).

The Christian understanding of dreams did not disrupt the understanding of dreams found within West African nations and societies but rather enhanced them, encouraging development of new dream signs and interpretations. The Bible encourages a strong belief in the supernatural and communication with God through dreams and especially, through visions. Shade Richards of Georgia believed that "God lead his people by dreams" (FWP, GA, 3, 205). According to the book of Genesis, Joseph, the son of Israel/Jacob, was a dreamer and interpreted dreams that always came true, just as he interpreted them. According to the book of Daniel, Daniel/Belteshazzar successfully interpreted dreams of the king and had the ability to understand all kinds of dreams. In the book of Luke, Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus, was visited by an angel in a dream. The angel warned him of the current events that threaten the life of baby Jesus and tells Joseph to flee. Scriptures like the one found in the books of Acts and Joel, "old men will dream dreams" encouraged African American Christians to anticipate dreams that related to their faiths and the Kingdom of God. As the son of a Christian minister and a minister himself, King is no doubt aware of all these passages. It is more than probable that either the spirit of God or an angel met with King's dream-soul to communicate with him regarding the future of America, whether they would actually gain rights, equal treatment and justice for them and their descendants.

The concept of the dream-soul can be embraced within Christianity since Jacob's dream in the book of Genesis reveals of a concept similar to the idea of the dream-soul. His dream was that where he slept there was "a ladder set up" on which "the angels of God ascend[ed] and descend[ed] (Gen. 28: 12-17). Like Mr. Evans whose dream-soul wandered and saw the KKK on their way to his home, Jacob's dream-soul entered into this realm and saw these heavenly spirits while they were coming to Earth and returning to Heaven. This account serves as evidence that

angels walk the earth as the author of Hebrews writes, “be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2). Jacob’s dream-soul is a witness to this reality that takes place unbeknownst to those who do not have access to this realm except for certain dream-souls the Lord allows. The Christians in the audience during the March on Washington, and surely King himself, held this understanding that the dreamer gains understanding of the world around them from the occurrences of the spirit realm via dreams.

King descends from a long line of preachers using dreams in this manner. Preacher James Southall of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma:

> learned a long time ago dat dey was nothing to charms. How could a rabbit’s foot bring [him] good luck? De Bible [thought him] better’n dat. [He] believe[d] in dreams though. [He’d] seen de end of time in [his] dreams. Saw de great trouble [African Americans were] going through [then], years ago in a dream. It [was] clear in [his] mind how de world [would] com[e] to a [sic] end. (FWP, OK, 309)

What Preacher James’ dream reveals is that Christians had predictive dreams that gave the dreamer power and knowledge about the future so they could act accordingly and not be alarmed over the coming days. Proclaimed “Head Prophet to the World,” Mose Hursey of Texas “was… a preacher… [for] thirty years” before staff from the WPA interviewed him. By the mid-1930s, Mr. Hursey was a proclaimed prophet who saw God in visions (FWP, TX, 2, 171). Proclaimed prophets must rely on verses such as this one located in the book of Numbers which reads: “If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known unto him in visions, and I speak unto him in a dream” (Num. 12:6). Christian dreamers did not differ from dreamers of other faiths or no faith. Christian dreams ranged from hearing the voice of God to glimpsing the future. “Deeply religious” Amy Perry of South Carolina maintained that she did not believe “in

ghost, nor dreams, nor conjuh;" but, her very next statement was, "John de Baptist and dem dream dreams, and de Lawd show dem vision." Ms. Perry revealed that her faith in God was established on account of a dream she had before her conversion (FWP, SC, 3, 254).

Included in much African American writing is the conversion experience, and here again we see the influence of dreams. Conversion created the communion and bond with the Spirit but also gave the new believer a special self-identity (West 85). The conversion moment sometimes included hearing the voice of God or seeing visions that increased faith in the Christian supernatural and encourage the nonbeliever to join the church. Hearing the voice of God no doubt increased the slaves' self-esteem. They could now walk with more agency, maybe not over their current life, but over their eternal life (Genovese, "Religious Foundations" 304). Nancy Gardner of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, born a slave in Tennessee, distinctly remembered her conversion experience, and being encouraged by the voice of the Lord. She said:

> I remember jest as well when I was converted. One day I was thinking 'bout a sermon de preacher had preached and a voice spoke to me and said, "De Holy Ghost is over your head. Accept it!" Right den I got down on my knees and prayed to God dat I might understand dat voice, and God Almighty in a vision told me dat I should find de church. I could hardly wait for de next service so I could find it, and when I was in de water getting my baptisement, dat same voice spoke and said, "Now you have accepted don't turn back 'cause I will be wid you always!" O you don't know nothing 'bout dat kind of religion. (FWP, OK, 109)

While she was already attending church and meditating on the words of a pastor, without the voice of the Lord directly speaking to her, Ms. Gardner may not have converted as quickly as she did. The voice of the Lord made the Church palatable to her. Susan Snow of Meridian,

Mississippi had a similar conversion experience. It took two visions before she converted. Ms. Snow told a white woman her first vision in which the woman responded:

> "Susie, dat's 'ligion a-callin' you" (Mississippi). She ignored this first vision on account of the woman whom she described as somewhat fraudulent. "White folks' 'ligion aint like Niggers' 'ligion. I know a woman dat couldn' 'member de Lawd's Prayer, an' she got 'ligion out o' prayin', 'January, February, March'." (FWP, MS, 141)

The visions that happened during the conversion granted Christians "sight" into the supernatural world. It is worth noting that despite how the description may read, moments like these in black churches are not unorganized, chaotic moments. Moreover, these moments of what W.E.B. Du Bois termed "frenzy" were a chance for individuals to communion with the Spirit while everyone else did the same, in the fashion they found most suitable ("Faith of the Fathers" 4). This explains why slaves preferred to join the Baptist and Methodist denominations; they wanted to express their joy and praise their Lord in the way they felt was genuine, the way they felt comfortable to do so.

