

# The March (The March on Washington, August 28, 1963)

## Transcript of the Documentary

At the beginning of the 1960s, the situation in the Afro-American community was growing ever more tense owing to high unemployment and racist discrimination. In response, a coalition of civil rights groups organized the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, one of the key events in the history of the black civil rights movement in the United States, on August 28, 1963. The main organizers included A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Martin Luther King Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Approximately 250,000 participants, one quarter of them white, marched peacefully from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial and thus helped ensure that the U.S. Administration passed the Civil Rights Act in 1964. On behalf of the USIA, James Blue produced the documentary *The March*: He directed 12 cameramen, wrote the poetic voiceover, narrated and edited the film. It includes the full text of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, was translated into 52 languages and 300 copies were distributed world-wide.

>> The transcript was first published in: Gerald O'Grady (ed.), *James Blue. Scripts and Interviews. Celebrating Swamp: 25 Years - Honoring Founder James Blue, Conference at the Rice University Media Center, November 1-3, 2002, SWAMP Southwest Alternate Media Project, Houston, 2002, pp. 79-84, © James Blue Memorial Collection.*

[...]

**Loudspeaker Truck:** Freedom Now movement, hear me. We're 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 under way.

**Singing:** Hold on, hold on, keep your eyes on that prize, hold on [...]  
If the F.B.I. would investigate,  
probably, then, we would integrate.  
Keep your eyes on the prize,  
Hold on, hold on! [...]  
We are all here black and white,  
Bound to fight for equal rights [...]  
Hold on, hold on!

**Narration:** On August 28, 1963, two hundred thousand Americans came to Washington to demand complete freedom for everyone. This is the story of that day.

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.

**Marshall testing walkie-talkie:** This is Equality One calling Freedom Two, over [...]

**Narration:** Many people predicted violence. Negro groups trained themselves to overwhelm it. Armed with portable two-way radios, volunteers scattered throughout the area 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.

**Walkie-talkie:** This is Freedom Two to Equality One [...]

**Narration:** 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 three hundred and fifty 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,



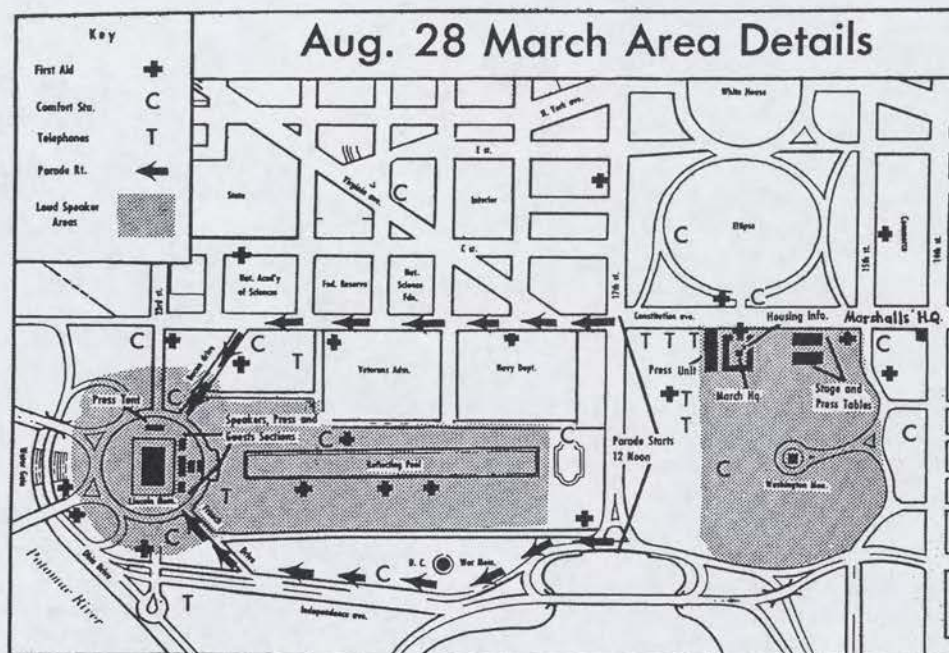


Diagram of the route at the March on Washington, August 28, 1963, published the same day in *The Washington Post*.

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.

**Bullhorn:** We need four people at table eight [...]

**Narration:** In New York, volunteers worked for two days and two nights to make lunches for the march; they made eighty thousand cheese sandwiches.

**Singing:** We shall overcome some day [...]

**Voice of a young woman:** Get your button here. O.k. Get your button here for the March on Washington. Do you have it?

**Narration:** The pins said: "I MARCH FOR JOBS AND FREEDOM." Everyone who marched wore one. The two hundred thousand people who were to march that day were held together by the strength of that pin.

**Prayer in church:** This morning, Father, we ask if 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 men. Oh, God, we ask for those who have hatred in their hearts to touch their hearts right now, oh Father, and somehow, fill their hearts with love and, oh God, make of this land in which we live a land of cleanliness and a land of righteousness, oh God, and may we recognize this land, a land of Freedom for every race. Oh, Father.

**Singing:** We shall overcome [...]

**Yell outside of bus:** Let me hear you say it! FREEDOM!

[... preparations, night falls ...]

