

## Dream on

### by John Tuckey

What's a dream? Why, it's nothing. What does a dream do? Does it make sick babies better? No. Does it put money in my pocket? No. Does it grow food, or provide shelter?

No. A dream doesn't do any of those things. In fact, a dream don't do nothing! A dream is just pictures in your head. Nothing else, is it? Yet, now, those words - "I have a dream" - are some of the most famous words anyone has ever said.

And just a man saying it changed everything. Everything! For people in America, it changed everything. And, you know something? I was there when the man said it. I was there!

It was way back in 1963, I was just a ten year old girl then. I still don't know what was going on in my father's head when he took me to hear a speech. I was ten! Speeches were just boring! Yeah, all those years ago, my father took me to listen to a speech by a man called Martin Luther King. And if my father thought I was going to be interested, he could just dream on! I sulked all the way on the bus. I sulked all the way as we walked to the place, because there were thousands of people.

Thousands! And all of them were big adults, and there was just little me. Boy, I couldn't see anything! So, I sulked. Oh, and held on tight to my father's hand.

Everyone was excited and talking. Then, it all went quiet. And my father lifted me up and sat me on his shoulders, even though I was ten, so I could see. And what I could see, was this man in a suit, standing on a platform, behind a microphone, and, all around, a huge sea of people. Then he started talking and, boy! I had no idea anyone could talk that slowly! It sounded to me like more useless talk, and all I wanted him to do was to get a move on so we could all go back home.

People kind of clapped politely every now and then, and I didn't take much notice. Then he started talking about freedom and justice, and the people listening got more excited, and started cheering.

Because you need to understand that things were pretty crazy in my country in those days. Some children couldn't go to the same school as other children. Some people couldn't live in the same part of town as other people. Some people couldn't get jobs to earn money, like other people. Some people couldn't even sit in the same part of a bus as other people. Can you believe that?



If you were one sort of person, you couldn't sit in the same seats as another sort of person. How crazy is that? And it was my people who couldn't do those things.

Anyway, I knew things were bad for us, and much better for other people. But, Martin Luther King, he didn't say "go out and hate those other people." He said, "we need things to be different for everyone." For everyone!

And my father suddenly shouted, "Yes! Yes! Amen!" He was getting real excited! I'd never seen him so excited. And he looked up and said to me, "See, if you know that something can be changed, then you can try and change it. It's when you think it can't be changed, then you don't even try."

Now, when I think back to that speech, that's what it did. It gave us all hope. It made us believe things could be changed, and once we believed that, we could do something. Because, once you believe you can do something, often as not, you can do it!

Anyway, as Martin Luther King talked, people got more and more excited. And then he said those words. And it was a dream of how things could be so much better, and I got caught up in it, like everyone else. I was yelling, "Amen! Amen!" and clapping and cheering. And then he came to the very end of his speech.

He was talking about how the world would be when all the things that held us down were taken away, and we'd be free.

When my father and I walked out of that place, we were walking on air! Everyone was full of so much hope. So much hope! And that hope has lasted me all the long years since that day.

And because of that hope and belief, things are so much better than they were then. So much better! And I learned that day that talk is not useless, and dreams are worth having. And what I say now is, Amen to that.