Most dreams reported in the WPA interviews are indicative dreams, dreams with signs that align with particular meanings. Indicative dreams are interpreted differently than other dreams since one can ignore most of the narrative of the dream and focus in on one aspect of the dream, matching the correct meaning to the sign, and then discerning the entire meaning of the dream (Spier 522). Dream signs had to be "read" carefully and accurately to predict imminent danger. There were signs for a range of things, among them unexpected visitors, bad luck, death, weddings, pregnancies, enemies (Levine 66). These signs could embody ancestor sightings or aspects of Nature. Therefore, the realm of nighttime dreams holds a key role in African

American folk beliefs. Lawrence W. Levine writes in his book, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought, From Slavery to Freedom,* that "signs were not merely phenomena to be accepted passively; they were often calls to action" (66). Signs serve as a chance for a person to actively participate in the course of present and future events *if* they responded in a reasonable amount of time and took appropriate actions. Signs are a complex belief set because one must first correctly identify the sign, know the exact meaning of the sign, and then respond with appropriate actions. Through dream signs and rituals, slaves and their descendants were equipped with knowledge of impending doom and regained power and agency over their lives and environment during a time when their master(s), white people, and the government held *almost* total control. Regaining control over life, especially after ancestors were set free and given rights backed by the 13th, 14th, 15th and 19th amendments was a key imperative for black advocacy initiatives including the Civil Rights Movement. King's decision to veer off from his original speech and discourse on a dream references a time when blacks gained access to knowledge about their future via dreams.

There is an entire repertoire of signs that denote specific outcomes. Mrs. Emmaline Heard of Georgia told her WPA staff worker of a couple signs within dreams that foretold death: teeth falling out or seeing a naked person in a dream (FWP, GA, 4, 257). Within a volume of the WPA slave narratives is a list of signs complied by the WPA staff. They include: to dream of muddy water, maggots or fresh meat, meant death; to dream of a casket meant death, with the number of caskets relating to the number of future deaths; to dream of blood is a sign of trouble; to dream of fish is a sign of motherhood [or pregnancy]; to dream of eggs is a sign of trouble unless the eggs are broken, and if they are, then the trouble has ended; snakes within a dream are signs of enemies, and if one kills the snakes in a dream, then they have conquered their enemies;

to dream of fire is a sign of danger; to dream of a funeral is a sign of a wedding; to dream of a wedding is a sign of a funeral; to dream of silver money is a sign of bad luck but bills are a sign of good luck; to dream of dead people is a sign of rain; to dream of crying is a sign of trouble; to dream of dancing is a sign of happiness; to dream of your teeth falling out is a sign of a death in the family; to dream of a woman's death is a sign of a man's death; to dream of a man's death is a sign of a woman's death (FWP, GA, 4, 283-289; FWP, OK, 305). Lizzie Davis, an ex-slave, added to this abbreviated list of the many dream signs in existence by stating that dreams that feature the dreamer traveling and reaching an old, rundown building signifies the death of an *elderly* person (FWP, SC, 1, 297). There is, however, a challenge when it comes to dream signs: learning and remembering what signs go with what interpretation. In tight-knit black communities where people share dreams freely, one may not have to rely on one's own memory to interpret dreams. A neighbor, a conjurer, or a family member could help fill in the gaps for signs that one is not familiar with. Christians created their own dream signs based on their own experiences and knowledge of the Biblical imagery such as Patsy Moses of Texas who said that dreaming of "clear water lets [one] know [they're] on de right side of Gawd (FWP, TX, 3, 142).

There is a bit of inconsistency within these signs since some will view seeing the dead in dreams as a sign for rain whereas others view dreams of the dead as bad omens. Others may simply view this as a visit from their ancestor (Shafton 213). Puckett noted this inconsistency in *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* by observing that signs varied depending on the group of African Americans. Every community may have a slightly different interpretation. This could be because what is seen in dreams is directly connected to its approximate outcome. Cora Torian of Kentucky frequently dreamt of fish, and according to her beliefs, to dream of fish meant one would receive money, "an [she] always did" (FWP, KY, 104). Notice that this differs from the

general interpretation of fish signs in dreams: pregnancy. If what Ms. Torian received every time she had a dream about a fish was money, then she would equate dreams about fish with money. Over time, this sign would be added the collective unconscious of African Americans since Ms. Torian could be called on to interpret a neighbor's fish dream or instruct her children or family to embrace this meaning. Still, Ms. Torian held beliefs in signs that were in consensus to more widely-received dream signs like dreaming of the dead signifying the coming of rain, dreaming of a horse and buggy predicting death in one's family, dreaming of a marriage or a naked person meaning the death of one of the dreamer's family members or their neighbors (FWP, AK, 7, 188; FWP, KY, 104). Mrs. Susan Dale Sanders of Kentucky believed that dreaming of money is a sign of good luck while others believed silver money in dreams is a sign of bad luck (FWP, KY, 106). There are no rules when it comes to dream signs, everyone has their own way of interpreting their dreams; one goes based on feeling, experience, and sometimes, the opinion of other to interpret dream signs.

A woman who had recently died in Mary Jane Hardrige's town visited Mrs. Hardrige in her dream one night. In the dream, the woman handed Mrs. Hardrige her naked baby and asked Mrs. Hardrige to keep him for her. Ms. Hardrige of Arkansas awoke from her dream and told her neighbor who interpreted the dream to mean the upcoming death of a woman, but Mrs. Hardrige told the interviewer that she always heard that dreaming of the dead meant rain. These two women lived within the same community but held very different yet common interpretations of dreams. Notice also how Mrs. Hardrige shared her dream with her neighbor since it may have been the case that she was not too sure of the meaning of her dream especially since it involved the woman's baby. While she "always heard" one meaning, she did not seem too sure of that interpretation for her dream. Ms. Hardrige does not say whether she took in the infant, only that

she “was much devoted to the child” and “love[d] him.” It is possible that Mrs. Hardrige was a bit confused on what her next steps were due to the varied interpretation of the dream: rain, the imminent death of a woman, or literal instructions from an ancestor spirit. It seems that Ms. Hardrige did the latter (FWP, AK, 3, 160).

