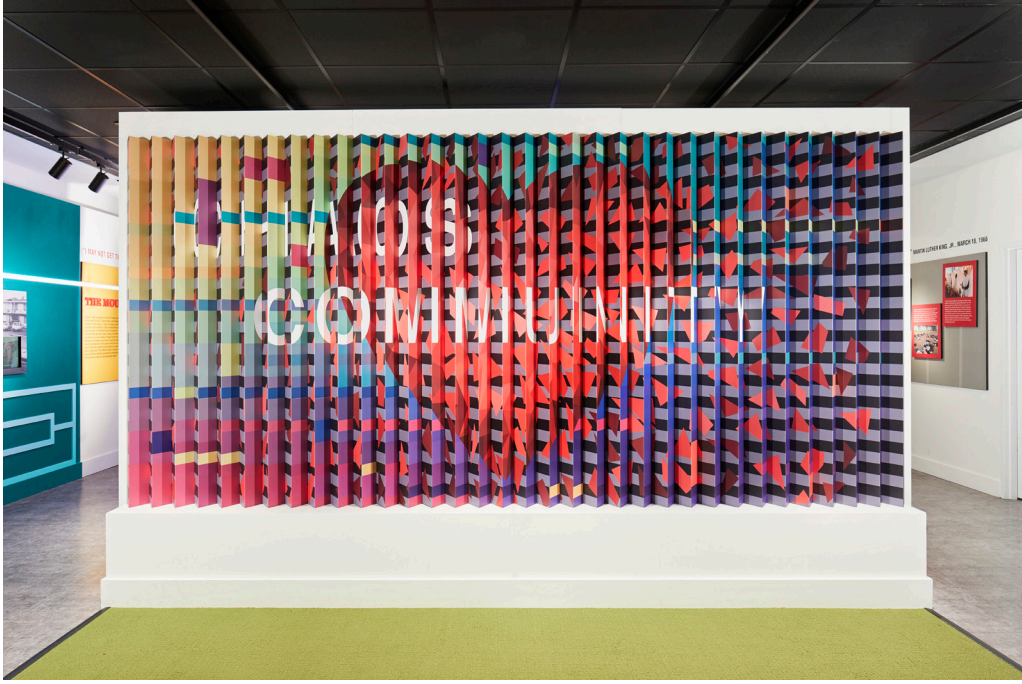
NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM

MLK50

1968 - 2018

Where Do We Go from Here?

KING: A LEGACY REMEMBERED



Teaching and Learning Guide

"Thank God we have the example of Martin Luther King, Jr. People need role models. It's so important not just to commemorate his life, but to study and try to live by the principles of that life."

– Coretta Scott King.

King: A Legacy Remembered, A Teaching and Learning Guide **is part of the National Civil Rights Museum's ongoing effort to educate the public about the Civil Rights Movement, and the enduring legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** The project began as we were preparing for the 50th anniversary commemoration of Dr. King's assassination. We consulted numerous students, teachers and community stakeholders throughout the development process. These conversations influenced a critical shift from commemorating a historic moment to promoting historical context and understanding around the civil rights movement and King's final year. Using the exhibition *King: A Legacy Remembered* as our inspiration, we've created a thought – provoking, primary source-based education guide. The activities featured can be easily incorporated into an educator's current curriculum and adapted for different grade levels.

The guide is divided into four sections: ***Instruments of Change, Understanding an Evolving King: Comparative Analysis, Craftivism = Crafts + Activism,*** and ***Human Rights. Instruments of Change*** **highlights the difference in communications media from the twentieth century and today.** As citizens of the twenty-first century, we are accustomed to ever-present technology. Our frequent reliance on technology inhibits our understanding of the challenges and creativity behind communication during the Civil Rights Movement. ***Understanding an Evolving King: Comparative Analysis*** **features 6 of King's speeches (complete and abbreviated versions) beginning with his first speech during the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 and ending with his final speech at Mason Temple on April 3, 1968.** These speeches were intended to be listened to, so we encourage educators to provide students access to the audio versions which are available from several online resources. The final two sections link the past to the present. ***Craftivism = Crafts + Activism*** **offer fun engaging ways to prompt students to think about themselves and the space they occupy in the world.** It introduces unique ways to begin to confront issues of social injustice as well as means for open dialogue in the classroom. While most Americans are aware of their civil rights, the rest of the world is more familiar with the concept of human rights. **Written in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human rights is a legal document, we have distilled the concepts down to an approachable and visually engaging method in the classroom.**

The activities in this guide are meant to be part of an ongoing classroom dialogue on the Civil Rights Movement. We encourage teachers to consider using this guide along with other tools found on our website: www.civilrightsmuseum.org.

Happy learning!

