

THE MARCH

Screenplay of the 1964 film by James Blue.

Edited by Liam Maher and incorporating research by David A. Frank and Liam Maher.

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[Scene opens on CARL T. ROWAN sitting behind desk.]

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.

[Scene cuts to footage of citizens & truck with sign reading "Freedom Now!" ANNOUNCER audio is superimposed.]

Announcer: *[voiceover]* 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!

[Cut to Washington, D.C. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH giving address at the National Press Club, August 26th, 1963. Caption reads, "A. Philip Randolph."]

A. Philip Randolph: Negroes want the same things that white citizens possess: *all* 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.

[Scene cuts to Bethesda, Maryland. BETHESDA MARCHERS are singing "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize" led by MALE SOLOIST 1 (off-screen).]

Bethesda Marchers: *[singing "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize"]*

Hold on, hold on,

Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, hold on.

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

Bethesda Marchers: *[singing "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize"]*

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 Soloist 1:

Well if the FBI would investigate
Then probably then we could get our strength.

Bethesda Marchers:

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 Soloist 1:

Well we are all here black and white
Trying to fight for our equal rights.

Bethesda Marchers:

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

[Cut to footage of busses driving in night and MARCHERS arriving in Washington, D.C. NARRATOR/JAMES BLUE audio is superimposed.]

Narrator/James Blue: 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.

[Cut to man holding radio receiving message from MAN ON RADIO. Underneath NARRATOR/JAMES BLUE, he sends a call through.]

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"...

Man on Radio: This is Freedom 2 to Equality 1. This is Freedom 2 to Equality 1...

[Audio/scene continues underneath NARRATOR/JAMES BLUE.]

Narrator/James Blue: 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.

[Cut to New York City, where volunteers are making sandwiches. MAN 1 is giving orders.]

Man 1: We need four people to table eight! Table eight...

Narrator/James Blue: In New York, volunteers worked for two days and two nights to make lunches for the March. They made 80,000 cheese sandwiches.

[Montage of volunteers. Superimposed is audio of "We Shall Overcome" sung by the NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES CHOIR & DR. MERRITT A. HEDGEMAN.]

Male Soloist 2: *[singing "We Shall Overcome"]*
We shall overcome,

National Council of Churches Choir:

We shall overcome,
We shall overcome someday,
Oh deep in my heart, I do believe
We shall overcome someday.

[Cut to scene where women are pinning buttons on each other's lapels.]

Woman 1: Okay, thank you. Get your buttons here for the March on Washington! Get your buttons here for the March on Washington...

Narrator/James Blue: 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.

[Cut to church in Los Angeles, CA where REVEREND EDWARD S. WILLIAMS is speaking to congregation in Holman M.E. Church.]

Reverend Edward S. Williams: 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...

[Scene cuts to footage of MARCHERS boarding busses with "We Shall Overcome" being sung in the background, gradually getting louder. WILLIAMS continues to speak.]

Reverend Edward S. Williams: ...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, uh, 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 Father...

Marchers: *[singing “We Shall Overcome”]*
Deep in my heart, I [we] do believe,
We shall overcome someday.

[Cut to footage of MARCHERS on buses. DR. MERRITT A. HEDGEMAN, Director of Music at Riverside Church in New York hums “Keep Your Eyes on the Prize” underneath footage. A sudden shot captures the CROWD along the road.]

Crowd: Freedom! Freedom!

[Cut back to bus. End scene.]

[Scene opens at site of the march, where MAN 2 is performing an audio check on a microphone.]

Man 2: 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...

[Audio of MARCHERS singing “We Shall Overcome” superimposed over scene.]

Man 2: One, two, three, four, five...

[Cut to Danville, VA. The group of DANVILLE MARCHERS has gathered.]

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

Danville Marchers: *[singing “We Shall Overcome”]*
Oh deep in my heart, I do believe
Oh, we shall overcome someday.

[audio of REVEREND LAWRENCE CAMPBELL of Bibleway Church in Danville, Virginia superimposed over scene.]

Reverend Lawrence Campbell: *[off-screen]* 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.

Danville Marchers: *[singing]*
Oh I do believe,
Oh, we shall overcome someday.

Reverend Lawrence Campbell: Shake hands with the person beside you.

[DANVILLE MARCHERS begin interacting. MAN 3 speaks up.]