Puckett addressed the “wide variation” in dream signs and provides this explanation for the variations, or inconsistencies: “wide variation is due to the fact that even a stupid person may be original in his dreams” (Puckett 504). While Puckett’s words are harsh, it resembles the words of Howard Thurman, an African American philosopher, theologian, educator, and civil rights leader:

> The human spirit is so involved in the needless cycle of birth, of living and dying, that in some sense each man is an authority, a key interpreter of the meaning of the totality of experience. The testimony of the individual, then, is always fresh, if he is able to make himself articulate to his fellows. (29)

Thus, each dreamer is his or her own “key interpreter of the meaning of” their dreams, based on their own lived “experience[s].” “Fresh” interpretations from dreamers will add to the growing list of dream signs and, in time, will be held to high regard amongst older and well-received interpretations. Similar to how the practices and knowledge of African-born and older slaves were passed on, many people who resided in the South and Midwest in the mid-1930s passed beliefs in dreams on to future generations, some of whom would wind up at the March on Washington.

Other categories of dreams signs include animals, as when Ms. Annie B. Boyd, born as a slave belonging to a Mr. Charles Cammack of Kentucky, revealed the time she dreamt of a snake

falling out from her dress and awoke to find a snake at the side of her bed. Ms. Boyd killed the snake, a dream sign is also found within societies of Southern Nigeria, but knew she had an enemy. "Sho nuff in a few days", Ms. Boyd declares, "a woman I thot was my friend turned gain [sic] me. By killing de snake I knowed dat I would conquer dat enemy" (FWP, KY, 58). Another major set of dreams is what Anthony Shafton[3], an independent scholar, refers to as "ancestor visitation dreams," dreams of ancestor spirits visiting the living (Shafton 23). The ancestors, spirits of deceased members of the community whether dead days ago or decades ago, are a powerful class of spirits within West African religions which influenced the relationship between the living and their dead love ones among African Americans. These spirits act as mediators between the gods and humans while also possessing power to grant fertility and health to their descendants and other living community members (Raboteau, *Slave Religion* 12). Ancestors, while physically dead, remain alive through their actions and interferences in the affairs of the living. Toni Morrison makes use of this relationship when she describes the relationship between ancestor spirits and their descendants in her novel, *Beloved*, as living in a house "peopled by the living activity of the dead" (*Beloved* 35). Ancestors had access to their descendants through physical appearances, or sightings, and especially through dreams. Jake Wilson of Old Fort had this to say about ancestors: "Duh dead know wut dug libin is doing an come roun deah close kin an friens wen dey is in trouble" (Joyner 6).

Outside the realm of dreams, virtually anyone might see an ancestor spirit or ghost, but according to African American folk belief, a certain birth condition granted a person with a special ability, or gift, to see the dead and other spiritual forms: a caul (Puckett 138, 139). This

[3] Anthony Shafton is an independent scholar whose research focuses on African American cultural sociology, dream psychology, and biological evolution. In his book, *Dream-Singers: the African American Way with Dreams*, Shafton interviews African Americans about their perception with dreams.

belief is shared by those in West Africa and the Caribbean (Joyner Appendix). Aunt Mary, the daughter of a slave, revealed that she could see ghosts because she was born with a caul over her face: "Anybody knows dat a pusson bawn wid a caul obuh dey face," Aunt Mary says, "kin sho see ghoses" (Joyner 2). Those born with a caul are also more prone to see visions. The gift is properly known as "second sight" which implies the person's first sight is what they can see in the physical (natural) realm and the second sight is what they can see in the spiritual realm. W. E. B. Du Bois repurposes this concept as the gift of second-sight or double consciousness in his *Souls of Black Folk* (xxii).

Similar to being born with a caul over one's face granting the gift of "second sight," being "born again" in Christ gave some African Americans the ability to see visions as well. Mrs. Emmaline Heard of Atlanta, Georgia relays the story of Aunt Darkas of McDonough, Georgia who often said that "the Lord gave her power and vision" (FWP, GA, 4, 250). Cauls granted one a greater understanding of the supernatural and a way to interpret, events of the present. For Christians, God delivered to them the same understanding. A person interviewed from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, whose name was not recorded, proudly professed that they would know when their parents should pass away as the Lord would reveal it to them in a dream (FWP, AK, 5, 311). Visions do not stop after conversion but they continue throughout the person's life as with Ellis Jefferson of Hazen, Arkansas who was already Christian when he had a vision in which the Lord spoke to him, telling him to be ordained [as a minister] (FWP, AK, 4, 37). King's dream is much more powerful than a hopeful thought of the future because his refrain suggests that his dream-soul showed him that the Movement would be successful. Given his Christian faith, King's dream-soul met with the Spirit of God who gave him this information of the future. Or, at least, that is what he is suggesting by presenting himself as a dreamer during the March on

Washington. As an African American, King is the seventh-born child, full of wisdom, and born with a caul, having the gift of second-sight. King's ability to see into the spiritual realm came via dreams.

The last type of African American dreaming practice that King would allude to is symbolic dreams. One has to be as careful when interpreting symbolic dreams as one is when interpreting indicative dreams. With indicative dreams, one dream sign encompasses the dream's meaning, but with symbolic dreams each element of the dream needs to be interpreted and pieced together to understand the full meaning of the dream. This type of dream features symbols, not common dream signs. Biblical dreams are an example. In the book of Genesis, Joseph, son of Jacob/Israel, has two dreams which he shares with his brothers and father. For Joseph's first dream, the sheaves of grain are not interpreted like dream signs; they are symbols for him and his brothers. The same applies to his second dream in which the sun, moon and stars are not to be taken as omens but representations for his mother, father, and brothers (Gen. 37:5-10). To be clear, both of Joseph's dreams come to pass. In another instance, when Joseph is in an Egyptian prison, he interprets the dreams of two prisoners. The prisoners' dreams are very detailed, with each element having a specific meaning, fitting together to create one larger message. The first prisoner's dream is this:

> In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand"

The second prisoner shares his dream with Joseph, and Joseph explains what each symbol represents in both dreams, and both dreams come to pass (Gen. 40:9-11). King as a Baptist minister was very familiar with these dreams and their predictive nature. This Biblical understanding of dreams is identical to a West African understanding of dream, so this tradition, the various dream signs and their meanings, were embraced by black Christians, for they did not have to change any understanding of this common occurrence, only develop new signs.