Noelle Trent, PhD
Director of Interpretation, Collections & Education

National Civil Rights Museum
AT THE LORRAINE MOTEL

NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM
MLK 50
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A LEGACY REMEMBERED

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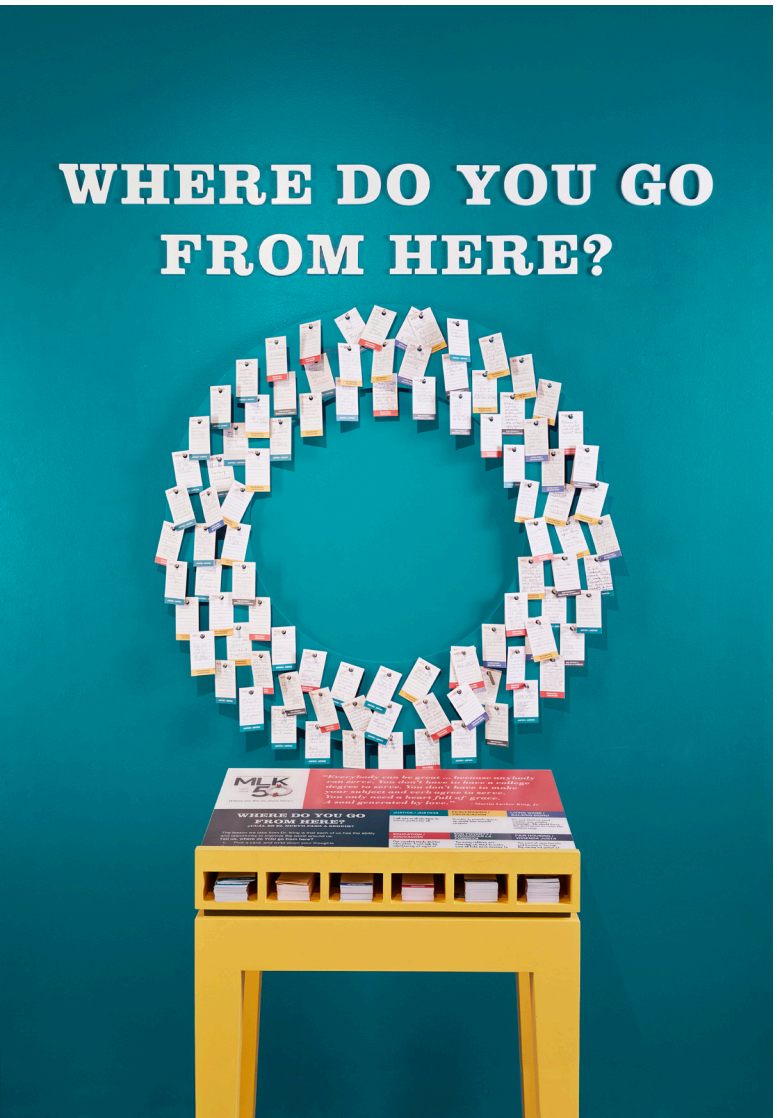


Instruments of Change

Instruments of Change are the various tools of mass communication that informed the public and raised awareness throughout the country and the world. Each of these 'gadgets' has evolved technologically since their invention and even over the last 50+ years. Students should consider why each of these inventions is important or how it is relevant to Civil Rights history and American history. What if these devices had not been invented yet? How is this landscape different today in terms of who has access to this technology and these tools? Why is it relevant that most people now carry in their pocket (or purse), a single device which serves all the purposes that these antiquated devices once served? Since everyone has the ability to post/ share information online now, why does this mean we need to be critical of the information we encounter? How is each of the following 'gadgets' an instrument for creating change?

How is a Microphone an Instrument of Change?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will compare and contrast mass media communication from the 1960's with modern day mass media communication.

2. Students will discuss how activists and leaders in the 1960's used microphones and their voices to amplify messages or ideas.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

Do you think the microphones in the 1960's were easily portable? Could speakers move around freely or were speakers confined to one spot when using a microphone? What might prevent them from moving around while using a microphone? How have microphones changed since the 1960s?

Why is a microphone important in letting your voice be heard? How does help you create positive change? If someone doesn't have a microphone to amplify their voice, how does this limit their ability to share information?

If you had a microphone, what would you say? Who would you address? Where would you use your microphone? How is what you would say into a microphone in front of a large group different than what you would say to a close friend or two?

Who uses a microphone as an instrument of change (e.g., poets, musicians, newscasters/ journalists, leaders, politicians)? How do each of the people you mentioned use a microphone to create change?

How does hearing words aloud impact people differently than reading words on paper? What role does the microphone play in allowing that to happen (e.g., speeches, plays, monologues, spoken word/poetry)?

What are some other ways you can use your voice? Answers could be protest signs or visual representations (e.g., artwork, images, social media posts). As a follow-up activity, students could create a poster, protest sign, or piece of artwork with a message to amplify their voice through nonverbal communication.

Creative Commons

ACTIVITIES:

- Have students watch this video of Dr. King giving his speech entitled, "I Have Been to the Mountaintop" on April 3, 1968 at the Mason Temple in Memphis, TN. Ask students how the microphone was an important tool in this video.
- Pair students up, with one person assigned to be the interviewer and one person as the interviewee. Have students choose an issue that was important to the civil rights movement. Have the interviewer write questions to ask the interviewee with the objective of pulling key answers out of the interviewee. The goal of the interviewee should be to eloquently and succinctly state their point of view on the issue as well as to persuade their audience to take related action. Interviews could be written, recorded, or performed in class.