Man 3: Reverend, what about that trademark?

Reverend Lawrence Campbell: *[shouting]* Do you want to be free?

Danville Marchers: Yeah!

Reverend Lawrence Campbell: Do you want to be free?

Danville Marchers: Yeah!

Reverend Lawrence Campbell: Do you want to be free?

Danville Marchers: Yeah!

Reverend Lawrence Campbell: Let me hear you say...

Danville Marchers: Freedom!

Reverend Lawrence Campbell: Let me hear you say...

Danville Marchers: Freedom!

Reverend Lawrence Campbell: Let me hear you say...

Danville Marchers: Freedom!

[Scene cuts to shots of Capitol Building and National Mall, caption reads "Washington, D.C., August 28, 1963." Cut to Union Station in Washington, D.C. where train is pulling in and WOMEN are singing "We Shall Not Be Moved."]

Women: *[singing "We Shall Not Be Moved"]*

We're on our way to freedom; we shall not be moved.

We're on our way to freedom; we shall not be moved...

[Sounds of crowd muffle singing.]

...planted by the water,

We shall not be moved.

[Cut to bus interior.]

Woman 2: We're almost there!

Man 4: Alright, just pass them back. Alright I'll start on this side. Alright, pass them down...Do you have any questions?

Woman 3: Wake up, girl!

Man 4: Or anything that's bothering you. Be sure you contact your captains 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.

[MARCHERS talk amongst themselves, greeting each other and calling out to people on the street.]

Woman 4: Ope, there's Mary! There's Mary!

Marchers: Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!

[Cut to JOAN BAEZ on outdoor stage at the corner of 15th Street & Constitution Avenue, singing "We Shall Overcome" with gathered crowd. Caption reads "Joan Baez:"]

Joan Baez: *[singing "We Shall Overcome"]*

We are not afraid, We are not afraid
We are not afraid today,
Oh deep in my heart I do believe
We shall overcome someday.

[Speaking]

We shall overcome.

[Singing]

We shall overcome, we shall overcome
We shall overcome someday
Oh, deep in my heart I do believe
We shall overcome someday

[Applause. Cut to footage of MARCHERS gathering on the National Mall with audio of ODETTA singing "Spiritual Trilogy" in background. Gradually returns to outdoor stage and crowd.]

Odetta: *[singing "Spiritual Trilogy"]*

I'm on my way, and I won't turn back
I'm on my way (I'm on my way), and I won't turn back (and I won't turn back)
I'm on my way (I'm on my way), and I won't turn back (and I won't turn back)
I'm on my way, thank God, I'm on my way.

And I'm on my way (and I'm on my way), and I won't turn back (and I won't turn back)
And I'm on my way (and I'm on my way), and I won't turn back (and I can't turn back)
I'm on my way (I'm on my way), and I won't turn back (and I won't turn back)
I'm on my way, thank God, I'm on my way!

[Applause and cheering. OSSIE DAVIS speaks.]

Ossie Davis: *[off-screen]* We call this section of our program to a halt and ask you to assemble in your respective groups and begin the March for Freedom now. Let us begin quietly and orderly to move out, remembering that by your great numbers you have forced a slow, dignified, and stately march. We'll see you at the Lincoln Memorial.

[MARCHERS begin to assemble in front of the Lincoln Memorial as shown through various shots. MARCHERS begin singing "We Shall Not Be Moved"]

Man 6: Very, very, very fine. We're gonna wake up Lincoln! Tell him to get up and start tappin' his feet!

Marchers:

...we shall not be moved.

Just like a tree that's standing by the waters, we shall not be moved.

We shall not, we shall not be moved.

We shall not, we shall not be moved.

[Cut to MARCHERS singing "We Are Soldiers in the Army."]

Marchers:

...We got to fight although we have to cry

We got to hold up the freedom banner

We got to hold it up until we die.

We are soldiers in the army

We got to fight although we have to cry

We got to hold up the freedom banner

We got to hold it up until we die.

Girls in Crowd: Freedom Now! Freedom Now! Freedom Now! Freedom Now! Freedom Now!
Freedom Now! Freedom Now! Freedom Now!

Man 7: And what do we want now?

Girls in Crowd: Freedom Now! Freedom Now! Freedom Now! Freedom Now! Freedom Now!