The understanding of dreams is that all dreams are predictive and will come to pass on their own. A person cannot control the outcome of a dream but could still conjure up information they wanted to know. If one wanted to know who they would marry in the future, they could simply put an apron under their pillow on a Friday night to dream of the person. The first night sleeping in a new house and naming each corner after a lover will also bring about the same dream. Overall, dreams can be daunting if what the person sees unsettles them or it could be wonderful like where to find a pot of money. For some African Americans in the crowd during the March understanding dreams as a reliable mode of communication between the living and the dead, between the living and God, and between the living and other spirits makes King's identity as a dreamer and his dream all the more powerful and reassuring that their efforts were not in vain (Puckett 496-497).

Chapter 2: Dreams as a Writer's Literary Tool

To understand the full range of influences on King's vision of dreaming, we must consider the presence of dreaming in African American literature for King uses the same literary technique within his speeches. Though I have made reference to black writing throughout the thesis, this chapter will address three specific texts, *Invisible Man, Paradise,* and *An American Marriage*. Some literary criticism of dreams relying on a Freudian school of thought, psychoanalysis, to analyze characters and writers or can also analyze how writers illustrate the American Dream through their novels or what particular aspect of the Dream they criticize. Such novels include *The Great Gatsby, Of Mice and Men,* or *Ragged Dick.* The following literary critic applies the cultural belief in dreams as seen in the previous chapter to the authors and their novels.

He is said to have died, but the narrator's grandfather in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* appears throughout the novel "as though he had not died at all." His words haunt the narrator like a "curse," reappearing in the narrator's mind only when "thing[s are going] well" in his life. These words, the grandfather's last words on his death bed, charged the narrator's family to be "treacherous" against those who held power over African Americans while being passive and content to the point of undermining the entire white power structure. These final words plagued the narrator's memory, seemingly keeping the grandfather alive in the novel, but his actual spirit is present throughout subsequent pages. When the narrator receives a scholarship to college, he is overjoyed and feels "safe from" his grandfather's last words, but the grandfather visits the narrator via a dream that same night. Since he is an ancestor, it is his duty to guide his descendants through life with the knowledge he has access to from the spiritual realm. The entire novel centers around the invisible spirit of the grandfather who appears early in the novel and the

very end, sandwiching the narrative; the narrator cannot escape his grandfather's presence since his grandfather would pay him visits via dreams for years, most likely when the narrator tried to live contrary to the grandfather's "curse" and found satisfaction in living to please white people. The grandfather's spirit controls the events of the narrative through his instructions to "Keep This Nigger-Boy Running." This written declaration in the ancestor visitation dream commands the events of the novel going forward since dreams of this nature are predictive. Neither the narrator nor the reader can escape the words declared in the realm of dreams for they are guaranteed to come true as the dream-soul of the narrator meets the spirit of his ancestor who insists on guiding him to the future (Ellison 14, 26).

Ellison's decision to include an ancestral visitation dream in his novel, thus allowing the grandfather to visit the narrator and continue as a character, forces the story to revolve around his spiritual visits. Once the words are spoken on the page and the dream is shared, the reader must take note of the ways that the grandfather's dream declaration functions as a curse for the narrator. Revealing early in the novel that the dream will reoccur for years after the initial dream charges the reader to read the novel keenly to discern the signs of when the grandfather visits the narrator. Ellison's fashioning of dreamers and dreams in the world of his novel subjugates the novel to oppressing and frustrating the narrator. As a means of foreshadowing, just like Douglass' decision to use his dream in his narrative, Ellison is bound by his own dream creation to carry on the story in the words of the grandfather, focusing on the imagery of the dream. The narrator observes,

> That night I dreamed I was at the circus with him and that he refused to laugh at the clowns no matter what they did. Then later he told me to open my brief case and read what was inside and I did, finding an official envelope stamped with the

> state seal; and inside the envelope I found another and another, endlessly, and I thought I would fall of weariness. "Them's years," he said. "Now open that one." And I did and in it I found an engraved document containing a short message in letters of gold. "Read it," my grandfather said. "Out loud!" "To Whom It May Concern," I intoned, "Keep This Nigger-Boy Running." (Ellison 26)

According to Joseph F. Trimmer, a professor of English at Ball State University, the clowns are a metaphor for a yes-man who must wear a mask to be complacent. The (spirit of the) narrator's grandfather gives him the meaning of the envelope metaphor: each envelope stands for one year. Trimmer writes, "the dream ends with the grandfather laughing at the fraudulent results produced by the narrator's actions; the narrator has played the clown but he is only a fool" (47). Clowns are not a part of dream signs, neither are envelopes nor circuses. Viewed as a larger metaphor of deferred dreams in black life, each component is a symbol, standing in place for the constant running dominant society demands of black non-citizens. This message is wrapped inside of a dream for safe keeping, not to be forgotten by the narrator but established within a dream to force the narrative to incorporate this command. As the author, Ellison created a story where the narrator struggles with the final words of his grandfather but also puts that message into a dream, thus invoking the power of dreams and forcing the narrative to incorporate what is predicted with the dream: keeping the narrator running until the end (of the novel) (Ellison 47; Trimmer 47).

A symbolic dream appears in Toni Morrison's *Paradise* and is relayed by Nathan DuPres, the oldest man in the all-black town, Ruby. DuPres, like many times over the years, recounts the details of his dream images to town members during the welcome address for the town's annual Christmas Play. According to Puckett and Thurmond, DuPres is the primary interpreter of his dream, relying on personal experiences to decode dream symbols—flowers,

water, bean rows, and a Native American man—to conclude that the dream's meaning is that the town will remain unified and strong as long as they understand the initial reasons their founders established the town; however, Morrison allows the reader to interpret the dream based on their own experiences as readers of the novel. DuPres, as with all characters of the novel, cannot grasp the concept that the town's foundation was based on poisonous values and beliefs that may not stunt the growth of the town but will eventually be the very factor that destroys it. DuPres' lived experiences does not contain knowledge of the town's racial discrimination, hatred, and feelings of racial superiority. Readers' experiences of the novel's plot do contain this insight and help interpret DuPres' dream as a foreshadowing tool for where the town is heading. DuPres says,