Creative Commons

How is a Camera/Photo an Instrument of Change?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will discuss what media was like before and after modern photographic technology evolved into the digital realm.
2. Students will discuss how photographs spread awareness of the civil rights movement in the 1960's.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What does it mean to now have the ability to take a photo anywhere, and at any time with a cell phone? How does modern technology change the speed at which information spreads (i.e. the internet, social media, digital sharing)?

How do photographs have power to evoke emotion from the viewer? Give some examples to support your answer.

What emotional effect does seeing photos of an event have on a person, particularly when the event involves violence or graphic content?

How do photos help people to better understand an event that they did not personally experience? In areas of the country where segregation was less obvious, how would seeing photos of the segregated South and racially motivated violence, change people's understanding of the Movement? How does seeing photos change your perception of the Movement?

What questions do you have as you examine photos from the past, particularly from the Civil Rights Movement?

Courtesy of the Commercial Appeal

Art Shay

ACTIVITIES:

- Show students the video clip about the usage and function of a 1950's camera and this one showing the process of developing film.
- Ask them the following, to infer based on the video:
  - » Does the camera look light or heavy?
  - » Would it be easy to carry around in your pocket, like a cell phone?
  - » Does it plug in? What gives it power?
  - » Does the photographer get to see the finished picture immediately?
  - » How is the old-fashioned camera different from a camera in a cell phone?
- How has the evolving technology of photography changed people's access to photographic images? Where did people see photos in the 1950's-1960's? Where do people see photos now?
- Show students photographs from the marches that were a part of the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike and photos from the current Black Lives Matter protests.

  Compare and contrast modern digital photos with older photos that were developed (e.g. coloration, photo quality, subjects, feelings evoked).
  - » How do the older and newer photos look different?
  - » What do the photos have in common?
  - » Do the photos from past and present protests bring out different emotions or similar emotions? Compare and contrast the photos.
- Have students find a historic photograph of their choice online. Ask students to consider the message the photographer was trying to convey by capturing the photo and sharing it with the world. Write a headline to go along with the image. Now, pick a modern photograph of a current event and repeat the steps from the previous photograph.

Photo by Rolls Press/Popperfoto/Getty Images

Courtesy of the Commercial Appeal

Art Shay

ART SHAY

Freelance photographer Art Shay was born in Bronx, New York in 1922. The World War II veteran became a freelance photographer in 1949 working for national publications like *Life Magazine, Time Magazine,* and *Sports Illustrated*. Shay was known for his street style photography. He arrived in Memphis the night of April 4, and met *Esquire Magazine* writer Garry Willis at the Lorraine Motel. Together the two men shadowed the Memphis Police department as they looked for King's killer. He would later document the Silent March, the memorial at R. S. Lewis and Sons, and King's final departure from Memphis Metropolitan airport. Shay's photographs are some of the few colored photos from that time period, many of which have not been seen before.


Photo by Dr. Ernest C. Withers, courtesy of the Withers Family Trust

ERNEST WITHERS

Civil Rights photographer Ernest Withers was born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1922. The World War II veteran and activist captured some of the most iconic moments of the Civil Rights Movement. From the Emmett Till trial in Mississippi to the Memphis Sanitation Strike, Withers provided a generation of visual truth, a courageous task that solidifies him as a civil rights champion. He photographed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. regularly from the end of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1956 to his final trip to Memphis on April 3, 1968. Withers' photos were published in local and national publications including: *The Tri-State Defender, The Commercial Appeal, Life Magazine,* and *Time Magazine*. Hours after King was assassinated, Withers developed Joseph Louw's famous photograph of Dr. King's aides pointing in the direction of the shot on the balcony at his studio on Beale Street. Withers unique access as an African American photographer provides a distinct historical perspective on the movement and its leaders.

How is a Radio an Instrument of Change?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will compare and contrast mass media communication from the 1960's with modern mass media communication methods.
2. Students will understand the importance of amplifying activists' voices, through interviews and speeches, as a way to spread ideas and information.
3. Students will observe direct connections between the Civil Rights Movement and the music created by black musicians in the 1960's.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What do you like to listen to on the radio? Do you listen to news, music, or both?

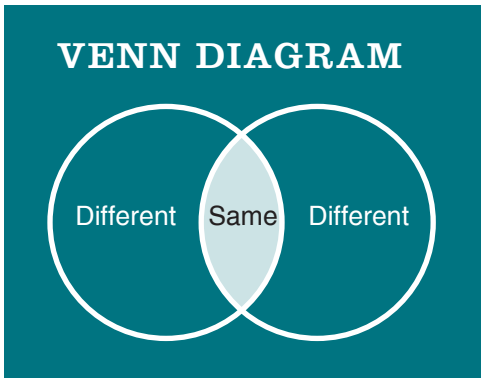
Why were radio broadcasting networks in the 1960's important? What other methods of communication were popular in this era? What methods were most efficient for getting information to a large number of people?

