

The March, Part 1 of 3

Carl T. Rowan: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm Carl T. Rowan. As the new director of the United States Information Agency, I have the privilege to present to you a dramatic document of man's continuing search for dignity. It is a film about the great civil rights march in Washington, a moving exercise of one of the most cherished rights in a free society, the right of peaceful protest. I believe that this demonstration of both whites and Negroes, supported by the federal government and by both President Johnson and the late President Kennedy, is a profound example of the procedures unfettered men use to broaden the horizons of freedom and deepen the meaning of personal liberty.

Announcer: Freedom Now movement, hear me! We are requesting all citizens to move into Washington, to go by plane, by car, bus, any way that you can get there. Walk if necessary. We are pushing for jobs, housing, desegregated schools. This is an urgent request. Please join! Go to Washington!

A. Philip Randolph: Negroes want the same things that white citizens possess. All of their rights. They want no reservations. They want complete equality – social, economic, and political. And no force under the sun can stem and block and stop this civil rights revolution, which is now underway.

Crowd singing: Hold on, hold on! Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on!

Narrator: On August 28, 1963, 200,000 Americans came to Washington to demand complete freedom for everyone. This is the story of that day.

Crowd singing:

Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, hold on!
Hold on, hold on!
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, hold on!

Male Singer: Well if the FBI would investigate,

Crowd: Yeah!

Male Singer: Then, probably then, we could get our strength.

Crowd singing:

Yeah! Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, hold on!
Hold on, hold on!
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, hold on!

Male Singer: Well, we are all here black and white,

Crowd: Yeah!

Male Singer: Trying to fight for our equal rights.

Crowd singing:

Hey! Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, hold on!
Hold on, hold on!
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, hold on!

Narrator: They came from Los Angeles and San Francisco, or about the distance from Moscow to Bombay. They came from Cleveland, from Chicago, or about the distance from Buenos Aires to Rio De Janeiro. They came from Jackson, Mississippi, from Birmingham, Alabama, or about the distance from Johannesburg to Dar es Salaam. By the end of August 1963, in some places of the United States, a Negro could not go to school where he chose, eat where he wished, build his home where it pleased him, or find jobs for which he was qualified. He had been insulted, beaten, jailed, drenched with water, chased by dogs. But he was coming to Washington, he said, to swallow up hatred in love, to overcome violence by peaceful protest. Many people predicted violence. Negro groups trained themselves to overwhelm it. Armed with portable two-way radios, volunteers scattered throughout the March would keep watch. Should violence come then that day, they would call for help. Each man would have a code name: Freedom, Equality, Justice, Jobs.

Male Voice on Radio: This is Freedom 2 to Equality 1. This is Freedom 2 to Equality 1.

Narrator: The Constitution of the United States guarantees every American the right to protest peaceably. Two hundred thousand Americans, then, were going to use this right. Three hundred and fifty years ago the white man came to America, and 350 years ago the Negro came to America. The one came as master; the other as slave. One hundred years ago, Abraham Lincoln declared, as president of the United States, that all slaves would henceforward be set free. Now, both black and white Americans were preparing to march to say that a century later, the black man still was not completely free.

If I am not free, you are not free. If one man on Earth is partly enslaved, the world is not completely free. It was every man's duty then to help every other man. In New York, volunteers worked for two days and two nights to make lunches for the March. They made 80,000 cheese sandwiches.

Male Singer: We shall overcome.

Crowd singing:

We shall overcome, we shall overcome some day.
Oh deep in my heart I do believe, we shall overcome some day.

Narrator: The pin said, "I march for jobs and freedom." Everyone who marched wore one. The 200,000 people who were to march that day were held together by the strength of that pin.

Minister: This morning, Father, we ask that Thou would hear the prayers of Thy children everywhere. Those who are burdened down because of conditions here in America, and those who are confused about how they should treat their fellow man. Oh God, we ask for those who have hatred in their hearts to touch their hearts right now, Father, and somehow fill their hearts with love. And oh God, make of this land in which we live be a land of clean and a land of righteousness, oh God, and may we recognize this land, a land of freedom for every race, oh God.

Crowd singing: Oh deep in my heart I do believe, we shall overcome some day.

[Lone Male Voice humming]

Crowd: Freedom! Freedom!

Speaker: Five, four, three, two, one. Testing, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one. This is an audio test. One, two, three, four, five. Five, four, three, two, one. One, two, three, four, five.

Narrator: In the night few people had arrived. Negro leaders feared that their work had failed. Those who did come waited singing.

Crowd singing:

Oh deep in my heart you know that I do believe.
Oh, we shall overcome some day.

Reverend: We are encouraged. We're not gonna fight our white brethren with malice, nor are we gonna fight them with any falsified stories, nor are we gonna fight them with hatred. But we're gonna fight them with love. When they hate us, we're gonna absorb their hatred in love. When they speak against us, we're gonna speak things of love toward them. We are not gonna let their hatred turn us around, but we gonna love them on every side.

Crowd singing: Oh I do believe, oh we shall overcome some day!

Reverend: Shake hands with the person beside you.

Male Crowd Member: Reverend, what about that trademark?

Reverend: Do you want to be free?

Crowd: Yeah!

Reverend: Do you want to be free?

Crowd: Yeah!

Reverend: Do you want to be free?

Crowd: Yeah!

Reverend: Let me hear you say—

Crowd: Freedom!

Reverend: Let me hear you say—

Crowd: Freedom!

Reverend: Let me hear you say—

Crowd: Freedom!

[Background singing]