> Was an Indian come up to me in a bean row. Cheyenne, I believe. The vines were green, tender. The blossoms coming out all over. He looked at the row and shook his head, sorrowful-like. Then he told me too bad the water was bad; said there was plenty of it but it was foul. I said, But look here, look at all the flowers. Looks like a top crop to me. He said, The tallest cotton don't yield the best crop; besides, those flowers the wrong color. They's [sic] red. And I looked and sure enough they was turning pink, then red. Like blood drops. Scared me some. But when I looked back he was gone. And the petals was white again. (Morrison 205)

The experiences of the reader are different from DuPres' since the novel reveals the faults of the town DuPres is blind to, symbolized by DuPres diverting attention from the foul water to the flowers. DuPres cannot see that the crops will eventually die because what the town uses as nourishment for their crop is actually poison: hatred and a belief in racial superiority and purity which fosters violence to keep the town strong by destroying any opposing beliefs. This crop, the older generation that maintains their discriminatory and conservative beliefs, has produced

flowers, nine to be exact, that take to murder, literal blood on their hands, to ensure their town is void of any opposition that may destroy them. Even at the Christmas Play that the children are putting on before them, the town's older generation relates the Biblical story of Mary and Joseph turned away from Inns to the rejection the town's founders faced from Americans, both whites and lighter skinned black people, which forced them to set up their own town, away in a manger. The story that the dream tells is not satisfactory for the town's leaders, so altering the apparent meaning of the dream is better suited for a town that is desperately trying to convince its younger members to adopt their conservative beliefs (Morrison 204-205).

The main symbols of DuPres' dream, the colors and the Native man, reveals the ending (and future) of the novel. The Native man acts as the voice of discernment for DuPres and points out what is wrong with the town. For an all-black town, the spirit of a Native man visiting a town member in a dream seems out of the ordinary. Morrison fashioned this dream as a spirit visitation as well as a symbolic one, since the lack of familial ties between the Cheyenne man and DuPres disqualifies this dream as an ancestral visitation dream. The Native man's spirit can still visit DuPres' dream-soul. DuPres' familiarity with the Native man, suggesting what nation the man belonged to, hints that DuPres knows a little of the community who lived on the land before them. A common criticism of Morrison's writing is her portrayal of Native Americans as ghost-like (Womack 43). The native characters are restricted in their voices and their character development. *Paradise* is no exception. Not far from the town is an abandoned convent house that once functioned as a boarding school for Cheyenne-Arapahoe girls. While town residents seldomly venture beyond town limits, Ruby's location in Oklahoma suggests DuPres and the other town founders were well-aware of the Cheyenne nation established in Western Oklahoma were Ruby is located (Womack 34). This ghost or spirit of a Cheyenne man visiting DuPres via a

dream has connections to the area near Ruby, making the chances of a conversation between them very likely. Still an ancestor spirit of someone, just not an ancestor of DuPres, his main responsibility is to guide the living, guidance that is revealed through his sorrowful looks in regard to the vines, water and flowers of Ruby. Instead of ignoring Ruby so they can continue on blindly, oblivious to their internal poisons, the Cheyenne man attempts to demonstrate to DuPres through dream symbols that the town is on the verge of a point of no return. The flowers changing color from white to "blood" red, with white representing the presumed (racial) purity and superiority of the town members and red, the hatred and evilness and true persona of the town whose members would come to have blood on their hands, their petals. Nine town members of Ruby, from both generations, carry out a killing spree on the women living in the abandoned convent house at the end of the novel. While not all nine men directly shot the women, they and the rest of the town are fully responsible for the women's death; Ruby's hands are no longer clean, or white, but soiled with the blood of women who dared lived contrary to the conservative beliefs of the town.

As the creator of the dream, Morrison subjugated the town of Ruby to remain oblivious to the events that were bound in time to happen but allowed for an ancestor spirit to warn them. Similar to how Sandy gave Douglass a chance to abort his escape plan, Morrison gave Ruby as chance to save themselves. The novel begins with the lines "they shot the white girl first," so the readers can have the experience of the massacre in order to have the knowledge needed to interpret the dream that is presented much later in the novel. The novel without the introductory shooting would leave readers dependent on DuPres for the dream's interpretation. Since this dream predicted the events of the future, regardless of DuPres correctly interpreting it, he is powerless to stop the events from coming to pass. The spirit of the Native man residing in the

spiritual realm has knowledge of the future and lets the town know of a fate that they are powerless to stop. The only power they might have had is a forewarning of what to expect. Morrison's use of the dream gives power to the readers to interpret subsequent events that speak to the future of town members.

Tayari Jones' *An American Marriage* contains dreams as well. The novel features a letter that Olive, an African American woman, pens to her son, Roy, about Celeste, the woman that he wants to marry. Olive writes:

> Roy, I cannot say an ill word against a woman that I have not met, but my spirit is troubled…. I would not be your caring mother if I didn't tell you that my dreams have come to me again. I know you don't believe in signs, so I am not going to tell you the nitty-gritty. But I am so worried about you, son. (Jones 265-266)

Olive does not reveal exactly what she saw in her dream, whether it was a visit from an ancestor urging her to warn Roy about his upcoming nuptials, images of Roy sometime in the future (sitting in a jail cell, divorced), or indicative dreams with signs for bad luck. She may not have told Roy exactly what she saw in her dreams but, like Aunt Cynthia, the midwife from chapter one, she relayed only its message, concluding the interpretation was sufficient to convince Roy of unpleasant times ahead if he married this particular woman. Roy receives this letter after he is divorced and released from jail and attempts to come to terms with his mother's words which were meant to "warn [him]…save [him]," but in the end, Roy is unmoved by his mother's "prophetic dreams" (Jones 266). He may not believe in signs, but Roy does exhibit a growing level of faith in dreams, even if it is in hindsight. To Roy, his mother could not have possibly known what the future held for him, only that something horrible would happen. Unlike the narrator from *Invisible Man* or residents of Ruby, Roy did not receive his warning until long

after he was married, imprisoned, and then divorced. It is difficult to understand but Olive's dream connects Roy's future legal troubles with his marriage to Celeste, suggesting that Roy's choosing to go forward with marrying Celeste and not choosing another path will lead to imprisonment. Not marrying Celeste would have been a way for Roy to avoid one future and create another. Note that the warning dreams of Frederick Douglass, Ms. Drucilla, DuPres and Olive were never heeded. Even dreams that warn still occur despite ancestors' strong desires to protect their descendants and the living from having this future. What one sees in the dream will come true. Creating a novel in which a character attempted to warn her son of a disastrous marriage with unforeseen consequences makes readers wonder how Roy's life would have turned out had he received the letter. The readers can rest assured that Roy's life would have turned out the same since he believed that his mother could not have foreseen his future. Jones also could have placed Olive's letter into Roy's hand but does not, allowing dreams to run their course and come to fruition, one way or another.