How would you speak if you were on a radio show that is being broadcasted to thousands of people? Would you speak differently than if you were talking to your classmates, friends or family? How so?

How is radio communication different from television or in-person communication for both the speaker and to the audience?

What are some of the ideas we hear from black musicians during the 1960's? What are some messages we hear from pop musicians like Sam Cooke, James Brown, Stevie Wonder and Aretha Franklin?

ACTIVITIES:



- Create a Venn diagram, identifying similarities and differences between a 1960's radio and its modern counterpart, a satellite radio or an HD radio.

  Teachers can differentiate levels of learning by adjusting the depth of the questions and corresponding activities to encourage higher critical thinking for older students. Examples could include writing an essay comparing and contrasting development of technology, creating an advertisement or commercial for an artifact, or making a more advanced chart or table of similarities and differences. Students could also create a timeline of an object's technological development from its invention to modern day.

  Students can also draw both objects to illustrate and better understand the physical differences between mid-20th Century and 21st Century technology.

- Ask students to close their eyes and imagine that they are hearing Dr. King speak on the radio in 1967. Play this audio clip of Dr. King discussing human rights and nonviolence.

  Ask students how they felt when listening to the clip. Was it hard to pay attention? What did they picture mentally while listening? How was it different than watching a video with Dr. King speaking?

- Ask students to listen to this short Spotify playlist and then discuss how these songs relate to the Movement:
  - » *A Change Is Gonna Come* - Sam Cooke
  - » *Blowin' in the Wind* - Stevie Wonder
  - » *Think* - Aretha Franklin
  - » *Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)* - James Brown

  Do these songs effectively share a message? What are each of these songs "saying" to the listener?

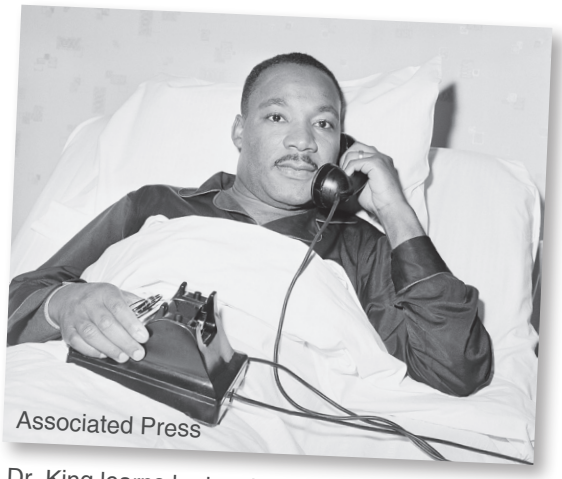
- Share the following Spotify Playlist with students and ask them which songs speak to them. Ask them why each of these songs made a playlist focused on Freedom.

- Ask students to build their own playlists or create a class playlist of "freedom songs." Have students list which songs they want to add to their playlist(s) and why those songs made the list.

How is a Telephone an Instrument of Change?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will compare and contrast technology and communication from the 1960's with current technology.
2. Students will discuss the challenges of spreading information by way of a rotary phone.
3. Students will understand how telephones can be an instrument or tool used to create social change.



Dr. King learns he has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize while in the hospital for a checkup

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

If we didn't have computers or email, how would we spread information or messages to others in our community?

How did people use a phone tree to share information or spread a message?

How many phone calls would it take to spread an idea, a message, or a plan to an entire city or community, in order to organize a protest?

If you wanted to disseminate information to people, which would you prefer: using a rotary phone from the past or a modern day cell phone? Why?

What is the most efficient and fastest way to spread information today?

How have phones changed over time? How are today's smart phones different than rotary phones, portable electric phones (which were still connected to a landline), the first mobile phones, or older cell phones?

ACTIVITIES:

- Have students watch this video demonstration of how to use a rotary phone.
- Have students make a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting a rotary phone with a modern day smartphone.
- Ask students to create a timeline illustrating the evolving technology of the telephone from the rotary phone to the smartphone.
- Introduce the idea of a phone tree, where one person calls 10 people and each of those 10 people, calls 10 more people, and so on.
- Ask students what would take longer, using a phone tree to reach 1 million people, or initiating a text, social media, or email campaign?

How is a Typewriter an Instrument of Change?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will compare and contrast communication methods from the 1960's with modern mass communication methods.

