

## Speech 08: Ray Nagin - Chocolate City -

### Practice 1 | Vocabulary

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**Directions:** Listen and repeat.

- **commemorate** - to remind people of an important person or event from the past with a special action or object
- **stuck** - unable to move; in an unpleasant situation or place that you cannot escape from
- **critique** - a piece of written criticism of a set of ideas, a work of art, etc.
- **disperse** - to move apart and go away in different directions; to make someone or something do this
- **trump** - to do what is necessary to make a particular situation successful, especially when this is sudden or unexpected
- **pretense** - the act of behaving in a particular way, in order to make other people believe something that is not true
- **knucklehead** - a person who behaves in a stupid way
- **violence** - violent behavior that is intended to hurt or kill someone

## Practice 2 | Speech

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**Directions:** Read the speech aloud with your teacher.

*"Chocolate City" the Martin Luther King Day speech given by **Ray Nagin***

*Mayor of New Orleans, Louisiana, on January 16, 2006*

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin gave this speech Monday during a program at City Hall **commemorating** Martin Luther King Jr. Tuesday, January 17, 2006.

I greet you all in the spirit of peace this morning. I greet you all in the spirit of love this morning, and more importantly, I greet you all in the spirit of unity. Because if we're unified, there's nothing we cannot do.

Now, I'm supposed to give some remarks this morning and talk about the great Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. You know when I woke up early this morning, and I was reflecting upon what I could say that could be meaningful for this grand occasion. And then I decided to talk directly to Dr. King.

Now you might think that's one Katrina post-stress disorder. But I was talking to him and I just wanted to know what would he think if he looked down today at this celebration. What would he think about Katrina? What would he think about all the people who were **stuck** in the Superdome and Convention Center and we couldn't get the state and the federal government to come do something about it? And he said, "I wouldn't like that."

And then I went on to ask him, I said, "Mr. King, when they were marching across the Mississippi River bridge, some of the folks that were stuck in the Convention Center, that were tired of waiting for food and tired of waiting on buses to come rescue them, what would he say as they marched across that bridge? And they were met at the parish line with attack dogs and machine guns firing shots over their heads?" He said, "I wouldn't like that either."

Then I asked him to analyze the state of black America and black New Orleans today and to give me a **critique** of black leadership today. And I asked him what does he think about black leaders always or most of the time tearing each other down publicly for the delight of many? And he said, "I really don't like that either."

And then finally, I said, "Dr. King, everybody in New Orleans is **dispersed**. Over 44 different states. We're debating whether we should open this or close that. We're debating whether property rights should **trump** everything or not. We're debating how we should rebuild one of the greatest cultural cities the world has ever seen. And yet still yesterday we have a second-line and everybody comes together from around this and that and they have a good time for the most part, and then **knuckleheads** pull out some guns and start firing into the crowd and they injure three people." He said, "I definitely wouldn't like that."

And then I asked him, I said, "What is it going to take for us to move and live your dream and make it a reality?" He said, "I don't think we need to pay attention anymore as much about the other folk and racists on the other side." He said the thing we need to focus on as a community, black folks I'm talking to, is ourselves.

What are we doing? Why is black-on-black crime such an issue? Why do our young men hate each other

so much that they look their brother in the face and they will take a gun and kill him in cold blood? He said we as a people need to fix ourselves first. He said the lack of love is killing us. And it's time, ladies and gentlemen.

Dr. King, if he was here today, he would be talking to us about this problem, about the problem we have among ourselves. And as we think about rebuilding New Orleans, surely God is mad at America, he's sending hurricane after hurricane after hurricane and it's destroying and putting stress on this country. Surely he's not approving of us being in Iraq under false pretense. But surely he's upset at black America, also. We're not taking care of ourselves. We're not taking care of our women. And we're not taking care of our children when you have a community where 70 percent of its children are being born to one parent.

We ask black people: it's time. It's time for us to come together. It's time for us to rebuild a New Orleans, the one that should be a chocolate New Orleans. And I don't care what people are saying uptown or wherever they are. This city will be chocolate at the end of the day.

This city will be a majority African-American city. It's the way God wants it to be. You can't have New Orleans no other way; it wouldn't be New Orleans. So before I get into too much more trouble, I'm just going to tell you in my closing conversation with Dr. King, he said, "I never worried about the good people -- or the bad people I should say - who were doing all the violence during civil rights time." He said, "I worried about the good folks that didn't say anything or didn't do anything when they knew what they had to do."

It's time for all of us good folk to stand up and say "We're tired of the violence. We're tired of black folks killing each other. And when we come together for a second-line, we're not going to tolerate any violence." Martin Luther King would've wanted it that way, and we should. God bless all.

## Practice 3 | Questions

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**Directions:** Answer the following questions.

1. What was message of Dr. King conveyed in the speech?
2. What is the moral issue emphasized in the speech?
3. What makes the speech inspiring?
4. 4. In your opinion, what could be done to resolve disunity among people?