

### 3c – Unite and Conquer

*In all of their civil rights struggles, Black Americans received support from White allies. Jewish Americans could often be counted on to stand with African Americans in the cause of justice. Jews were involved in the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League. They also participated in large numbers in the Civil Rights Movement of 1954-65.*

*Martin Luther King Jr. pointed out that Blacks and Jews shared both a common history of oppression and a common fight against the enemies of democracy. "[O]ur glory," King said, "is that we are chosen to prove that courage is a characteristic of oppressed people, however cynically and brutally they are denied full equality and freedom."*

*In the weeks leading up to the 1963 March on Washington - where King would deliver his historic "I Have a Dream" speech to a crowd of 250,000 - the American Jewish Committee declared its support for the cause of Black civil rights and for the demonstration.*

[The] pledge of first-class citizenship and freedom for the American Negro remains tragically unfulfilled. This enormous gap between promise and actuality underscores the justifiable impatience with which Negroes are insistently demanding their full democratic rights now. As members of a group ... which has from time immemorial known oppression and felt the indignities of discrimination, Jews understand the frustrations experienced by our Negro fellow citizens. We share with them the determination to eliminate swiftly the injustices from which they suffer.

The ... March on Washington ... will demonstrate the deep commitment of a vast majority of the American people to the attainment of full equality for all. ... We believe the March to be in the greatest tradition of peaceable assembly for a redress of grievances and therefore vigorously support local affiliates throughout the nation who desire to participate in this historic event.

The Jews have always been part of the eternal quest for human dignity and social justice for all mankind. Our devotion to this cause is rooted deeply in our religious and spiritual traditions and our social experience. A most appropriate means of expressing our ideals today, as Americans and Jews, consists in joining together with all men of good will in this peaceful and lawful assembly for the realization of a more humane and democratic society.

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*This article is reprinted by from the Teaching Tolerance curriculum kit  
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