2. Students will discuss the difference in efficiency between a typewriter and a modern computer or social media.

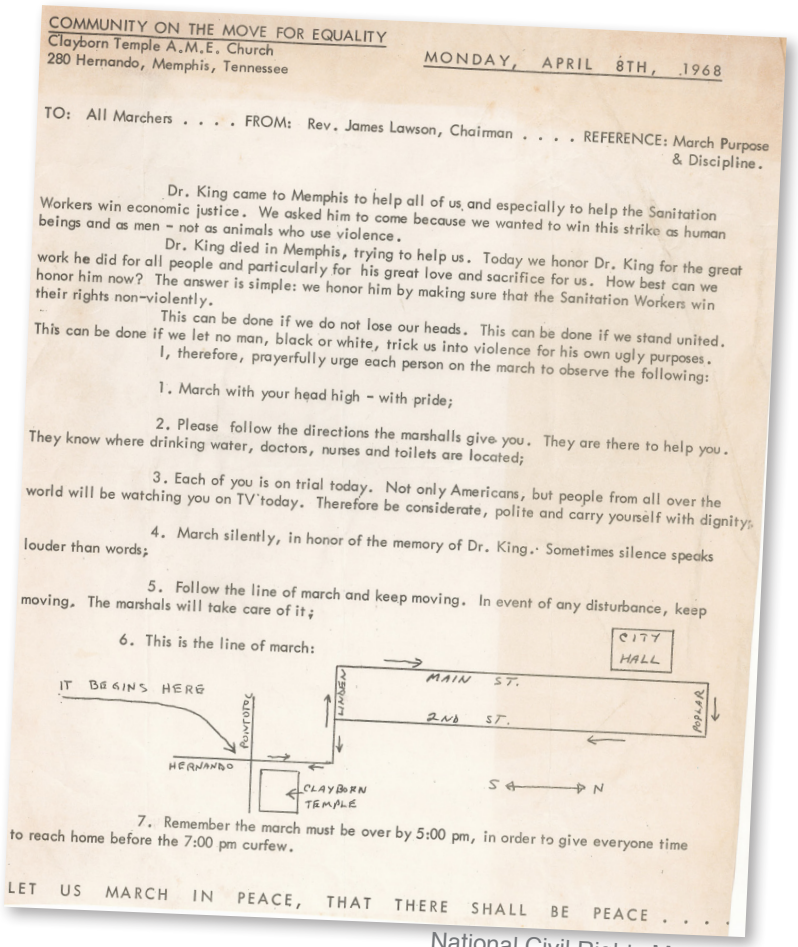
GUIDING QUESTIONS:

Compare and contrast the ease and efficiency of typing a message on a typewriter with posting an entry on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram. How many people can be reached with each method of communication within one minute, one hour, or one day? Which method is more efficient, using a typewriter or using internet based communication?

What would it have been like to type a flyer or a speech on a typewriter as opposed to a computer? How long would it take to distribute a typed flyer throughout a community without the use of the internet?

Who are some people who have used a typewriter to spread messages about protest or social change (e.g., speechwriters, event/protest organizers, newspaper writers/reporters, authors, preachers, teachers)?

How has the invention of the computer and the internet changed how people share information and ideas?



COMMUNITY ON THE MOVE FOR EQUALITY
Clayborn Temple A.M.E. Church
280 Hernando, Memphis, Tennessee

MONDAY, APRIL 8TH, 1968

TO: All Marchers . . . . FROM: Rev. James Lawson, Chairman . . . . REFERENCE: March Purpose & Discipline.

Dr. King came to Memphis to help all of us and especially to help the Sanitation Workers win economic justice. We asked him to come because we wanted to win this strike as human beings and as men - not as animals who use violence.

Dr. King died in Memphis, trying to help us. Today we honor Dr. King for the great work he did for all people and particularly for his great love and sacrifice for us. How best can we honor him now? The answer is simple: we honor him by making sure that the Sanitation Workers win their rights non-violently.

This can be done if we do not lose our heads. This can be done if we stand united. This can be done if we let no man, black or white, trick us into violence for his own ugly purposes.

I, therefore, prayerfully urge each person on the march to observe the following:

1. March with your head high - with pride;

2. Please follow the directions the marshalls give you. They are there to help you. They know where drinking water, doctors, nurses and toilets are located;

3. Each of you is on trial today. Not only Americans, but people from all over the world will be watching you on TV today. Therefore be considerate, polite and carry yourself with dignity;

4. March silently, in honor of the memory of Dr. King. Sometimes silence speaks louder than words;

5. Follow the line of march and keep moving. In event of any disturbance, keep moving. The marshals will take care of it;

6. This is the line of march:

7. Remember the march must be over by 5:00 pm, in order to give everyone time to reach home before the 7:00 pm curfew.

LET US MARCH IN PEACE, THAT THERE SHALL BE PEACE . . .

National Civil Rights Museum

ACTIVITIES:

- Let students watch this video of a typist using a 20th century typewriter. Ask students what seems different between the typewriter and a computer.
- Ask students to consider the following questions:
  - » What are some of the challenges the user may experience when using a typewriter?
  - » How does the user put the paper in the typewriter?
  - » Can you press “delete” if you make a mistake while typing?
  - » After typing a message, how many copies come out of the typewriter?
  - » How would you distribute the message to more than one person?
- As a class, create a timeline of mass media communication and journalism methods from the mid-1900s to the present. Put students into groups according to class size and number of communication methods on the timeline. Each group should research their assigned method of communication and present to the class. Following the completion of all presentations, have students compare and contrast the different methods for sharing written information that have been used by the media.
- Create a Venn Diagram to show the similarities and differences between a 20th century typewriter and a 21st century laptop computer or a tablet.
- Consider the ways in which the invention of the computer and the internet have changed the spread of information.
  - » Is it easier to spread information now than it was 50-60 years ago?
  - » Who can share information in print now?
  - » If anyone can share printed information, why does this mean we should be critical and fact check information we read, to verify it?

