

## JFK's Speech on Civil Rights

We are **confronted** primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution.

The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be **afforded** equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated. If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant open to the public, if he cannot send his children to the best public school available, if he cannot vote for the public officials who will represent him, if, in short, he cannot enjoy the full and free life which all of us want, then who among us would be content to have the color of his skin changed and stand in his place? Who among us would then be content with the counsels of patience and **delay**?

One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their **heirs**, their grandsons, are not fully free. They are not yet freed from the bonds of injustice. They are not yet freed from social and economic oppression. And this Nation, for all its hopes and all its **boasts**, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free.

Because JFK speaks better than I do, I'm not going to read his speech for him. The magic of YouTube lets him do that. I will ask this: do you witness any racism in your life around you? Do you think that the fight against racism is 'over'? What are some things that a 'normal person' can do to contribute to the fight? What is something that you would protest for?

### Vocabulary

**Confront:** There are two ways to deal with problems: The first is to avoid the problem, not talk about it, ignore it, and hope it will go away by itself. Or you can deal with the problem directly, go up to it and see what you can do. In this second case, you confront the problem. Confronting is always direct. You can also confront a person, or an issue, or a corporation. But a confrontation is always difficult. You probably won't confront your best friend, unless it's about drug abuse or another difficult subject.

**Afford:** Maybe you know the word afford, meaning 'to have enough money.' "I can afford a DVD player," for example, means 'I have the money for a DVD player.' If you look at JFK's speech, however, you'll see that this meaning makes no sense in the context. That's because there's a second, less common meaning of 'afford:' to grant or give someone something, or to give it to

them. “Bite-Sized-English.com affords you good English practice.” “My job affords me a lot of free time for my hobbies.” My advice to you is this: this is older, very formal English. It's good to understand, but if you try to talk like this, it sounds a little strange.

**Delay:** Nobody likes to wait. I *hate* waiting. And so, I know exactly when the tram that takes me to work leaves, and I try to get to the tram stop only half a minute or so before it comes. And, because I live in Germany, the tram is almost always on time. But, when there are car accidents or ice on the roads, the tram can be up to ten minutes late. Or, there's a ten minute delay. A delay, used as a noun, means a wait or a pause. To delay, used as a verb, means to postpone, or to make something wait. “The longer you delay in learning vocabulary, the more you'll have to learn!” is one example, so is: “I can't delay paying my rent any longer!”

**Heir:** When my grandfather died, my mother got his house. The house was her 'inheritance.' And my mother is my grandfather's heir. A heir normally means the person who gets your stuff when you die, but it can also be someone who takes over when you stop. Some people say that Obama is an heir to JFK, meaning they are leaders in the same tradition.

**Boast:** Is there a hobby—maybe a sport—that you and your best friend share? If you were a lot better at it than your friend, would you tease him? “I'm better than you! Any day! Any where! Any time!” If you did, you would be boasting. To boast is to tell the people around you how amazing you are. I boast about my German, sometimes. Or, if I have a good run time, I boast about it for a while. A little boasting, I think, is normal. Just don't do it all the time!