Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech: 'it's a flame that still burns'
Film-maker and artist Steve McQueen on finding inspiration in the courage of Martin Luther King

Steve McQueen
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Film-maker and artist Steve McQueen: 'such courage is a huge inspiration.'
Photograph: David Rose/Rex Features
The fact that I have the opportunity to make work as an artist and ask questions is because of the civil rights movement, which has influenced so many people and societies. Not just black people, but human rights as a whole. I don't know many things that have had that profound an effect on society.

The courage of Martin Luther King goes without saying, and every time I think of his last speech where he says, "I've seen the promised land; I may not get there with you", it always gives me goose pimples. Such courage is a huge inspiration. Recently I was fortunate enough to be invited to the National Association of Black Journalists to talk about my new film, 12 Years a Slave. The mood I encountered was one where people were re-evaluating their position within the context of society – how far people have come, and how far they have to go. The conference took place half an hour from where Trayvon Martin was killed. The "I Have a Dream" speech is so powerful because we all have that dream that people will not be judged by the colour of their skin, their gender or their sexual orientation. It's a flame that still burns 50 years later. It's something that is the truth, and we all cling on to the truth. It's the only thing we've got.