How is a Video or Film an Instrument of Change?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will compare and contrast televisions and video technology from the 1960's with its modern counterparts.
2. Students will consider how access to video technology has changed over the last 60 years.
3. Students will recognize the power of video footage to help a viewer better understand an event.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

How do televisions today look different from a television from the 1960's?

If people want to take a video today, what equipment do they use? Do they have to have a professional video camera?

How has access to video technology changed? Who can spread information through video? How does access to video technology increase the speed at which information is spread?

Think about the most meaningful thing you have ever watched on television. Describe how it made you feel.

Now, imagine you hadn't seen the video for yourself, but instead heard about it from someone else or heard about it on the radio. How does the experience of watching something for yourself change your interpretation of an event?

What were the differences between radio and television in the 1960s? How does if affect your understanding of an event or of the speaker's message, if you only hear the audio coverage versus watching and hearing it broadcasted simultaneously? How are these two experiences different?

Typical room at the Lorraine Motel

ACTIVITIES:

- Students should watch either or both of these television news reports which followed the assassination of Dr. King: ABC Newscast: April 4, 1968 or 1968 King Assassination Report (CBS)
  - » How did the style of the videos affect your viewing experience?
  - » What message did you take away from the news report? How did it feel seeing footage that was filmed the day Dr. King was killed? What was the tone of the news reporters?
  - » Compare and contrast the quality of film and television in the 1960s with the quality of film and television today.
  - » What are some differences between television footage that is recorded today and television recordings from the 1960's?

- Have students watch either episode 1 and 10 OR watch all 10 short segments of from the series TheRoot.com and Striking Voices -1300 Men : Memphis Strike 1968
  - » How did seeing footage of the Sanitation Workers, doing the work of collecting and emptying garbage, make you feel?
  - » What message did you take away from hearing from the Sanitation Workers themselves? How did it feel to hear from the Sanitation Workers' wives and children?
  - » Compare and contrast the quality of film and the historical footage you saw here with the quality of film and television you typically see today.
  - » Did you feel any differently or understand more about the struggle of the Memphis Sanitation Workers after watching/hearing them share their stories? How so?
  - » Does this viewing experience make you feel differently about public works (or sanitation workers) in your community?

ABC Newscast

AN EVOLVING KING

By 1967, Dr. King was a nationally and internationally renowned civil rights activist. People expected him to speak on issues on behalf of Blacks in the United States; however, he was continually aware of the struggle of all people across the world. Living in the midst of the Vietnam War and other armed conflicts, he was struck by the gravity of violence experienced by people across the world. On April 4, 1967, he stunned the world with his speech Beyond Vietnam delivered at the Riverside Church in New York City. He urged the United States to address poverty at home and abroad, as well as to deliberately abstain from violence.

Beyond Vietnam established King as a political and social radical; placing him at odds with his allies, many African Americans, and the White House. The King, America and the world knew, was evolving.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will recognize how Dr. King's perspective and his work changed and evolved throughout his life and career.

2. Students will analyze Dr. King's speeches to understand how his understanding of civil rights changed over the course of his public life.

GUIDING QUESTION:

When you think of Martin Luther King, Jr., what are some key words that come to mind?

ACTIVITIES:

3. Compare and contrast excerpt from Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) Mass Meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church (Dec. 5, 1955) with excerpts from his essay *Where Do We Go From Here?* (August 16, 1967).

4. Compare and contrast excerpt of Letter from a Birmingham Jail (1963) with excerpt from *Beyond Vietnam* (1967).

5. Compare and contrast excerpt from Dr. King's Nobel Peace Prize recipient speech with excerpts from his final speech (1964), *I've Been to the Mountaintop* (1968).

QUESTIONS:

Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) Mass Meeting Speech (1955) & *Where Do We Go From Here?*" (1967)

1. Based on the MIA speech, what are King's goals? How are these different from the aspirations King expresses in *Where Do We Go From Here?* How are they the same?
2. Why does King state that "we must create full employment or we must create jobs" in his speech, *Where Do We Go From Here?* How is this a part of civil rights for King?
3. Compare and contrast King's attitude towards America in 1955 in the Montgomery Improvement Association speech, and in 1967 in *Where Do We Go From Here?*

Letter from a Birmingham Jail (1963) & *Beyond Vietnam* (1967)

1. Who is King addressing in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail?" What motivated him to write this letter?
2. Who is the "white moderate" that King describes in "Letter from a Birmingham Jail? What does King wish that they would do?
3. Why does King argue that opposition to the Vietnam War is a necessary part of the Civil Rights Movement?
4. What does King mean when he states "Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit?" How does King's view of American society in "Letter from Birmingham Jail" contrast with his view of American society in the *Beyond Vietnam* speech? Cite specific examples to support your answer.

Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech (1964) & *I've Been to the Mountaintop* (1968)

1. Based on your reading of King's acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize, how would you describe his attitude towards achieving success in the Civil Rights Movement? Pessimistic? Optimistic? Why do you think he holds this attitude at this particular time? How does this contrast with his attitude in *I've Been to the Mountaintop*?
2. How does King discuss nonviolence as a political strategy in his Nobel acceptance speech? How does this compare with his discussion of nonviolence in *I've Been to the Mountaintop*? Do you think that this represents continuity or change? Explain your answer.
3. In his final speech, *I've Been to the Mountaintop* King says that African Americans need to "strengthen black institutions." Do you think that means that his dream of integration has faded or changed over the course of his life? Why or why not? How have his views evolved during the course of his career (1955 - 1968)?

Mass Meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church - Dec 5, 1955

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

In Montgomery, Alabama as elsewhere in the Deep South, segregation laws forbade African Americans the privilege of sitting where they wanted on city buses. During 1955, more than five African American women had been arrested for defying these segregation laws including 15 year old Claudette Colvin and 18 year old Mary Louise Smith. On December 1, 1955, seamstress and NAACP Secretary Rosa Parks was arrested for not giving up her seat to a white passenger. After being released on bail, a group of ministers and businessmen organized the Montgomery Improvement Association and a group of African American women known as the Women's Political Council collaborated and decided to boycott the city buses. The boycott began on Monday December 5, 1955 and it was an immediate success. That same night, the Montgomery Improvement Association elected the 26 year old pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to serve as its chairperson. His speech that evening was his first as a civil rights leader.

National Civil Rights Museum

MASS MEETING AT HOLT STREET BAPTIST CHURCH - DEC 5, 1955:

My friends, we are certainly very happy to see each of you out this evening. We are here this evening for serious business. We are here in a general sense because first and foremost we are American citizens and we are determined to apply our citizenship to the fullness of its meaning. We are here also because of our love for democracy, because of our deep-seated belief that democracy transformed from thin paper to thick action is the greatest form of government on earth. But we are here in a specific sense, because of the bus situation in Montgomery. We are here because we are determined to get the situation corrected. This situation is not at all new. The problem has existed over endless years. For many years now Negroes in Montgomery and so many other areas have been inflicted with the paralysis of crippling fears on buses in our community.[1] (That's right) On so many occasions, Negroes have been intimidated and humiliated and impressed-oppressed-because of the sheer fact that they were Negroes. I don't have time this evening to go into the history of these numerous cases. Many of them now are lost in the thick fog of oblivion, but at least one stands before us now with glaring dimensions.

---

[1] *The term "Negro" was considered appropriate at the time. Today, the appropriate terms are either African American or Black. A common cultural practice in the African American Protestant Church is for the audience to comment or shout in agreement during the preacher's sermon. Audience comments are usually short affirmations rooted in the Black American call and response tradition which is rooted in West African culture. The audience comments are noted here in parentheses.*

Just the other day, just last Thursday to be exact, one of the finest citizens in Montgomery -not one of the finest Negro citizens, but one of the finest citizens in Montgomery-was taken from a bus and carried to jail and arrested because she refused to get up to give her seat to a white person.[2] Now the press would have us believe that she refused to leave a reserved section for Negroes, but I want you to know this evening that there is no reserved section. The law has never been clarified at that point. Now I think I speak with, with legal authority-not that I have any legal authority, but I think I speak with legal authority behind me -that the law, the ordinance, the city ordinance has never been totally clarified.[3] Mrs. Rosa Parks is a fine person. And, since it had to happen, I'm happy that it happened to a person like Mrs. Parks, for nobody can doubt the boundless outreach of her integrity. Nobody can doubt the height of her character, nobody can doubt the depth of her Christian commitment and devotion to the teachings of Jesus. And I'm happy since it had to happen, it happened to a person that nobody can call a disturbing factor in the community. Mrs. Parks is a fine Christian person, unassuming, and yet there is integrity and character there. And just because she refused to get up, she was arrested.

And you know, my friends, there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. There comes a time, my friends, when people get tired of being plunged across the abyss of humiliation, where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July and left standing amid the piercing chill of an alpine November. There comes a time.

We are here, we are here this evening because we're tired now. And I want to say that we are not here advocating violence. We have never done that. I want it to be known throughout Montgomery and throughout this nation that we are Christian people. We believe in the Christian religion. We believe in the teachings of Jesus. The only weapon that we have in our hands this evening is the weapon of protest. That's all.

