Written by Timothy Houston
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The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom or "The Great March on Washington" was one of the largest political rallies for human rights in United States history and called for civil and economic rights for African Americans. The march was planned and initiated by A. Philip Randolph, the president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, president of the Negro American Labor Council, and vice president of the AFL-CIO. Randolph along with a group of civil rights, labor, and religious organizations organized the march under the theme "jobs and freedom".

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom was partly intended to demonstrate mass support for the civil rights legislation proposed by President Kennedy. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders therefore agreed to keep their speeches calm, and to avoid provoking the civil disobedience which had become the hallmark of the civil rights movement. King originally designed his speech as homage to Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, timed to correspond with the 100-year centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation.

The march took place in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, August 28, 1963. Martin Luther King, Jr., standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial, delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech advocating racial harmony during the march. Estimates of the number of participants varied from 200,000 to 300,000. The 1963 march was an important part of the rapidly expanding Civil Rights Movement.

The people at the march were from all over the country. They were committed to the struggle. Like a line from the poem "Invictus," their heads were bloodied, but still unbowed. They came seeking hope and inspiration, and they were not disappointed. They went back to Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, and other parts for the country with a new found energy and motivation. Like Martin Luther King, Jr., they too dreamed of a day when all men would be able to sing the song of freedom.
It has been 50 years since the march on Washington, and we are still striving for equality. With the advent of social media and instant news, we are bombarded with events that constantly remind us that the struggle is not over. Although these images can be overwhelming, we must not give up the fight. Our children and grandchildren are looking to us to champion their cause. They trust that we will leave them a better world full of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The time is now, and the mission is clear, we must not surrender the struggle for freedom and equality.

As we close out Black History month, I would like to remind you that as the national theme suggested, we are at another crossroad. It is imperative that we seize the momentum that was created by those who have gone before us. We can and will achieve freedom and equality if we do not give up, give out, or give in. May we never stop striving for what is right. Freedom is a God-given right, but quality is created by the will, determination, struggle, and sacrifice of the men and women who refuse to be denied.

Timothy Houston is an author, minister, and motivational speaker who is committed to guiding positive life changes in families and communities. To get copies of his books, or for questions, comments or more information, go to www.tlhouston.com.