[Audio of GIRLS IN CROWD fades as MARCHERS come by singing "Freedom."]

Marchers: *[singing "Freedom"]*

Freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom.

Freedom, freedom—

Man 7: *[speaking]* And what do we want now?

Marchers: *[singing]* --freedom, freedom, freedom.

Freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom.

Freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom...

[Cut to PUERTO RICAN MARCHERS singing "La Borinqueña."]

Puerto Rican Marchers: Esta es la linda tierra que busco yo...

Marchers: *[singing]* ...freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom.

Freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom.
Freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom.
Freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom...

[*MARCHERS sing "Hang on Freedom/Walk the Walk."*]
...I'm gonna walk the walk, I'm gonna talk the talk.
I'm gonna walk the walk, I'm gonna talk...

[*MARCHERS sing "I'm a Demonstratin' GI from Fort Bragg."*]
...I'm a demonstratin' GI from Fort Bragg,
And the way they treat my people, Lord, it makes me mad...

[*MARCHERS sing "Hang on Freedom/Walk the Walk."*]
Hang on freedom,
Hallelu (Hallelu), Hallelu (Hallelu)
Hallelujah.
I'm gonna walk the walk, I'm gonna talk the talk.
I'm gonna walk the walk, I'm gonna talk the talk...

[*Cut to MARCHERS sitting on National Mall. Organ plays "Oh Freedom" in the background. Voices. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH speaks from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.*]

A. Philip Randolph: Ladies and gentlemen. Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please! Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please!

Ossie Davis: I would first like to congratulate all of you on the orderly, dignified manner in which you executed the March from the Washington Memorial. You have already told the world what we are here for, and shown them by your courage, determination, and your order that we mean business.

[*Applause.*]

A. Philip Randolph: We will now be favored with a solo—Ms. Marian Anderson.

[*Applause. Cut to podium at the Lincoln Memorial. MARIAN ANDERSON walks into shot, up to microphone. Caption reads, "Marian Anderson."*]

Marian Anderson: We would like to do for you a Negro spiritual which has been the favorite of many audiences through the United States. At the piano is Miss Defax. We would like to do for you "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands."

[*Singing*]

He's got the whole world in his hands,
He's got the big round world in his hands,
He's got the wide world in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got the wind and the rain in his hands

He's got the moon and the stars in his hands
He's got the wind and the rain in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands

He's got the little bits of baby in his hands
He's got the little bits of baby in his hands
He's got the little bits of baby in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got you and me brother in his hands
He's got you and me sister in his hands
He's got you and me brother in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands.

Oh he's got everybody in his hands
He's got everybody in his hands
He's got everybody here right in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands.

[Applause.]

A. Philip Randolph: I have the pleasure to present to you Dr. Martin Luther King, "J-R."

[Applause. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. steps up to podium. Caption on shot reads, "Martin Luther King, Jr."]

Martin Luther King, Jr.: 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.

[Applause.]

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 100 years later, the Negro still is not free.

[Cheers.]

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."

[Applause.]

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

[Applause.]

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, 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, be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

[Applause.]

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.

[Applause.]

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.

[Applause.]

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.

[Applause]

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 snowcapped 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.

[Applause.]

And when this happens, 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.

[Applause. MARCHERS sing "We Shall Overcome" and organ begins to play.]

A. Philip Randolph: On behalf of the National Committee on the March on Washington...

[A. PHILIP RANDOLPH fades out. GERALDINE ANDERSON and the Eva Jessye Choir sing off-screen.]

Geraldine Anderson (with choir): *[singing "We Shall Overcome"]*

Oh, deep in my heart I do believe

We shall overcome someday.

Black and white together,

Black and white together,

We shall overcome someday.

Oh, deep in my heart I do believe

We shall overcome someday.

Marchers:

We'll walk hand in hand

We'll walk hand in hand

We'll walk hand in hand someday

Oh, deep in my heart.

[MARCHERS fade out as camera cuts to scene of abandoned National Mall. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH stands at podium outside the White House surrounded by reporters. Caption reads, "A. Philip Randolph."]

A. Philip Randolph: 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, God, freedom, and human dignity.

[Camera cuts to MARCHERS on bus, some sleeping.]

Narrator/James Blue: 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.

[MARCHERS sing "Freedom" off-screen as camera eventually fades to black.]