

# Re:Focus

simple ideas to help you thrive

by Simon Sinek

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## Movement

On August 28, 1963, 250,000 people from across the country descended on the Mall in Washington, D.C., to hear Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. give his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. The organizers didn’t send out 250,000 invitations and there was no Web site to check the date. How did they get a quarter of a million people to show up on the right day at the right time?

Dr. King was not the only person alive during that time who knew what had to change to bring about civil rights in America. He had many ideas about what needed to happen, but so did others. And not all of his ideas were good. He was not a perfect man; he had his complexities.

But Dr. King was absolute in his conviction. He knew change had to happen in America. His clarity of WHY, his sense of purpose, gave him the strength and energy to continue his fight against often seemingly insurmountable odds. There were others like him who shared his vision of America, but many of them gave up after too many defeats. Defeat is painful. And the ability to continue head-on, day after day, takes something more than knowing what legislation needs to be passed. For civil rights to truly take hold in the country, its organizers had to rally everyone. They may have been able to pass legislation, but they needed more than that, they needed to change a country. Only if they could rally a nation to join the cause, not because they had to, but because they wanted to, could any significant change endure. But no one person can effect lasting change alone. It would take others who believed what King believed.

The details of how to achieve civil rights or what needed to be done were debatable, and different groups tried different strategies. Violence was employed by some, appeasement by others. Regardless of how or what was being done, there was one thing everyone had in common—WHY they were doing it. It was not just Martin Luther King’s unflappable conviction that was able to stir a population, but his ability to put his WHY into words. Dr. King had a gift. He talked about what he believed. And his words had the power to inspire:

“I believe.”

“I believe.”

“I believe.”

People heard his beliefs and his words touched them deep inside. Those who believed what he believed took that cause and made it their own. And they told people what they believed. And those people told others what they believed. Some organized to get that belief out more efficiently.

And in the summer of 1963, a quarter of a million people showed up to hear Dr. King deliver his “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

But how many people showed up for Dr. King?

Zero.

They showed up for themselves. It was what they believed. It was what they saw as an opportunity to help America become a better version of itself. It was they who wanted to live in a country that reflected their own values and beliefs that inspired them to get on a bus to travel for eight hours to stand in the Washington sun in the middle of August to hear Dr. King speak. Being in Washington was simply one of the things they did to prove what they believed. Showing up that day was one of the WHATs to their own WHY. This was a cause and it was their cause.