These three writers and all the dreamers from chapter one demonstrate how dreams cannot be out maneuvered or foiled; they will come to pass and not even the spirits of ancestors can stand against them even though these spirits bring warnings to their descendants through them.

Chapter 3: "I Have A Dream"

King's dream is at the nexus of the dreams recorded in the WPA materials and black literature, for he *speaks* about a dream as a living experience but *crafts* it using the literary technique that the three black writers used. Regardless of being invented or experienced, dreams predict the future; and when created, they control it. Ellison, Morrison and Jones allowed for dreams to control the lives of their characters and King attempted to do the same with his dream. When he fashioned this famous refrain, he did so solely to get through to the crowd with a cultural reference they would be responsive to, similar to his use of Bible verses with audiences he knew had Biblical knowledge and the understanding of the prophetic verses he chose; so, when he recited a verse from the book of Amos, justice rolling down like waters, he was confident that the audience, most of whom were in their Sunday's best[4], would understand the surety of words of the prophet. Similarly, deciding to tell the crowd at the Albany campaign about his dream meant that he was sure they would respond positively to a dream and be encouraged by the inevitable future it revealed. King made room for the West African belief that influenced aspects of black Christian culture expressed during his speech, i.e., the call and response tradition. The crowd did not hesitate to participate in his rendition of the rhythmic preaching style black ministers were known for, and it resonated with the audience in a way that King felt was a "perfect" opportunity to share his dream. After every fifteen words or so, or after each pause, a "my Lord," "that's right," or "yes" can be heard in response to King's words, a vocal mode of agreement to his message. The atmosphere of the March, the crowd's energy, and the imagery in his *prepared* speech gave way for the opportunity to spontaneously dream. With this understanding of dreams as predictive engulfed into a West African influenced Christianity,

[4] A common term used for clothes worn to Christian church services on Sunday mornings.

King invoked the power of dreams to try and control the events of the Civil Rights Movement by creating his own dream images. A long history of this practice can be found in King's speechifying. For his address at Rocky Mount on November 27th, 1962, King dreamed up a future where "Sasser County, Georgia" would be desegregated and the races would live with mutual respect for one another (Miller 168). Professor Miller notes that Georgia does not have a Sasser County and this was an intentional mistake, for King "invent[ed] a fictitious Sasser County because his dream of a future world contains a place that looks so unlike present-day Georgia that the counties deserve better names" (Miller 168). King attempted to invent this county for Georgia's future and could only do so by dreaming. His dreams varied by speech but reveal the same intention as his dream of Sasser County: King was determined to invent a free and equal America for African Americans.

King had a repertoire of ideas and concepts he drew from when drafting his speeches. When listening to King's speeches, audience members may have noticed that King used the same phrases, lines or paragraphs in one speech that he used in a speech he delivered a month before. For example, King's "How Long, Not Long" exhortation or his "All, Here, Now" were as common as his dream refrain and could easily be cut and pasted from one speech to another. He reserved each bit for specific occasions based on the emotion he wanted to stir within his listeners: encouragement, reflection, or enlightenment. From his transcribed speeches, the dream refrain is always found in speeches that seek to encourage the audience to keep protesting for they would surely overcome their present struggles.[5] For his Rocky Mount speech, the refrain is immediately preceded by "How Long, Not Long." African Americans would not have to wait long for equal treatment and protection under the law because King was dreaming of a

[5] This is evident in his speeches with the dream phrase, "I have a dream," not speeches that just mention dreams.

desegregated North Carolina right now (166-168). They would not have to suffer violence and face imprisonment for much longer because he was dreaming before them. The dream refrain of his March on Washington speech came right after his remarks on how he was not "unmindful that some of [the audience gathered during] great trials and tribulations," and they should continue on with faith that "unearned suffering is redemptive" (Hansen 57). This idea of "unearned suffering" is furthered explained in King's 1960 "Suffering and Faith" speech in which he said that he chose to react to his undeserving suffering by "transforming the suffering into a creative force" (Tewkesbury 144). That "creative force" is dreaming a means of defense, a force that Mahalia Jackson insisted he use when she shouted at the mention of that line, "Tell them about the dream, Martin!"; thus, King dreaming is supposed to be taken as encouragement for the audience and a creative force of defense for Movement. He "transformed" his suffering into a dream like writers create dreams for their novels. For him it was a means of defense for he placed his dream on the front line of the Movement, in front of the nation. They would be "free at last," with "this faith" they could depend on when they organized subsequent marches and protests. As King provided details of what his dream-soul revealed, people in the crowd held hands and rocked back and forth shouting, "Dream some more!" This is the reaction that King hoped for as a sign that he convinced the crowd of his dream and that they wanted him to continue on. King knew very well what many from the audience had been through in the last few months and years: arrests, beatings, loss of loved ones, among the usual day-to-day national agenda of racism and discrimination. He made a huge decision to leave his script and tell the crowd his dream. King reassured a tired crowd that God has shown him that the people would overcome. Even Ralph Abernathy noticed the Spirit and King's dream-soul meeting while King spoke, for when King finished speaking, Abernathy ran up to King and told him: "the Holy Spirit

had taken hold of [you].” The Spirit had deposited a message to King’s spirit, his dream-soul (Hansen 58-59, 164).

