

Isaiah Antoine

Professor Blair

ENG 131 10

October 1, 2020

## Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's Rhetorical Devices

### Analogy

"We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light".

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is referring to racism as a boil that needs to be exposed in order for the condition to become better and he uses this analogy to illustrate racial injustice through a boil.

"I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith... and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty."

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is referring to the end goal of racial equality by illustrating it through how the beauty of the stars in the sky look.

### Simile

"The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter."

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is referring how fast Asia and Africa are moving towards their independence and compares them to a jet to denote the pace at which they are moving towards the goal of independence.

"Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream."

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is referring to how he would like to see racial justice/racial equality flow like water. Also, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is quoting the prophet Amos.

## Metaphor

“But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven," called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr compares the two ideas of God and intoxication. The God of the bible is holy, righteous, merciful, and just while to be intoxicated is typically something that is seen as a negative, but Dr. Martin Luther King Jr pairs intoxication with the love of God.

“Unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, they have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr compares segregation to a disease. When diseases are left unchecked, they spread and cause destruction, which is what segregation does too if left unchecked and combated.

## Personification

“Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is giving a rock the quality of human dignity. He refers to a rock because a solid rock is something that is unshakable/unmovable and he gives the solid rock this human like quality because Dr. Martin Luther Jr believes that human dignity should be something that is unshakable/unmovable. Meaning that everyone should have human dignity.

“Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr gives time the human quality of making an ally. He says this to show that if time is not being used it will become a friend to social stagnation and that there where will be no progress towards racial equality.

## Anaphora

“when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro,”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr continually uses the word “when” to show how he feels that the time is now to stand up for racial equality and that there is no such thing as a well-timed peaceful protest, which is what the clergymen had asserted.

." I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I cannot join you in your praise of the Birmingham police department.

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr repeats the words “I doubt” and then describes the condition of how he along with his peaceful protesters were mistreated. He does this to illustrate the pain he feels and directs it toward the clergymen.

## Chiasmus

“Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is referring to the clergymen to help fight against racial inequality because they had commended the police for protecting Birmingham, but Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is saying that whenever one is being affected with racial prejudice everyone will be affected indirectly.

“Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is referring to himself by being called an outsider by the clergymen to Birmingham and takes that idea and says as long as you live “inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.”

### Polysyndeton

“when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr uses the word “and” to give emphasis to appeal to the clergymen’s empathy by describing the condition of child’s thinking of racial inequality from a father’s perspective.

“I doubt that you would so quickly commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr uses the word “if” to again appeal to the clergymen’s empathy and to depicts how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr along with his peaceful protester were mistreated in jail.

### Asyndeton

“Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence across the pages of history, we were here. For more than two centuries our forebears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross injustice and shameful humiliation”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is referring to the amount of time African Americans have spent in America in bondage and drops the conjunctions to list the conditions that African Americans have been subject to.

." I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly

commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail;”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr stops using conjunctions to list how he and his fellow peaceful protester were mistreated in jail to appeal to the clergymen’s empathy.

### Epistrophe

“Yes, these questions are still in my mind. In deep disappointment I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the church. How could I do otherwise? I am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson and the great grandson of preachers. Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr repeats the words “yes” and “I” to show that he truly cares for the church and has concern for the church. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is not writing to the letter to talk down on the clergymen, but to show the clergymen that he loves the church and is willing to tell them the truth in a loving way even though it may hurt the church a little.

“Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence across the pages of history, we were here.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr repeats the words “before” and “we were here” to illustrate to the clergymen that African Americans have been in America for a long time and have been subject to racial inequality since the beginning of America. When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr uses these words, it adds emphasis that we have struggled long enough and that now is the time to protest.

### Mimesis

"thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr imitates the writing style of the Bible to refer to his calling in helping fix the problem of racial inequality to the clergymen who had accused him of protesting unwisely and untimely.

. I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth."

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr imitates the writing style of this “white brother” to show how the white moderate/ the clergymen think of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s peaceful protest as “unwise and untimely”. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr also does this to make a counter claim to the clergymen and writes his letter to show that African Americans have been oppressed much longer than they think.

### Allusion

“Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is referring to how the clergymen viewed him as an extremist, and he counter this idea by referring to Bible prophets/apostles to show that they were extremist for the gospel. He uses Bible prophets/apostles because the clergymen would know what he is talking about.

“Some -such as Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden, James McBride Dabbs, Ann Braden and Sarah Patton Boyle--have written about our struggle in eloquent and prophetic terms. Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South.”

In the quote above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr is referring to how other white Americans have stood up to help fight racial inequality and is making a point that if they can do it the clergymen can too.