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

**Singing:** We shall overcome [...]

**Preacher:** We are encouraged. We're not going to fight our white brethren with malice, nor are we going to fight them with any false-

fied stories, nor are we gonna fight them with hatred, but we're gonna fight them with love. When they hate us, we gonna absorb their hatred in love; when they speak against us, we gonna speak things of love toward them; we're not gonna let their hatred turn us around, but we gonna love them on every side.

**Singing:** [...] oh, I do believe, that we shall overcome one day.

**Leader:** Shake hands with the person beside you.

**Preacher:** Do you want to be free?

**Group:** YEAH!

**Preacher:** Do you want to be free?

**Group:** YEAH!

**Preacher:** Let me hear you say it!

**Group:** FREEDOM! [...]

**Singing [at train station]:** We shall not be moved [...]

**Young woman [on bus]:** We're almost there.

**Leader:** Just hold those two and I'll pass them down from here. All right, just pass them back. All right, I'll start on this side [...] If you have any questions or anything that's bothering you. Be sure you contact your captain for anything, and they will take it from there. Do not try to do anything on your own, because the minute you do, you will be upsetting the purpose of this march. The whole thing is an orderly conducted march.

**Woman:** That's it, that's Washington.

**Man:** Hi! Hi, everybody! We're here!

[Yells]

**Group:** FREEDOM! FREEDOM! FREEDOM!

**Song by Joan Baez:** We are not afraid [...]

Oh, deep in my heart I do believe

That we shall overcome, some day [...]

**Song by Odetta:** I'm on my way [...]

I'm on my way and I won't turn back,

I'm on my way, Great God, I'm on my way [...]



Npt 3: Rickman  
Weston  
Koza

## Freedom March - August 28, 1963

TIME	SIL/	CREW	EQUIPMENT	STORY	PROCEED TO:
4:30 AM	35 DS	<u>Gutman</u> Int. Roth Shaw Kemper (USIA - Jim Blue)	35 N.Y. Arri & Nagra	Bus from Brooklyn-Bus arrives at Ellipse - crowds-closeups-Gen'l views at stage	Meet Jim Blue at tent Cons. & 15th Wash. Mon. grounds
6:00 AM	35 DS	<u>Weston</u> Int. Pippitt Melekoglu Hower (USIA - Jim Blue)	DC wall, eyemo & DC recorder	Arrives Union Station crowds- Gen'l color Prob. wild SOF	Crew & Blue to Capitol Hill
6:00 AM	35	<u>Rickman</u> SOF Metaxas Ext. Gerlach (USIA - Tony Calsavage)	35 Arri & zoom recorder	Sunrise from Wash. Mon. -city shots - early AM risers on grounds-Gen'l color - White House	Stationary
8:00 AM	35	Yoder SIL Sands Ext. (USIA - Jim Krell)	eyemo	Copter shots A.M.- Butler Aviation, National Airport	then to Ind. Ave. by 11:00
8:00 AM	35	<u>Alpert</u> SIL Puello (USIA - Bob Silberling)	Arri & eyemo	Gen'l color early AM along Const. Ave & vicinity Wash. Mon. grounds & reflecting pool	To photo truck by 10:30
9:30 AM	35 DS	<u>Weston</u> Int. Pippitt Melekoglu Hower (USIA - Jim Blue)	DC wall, eyemo, Cap. recorder	10 delegates visit Congress, lip sync delegates arrivals	Crew to W.H. balance of day
10:00 AM	35 DS	<u>Rickman</u> Ext. Metaxas Storey (USIA - Tony Calsavage)	Arri & recorder	On Stand - stars entertain, Gen'l color Stand Position-upper north corner	Rickman to stand west side DC Mon. by 11:15
10:00 AM	35	<u>Koza</u> SIL Marcus Ext. <u>Don Ross</u> (USIA - <del>Lee Silver</del> )	35 Arri & zoom	Roof Lincoln Mem. arrivals both sides- wide angles- crowd reaction-entire Pledge -departures	Stationary
10:00 AM	35	<u>Ward</u> SOF Mulera Ext. Van Sand (USIA - Joe O'Donnell)	Wall eyemo zoom-DC ampex	Center stand- Gen'l program-wide angle of arrivals & departures Lincoln Memorial	Stationary
10:00 AM	35	<u>Mamas</u> SOF Portnow Ext. Storey (USIA - Joe O'Donnell)	N.Y. wall eyemo- DC ampex	Side stand - Gen'l program-arrivals & departures	Stationary
10:30 AM	35	<u>Alpert</u> SIL Puello (USIA - Bob Silberling)	DC arri & eyemo	Photo truck coverage with crowd assembled	Proceed to Linc. Mem.







came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free.

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 children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating "for whites only."

No. No, we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream.

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 then 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 down 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 and 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's 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, when we allow freedom to 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!"

**Singing:** We shall overcome [...]

**A. Philip Randolph [to the press cameras and microphones]:**

I think history was written today, which will have its effect on coming generations with respect to our democracy, with respect to our ideals, with respect to the great struggle of man toward freedom and human dignity.

**Narration:** There were many who praised this day and said that there had been a new awakening in the conscience of the nation. Others called it a national disgrace. In the wake of this day, more violence was to come, more hatred; but in the long history of man's cruelty to man, this was a day of hope.

[Singing in bus at night.]