Why was King’s dream rooted in the American Dream? What is the relationship between these two dreams? The Founding Fathers’ dream, according to King, is an instructional dream. Recall that instructional dreams are predictive only if the person carries out the instructions given in the dream. King proclaims that the American Dream has yet to be realized but that the “hour is late. The clock of destiny is ticking. We must act now before it is too late” (King, “American Dream”). All instructional dreams have a time stamp on them but they are not revealed; what is seen in the dream will not wait around forever until the dreamer decides they want to bring the dream into fruition. It is this dream that encompasses King’s dream. As King shared his dream during the March, he did not charge the audience with any instructions on how to make his dream, essentially the American Dream, happen. King would make the American Dream hold his dream; thus combining them and forcing both be predictive. As a dreamer, King determined whether he wanted to share the details of his dream or just its message. He chose the latter and reassured the protesters that he had a dream. Seeing that his dream is not an instructional dream, it was going to come to pass no matter what. Nothing could stop King’s dream from happening.

What King did during the March and the other times before and after the March was much more powerful that hoping since he presented himself as a dreamer and not a wishful thinker. As King said, he created the refrain during an Albany campaign; that means he created his dream then. Every time King spoke on his personal dream he never failed to mention *when* he had that dream. With every dream account in the WPA, the dreamer remembers the moment in which they had the dream. For King, he had his dream that day during the March on Washington in August 1963. He had his dream that day in Detroit in June of 1963. He had his dream that day

in Rocky Mount in 1962. He had his dream that in Atlanta on Christmas Eve of 1967. King is dreaming while giving his speeches, whether he comes prepared to share his dream or not, they all are had that day, in that very moment. This is why "I had a dream" used by those from chapter one was turned into "I have a dream." For his Rocky Mount dream speech, it was "I have a dream tonight" (Miller 170-171). For Detroit it was, "I have a dream this afternoon" (Miller 180). For D.C. it was, "I have a dream today" (Hansen 59). Coming up with this dream at that very moment for each speech was King's way of taking control of the moment, making his dream resemble that of Hurston's or the *Invisible Man*'s narrator's, a reoccurring one. The story of history would record when (or if) each dream image came true.

The nation would remember King as just a "dreamer," a kind, patient man who believed in non-violence and who, during a time when even the federal government called him the most dangerous Negro in America, he chose to speak about a dream. His advisors wanted him to speak about a dream. Mahalia Jackson wanted him to speak about a dream. Those in the front row of the March wanted him to speak about a dream. While King does not say that he heard Ms. Jackson that day, he must have heard a faint cry about a dream and may not have known where it came from since at that very moment she shouted, he left his speech and did what everyone wanted him to do. Leaning on the understanding of the dreams in African American culture both Biblical, literary, and testimonial, King felt that it was in the best interests of the Movement to step into the role of dreamer and not just visionary, prophet or minister. Invoking the power of dreams would give him the power to control the narrative of the future. It is the predictive nature of dreams which made King believe if he could conjure up a dream each time and control the message of the dream, then the nation, the government, even time itself had to fall in line with what he confessed to seeing in a dream. This is why those in the front row urged him to keep on

dreaming. As a great orator, he presented his message wrapped in a dream. King hoped to give the crowd something tangible they could place their faith in, so though King's dream is not a lived experience like the others, he conjured up a dream for the crowd with conscious intentions and understanding of dreams predictive, powerful nature.

Invoking the power of dreams exhibited power on the part of King who was/is seen as the son of Civil Disobedience. While he did urge the audience to remain dignified and not to repay hatred for hatred, violence for violence, he forcefully removed the power from the nation and the government and left them with no choice but to fall in line with what he dreamed. Some audience members reveal that they understood King's intention as dreaming as a lived experience and not merely a state of hopefulness for with "I have a dream" the audience shouted louder and louder with joy; those in the front row, still holding hands and rocking back and forth, cried out, "Tell us, tell us[!]" "Dream on!" "I see it!" "Keep dreaming! Keep dreaming!" The audience did not want his dream to stop, but for him to keep dreaming and declare that the demands of the Movement would be met, that the marchers and protesters were not demonstrating in vain, that they will have a glorious future. "This [was] the faith" and the intention. Further proof of King's intentions in dreaming is his disappointment that it had come to nothing by 1967. Near the end of his life, during his Christmas Eve sermon of 1967, King solemnly revealed that he was not successful in what he set out to do by dreaming. He said:

> In 1963, on a sweltering August afternoon, we stood in Washington, D.C., and talked to the nation about many things. Toward the end of that afternoon, I tried to talk to the nation about a dream that I had had, and I must confess to you today that not long after talking about that dream I started seeing it turn into a nightmare. I remember the first time I saw that dream turn into a nightmare, just a

> few weeks after I had talked about it. It was when four beautiful, unoffending, innocent Negro girls were murdered in a church in Birmingham, Alabama. I watched that dream turn into a nightmare as I moved through the ghettos of the nation and saw my black brothers and sisters perishing on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity, and saw the nation doing nothing to grapple with the Negroes' problem of poverty. I saw that dream turn into a nightmare as I watched my black brothers and sisters in the midst of anger and understandable outrage, in the midst of their hurt, in the midst of their disappointment, turn to misguided riots to try to solve that problem. I saw that dream turn into a nightmare as I watched the war in Vietnam escalating, and as I saw so-called military advisors, 16,000 strong, turn into fighting soldiers until today over 500,000 American boys are fighting on Asian soil. (King, "Peace On Earth")

What he "tried" to do by dreaming—controlling the future—seemed to not have worked. He attempted to ensure the success of the Movement through continued peaceful protests and making the marchers in D.C. pledge they would go on as such, but King's reaction demonstrate the words of Hurston: it is a blessing that few people dream dreams. By 1967, King's dream had become a nightmare. "I have a dream" turned into "I saw that dream become a nightmare" after the March on Washington. On September 15, 1963, a bomb went off in the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama killing four little girls in the basement of the church. Even though the Movement's mission towards racial equality achieved some gains like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, economic gains for the poor remained stagnant. And, in 1967, Detroit saw one of the most destructive riots in American history, brought on by the economic stagnation of

the poor. Refusing to remain defeated, in his 1967 Christmas Eve Sermon, King tried one more time to dream. “In spite of” all he had seen, he closed his sermon with “I still have a dream, because you know, you can’t give up in life.” He was determined to dream to combat all the violence he had seen and the consistent problems the nation ignored. As the end was drawing near for King, much to his own recognition as shown in his Mountaintop speech, King made one last attempt to defend the Movement from harm, from disappointment, from their present struggles (Hansen 60; King, “Peace On Earth”).

Work Cited

Primary Sources

Federal Writers' Project, and Library of Congress. Manuscript Division. *Born in Slavery Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*, 2001.

Joyner, Charles W., et al. *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*. University of Georgia Press, 1986.

King James Version. Bible Gateway, www.biblegateway.com. Accessed 16 Mar. 2020.

King, Martin Luther. "American Dream - Lincoln University - June 6, 1961." *Speeches by Martin Luther King: The Ultimate Collection,* BN Publishing, 2011.

King, Martin Luther. "Prophetic Last Speech - 1968." *Speeches by Martin Luther King: The Ultimate Collection,* BN Publishing, 2011.

King, Martin Luther. "Peace On Earth - December 24, 1967." *Speeches by Martin Luther King: The Ultimate Collection,* BN Publishing, 2011.

Secondary Sources

Akesson, Sam K. "The Akan Concept of the Soul." *African Affairs*, vol. 64, no. 257, 1965, pp. 280–291. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/720117. Accessed 4 Apr. 2020.

Bibb, Henry. "Conjuration and Witchcraft." *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, edited by Milton C. Sernett, Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 76-80.

Bourguignon, Erika E. “Dreams and Dream Interpretation in Haiti.” *American Anthropologist*, vol. 56, no. 2, 1954, pp. 262–268. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/664363. Accessed 16 Mar. 2020.

Bradford, Sarah Hopkins. *Harriet, the Moses of Her People*, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library, 2012. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=1068840.

Chireau, Yvonne. *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition*, University of California Press, 2003. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=223936.

Cullen, Jim. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*, Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2004. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=280924.

Du Bois, W.E.B.. “Of the Faith of the Fathers.” *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, edited by Cornel West, Eddie S. Glaude Jr., Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, 3-13.

Du Bois, W. E. B., and Jonathan Scott Holloway. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Yale University Press, 2015.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. Random House, Inc., 2002 ed., Random House, 2002.

Equiano, Olaudah. “Traditional Ibo Religion and Culture.” *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, edited by Milton C. Sernett, Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 13-19.

Genovese, Eugene. “Black Conversion and White Sensibility.” *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, edited by Cornel West, Eddie S. Glaude Jr., Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, 291-301.

Genovese, Eugene. “Religious Foundations of the Black Nation.” *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, edited by Cornel West, Eddie S. Glaude Jr., Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, 301-308.

Hansen, Drew D. *The Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Speech That Inspired a Nation*. 1st ed., Ecco, 2003.

Hurston, Zora Neale., and Cheryl A. Wall. *Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings*. Library of America, 1995.

Jones, Tayari. *An American Marriage: a Novel*. First ed., Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2018.

Kelley, Robin D. G. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Beacon Press, 2002.

Levine, Lawrence W. *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*. Oxford University Press, 1978.

Long, Carolyn Morrow. *Spiritual Merchants: Religion, Magic, and Commerce*. 1st ed., University of Tennessee Press, 2001.

Miller, W. Jason. *Origins of the Dream: Hughes's Poetry and King's Rhetoric*, University Press of Florida, 2015. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=1912986.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Plume, 1987.

Morrison, Toni., and Thomas H. Wirth. *Paradise*. 1st ed., A.A. Knopf, 1998.

Ossai-Ugbah, Ngozi Blessing and Chikaogu Diokpala Ossai-Ugbah. "Dreams as indigenous library of knowledge among ethnic groups in the south-south zone of Nigeria." *International Journal of Library and Information Science*, vol. 3(7), 2011, pp. 138-154, http://www.academicjournals.org/app/webroot/article/article1379673753_Ossai-Ugbah%20and%20Ossai-Ugbah.pdf. Accessed 27 Mar. 2020.

Puckett, Newbell Niles. *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*. The University of North Carolina Press, H. Milford, 1926.

Raboteau, Albert J.. "Death of the Gods." *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, edited by Cornel West, Eddie S. Glaude Jr., Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, 239-284.

Raboteau, Albert J.. *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South*, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2004. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=431205.

Sambol-Tosco, Kimberly. "The Slave Experience: Religion: Historical Overview." *Slavery and the Making of America. PBS*, www.thirteen.org/wnet/slavery/experience/religion/history.html.

Shafton, Anthony. *Dream-Singers: the African American Way with Dreams*. J. Wiley & Sons, 2002.

Spier, Leslie. *American Anthropologist*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1929, pp. 521–525. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/661282. Accessed 16 Mar. 2020.

Thurman, Howard. “The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death.” *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, edited by Cornel West, Eddie S. Glaude Jr., Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, 29-49.

Trimmer, Joseph F. “The Grandfather's Riddle in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man.” *Black American Literature Forum*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1978, pp. 46–50. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3041594. Accessed 4 Mar. 2020.

Tewkesbury, Paul. “Sex, Violence, and Suffering: Rethinking Martin Luther King, Jr., in Julius Lester's ‘And All Our Wounds Forgiven.’” *MELUS*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2015, pp. 129–149., www.jstor.org/stable/24570000. Accessed 28 Mar. 2020.

West, Cornel. “American Africans in Conflict: Alienation in an Insecure Culture.” *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, edited by Cornel West, Eddie S. Glaude Jr., Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, 77-98.

Womack, Craig S. “Tribal Paradise Lost but Where Did It Go?: Native Absence in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2009, pp. 20–52. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/studamerindilite.21.4.20. Accessed 25 Mar. 2020.

Appendix

Below is a transcript of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a Dream" speech. Reprinted from Drew Hansen's The Dream (pp.52-62):

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this

sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked insufficient funds.

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. 1963 is not an end, but a beginning. And those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice: in the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the

cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny, and they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating for whites only. We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back

to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of “interposition” and “nullification”, one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day, this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning: "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!"

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that: Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and

Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: “Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!

[i] Federal Writers' Project, and Library of Congress. Manuscript Division. *Born in Slavery Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*, 2001. Hereafter abbreviated as FWP followed by state abbreviation, volume number(s), and page number(s).