And certainly, certainly, this is the glory of America, with all of its faults. This is the glory of our democracy. If we were incarcerated behind the iron curtains of a Communistic nation we couldn't do this.[4] If we were dropped in the dungeon of a totalitarian regime we couldn't do this. But the great glory

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[2] *Rosa Parks (1913-2005) was a lifelong civil rights activist. She was active in the fight for equality from the 1940s until her health began to decline in the 1990s. She is most famous for inspiring the Montgomery Bus Boycott.*

[3] *Code of the City of Montgomery, Alabama. Charlottesville: Michie City Publishing Co., 1952. Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama. City Ordinance Code 1938: Section 603 and 604.*

[4] *Winston Churchill, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, used the term "Iron Curtain" during a March 5, 1946 speech in Fulton, Missouri. "Iron Curtain" described the political, military, and cultural division between the West and noncommunist countries and the Soviet Union which sought to isolate itself and its dependent countries from contact with the West. King's usage here is a reference to the restrictions on personal liberties in Soviet-controlled countries during the Cold War.*

of American democracy is the right to protest for right. My friends, don't let anybody make us feel that we are to be compared in our actions with the Ku Klux Klan or with the White Citizens Council.[5] There will be no crosses burned at any bus stops in Montgomery. There will be no white persons pulled out of their homes and taken out on some distant road and lynched for not cooperating. There will be nobody amid, among us who will stand up and defy the Constitution of this nation. We only assemble here because of our desire to see right exist. My friends, I want it to be known that we're going to work with grim and bold determination to gain justice on the buses in this city.

And we are not wrong, we are not wrong in what we are doing. If we are wrong, the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong.[6] If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong. If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer that never came down to earth. If we are wrong, justice is a lie. Love has no meaning. And we are determined here in Montgomery to work and fight until justice runs down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream.[7]

I want to say that in all of our actions we must stick together. Unity is the great need of the hour, and if we are united we can get many of the things that we not only desire but which we justly deserve. And don't let anybody frighten you. We are not afraid of what we are doing, because we are doing it within the law. There is never a time in our American democracy that we must ever think we're wrong when we protest. We reserve that right. When labor all over this nation came to see that it would be trampled over by capitalistic power, it was nothing wrong with labor getting together and organizing and protesting for its rights.

[5] *The Ku Klux Klan was a White terrorist organization that used violence and lynching to enforce second-class citizenship for African Americans. White Citizens' Councils were public groups of white businessmen, civic leaders, and landowners who used economic retribution and other tactics to enforce Jim Crow segregation and disenfranchisement laws.*

[6] *On May 17, 1954 with the Brown vs the Board of Education decision, the US Supreme Court struck down 'separate but equal' in Plessy vs. Ferguson in education.*

[7] *"Justice runs down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream." is a passage from Amos 5:24 found in the Old Testament. King would rhetorically use this phrase throughout his career.*

National Civil Rights Museum

We, the disinherited of this land, we who have been oppressed so long, are tired of going through the long night of captivity. And now we are reaching out for the daybreak of freedom and justice and equality. May I say to you my friends, as I come to a close, and just giving some idea of why we are assembled here, that we must keep-and I want to stress this, in all of our doings, in all of our deliberations here this evening and all of the week and while-whatever we do, we must keep God in the forefront. Let us be Christian in all of our actions. But I want to tell you this evening that it is not enough for us to talk about love, love is one of the pivotal points of the Christian face, faith. There is another side called justice. And justice is really love in calculation. Justice is love correcting that which revolts against love.

The Almighty God himself is not the only, not the, not the God just standing out saying through Hosea, "I love you, Israel." He's also the God that stands up before the nations and said: "Be still and know that I'm God, that if you don't obey me I will break the backbone of your power and slap you out of the orbits of your international and national relationships." Standing beside love is always justice, and we are only using the tools of justice. Not only are we using the tools of persuasion, but we've come to see that we've got to use the tools of coercion. Not only is this thing a process of education, but it is also a process of legislation. As we stand and sit here this evening and as we prepare ourselves for what lies ahead, let us go out with a grim and bold determination that we are going to stick together. We are going to work together. Right here in Montgomery, when the history books are written in the future, somebody will have to say, "There lived a race of people, a black people, 'fleecy locks and black complexion', a people who had the moral courage to stand up for their rights. And thereby they injected a new meaning into the veins of history and of civilization." And we're gonna do that. God grant that we will do it before it is too late. As we proceed with our program let us think of these things.

….. French and Abernathy speak …..

It has been moved, it has been moved, and seconded that these recommendations and these resolutions would be accepted and adopted by the citizens of Montgomery. Are you ready for the question? All in favor, stand on your feet. Opposers do likewise. Opposers do likewise. There is a prevailing majority. I certainly want to thank you, my friends, for this tremendous response. My friends, in order that nothing, that we will not be misquoted, and particularly with the resolutions, copies are prepared for the press; so that if the press would like to secure copies, they may do that, so that we will not be misquoted.
[recording interrupted]

. . . said here this evening because everything is being recorded. Reverend Glasco is here on hand recording everything that is being said, so that we're not doing anything in the dark here. Everything is being recorded. Now my friends, I just want to say once more to you. I've got to leave, I have presided to this point. It so happens that we have a group of very fine men who can do a much better job than I've done, and we're gonna let them do it. You know, we preachers have many engagements sometime. And I've got to go speak to the fathers and sons of this city; so that I'm gonna have to leave.

But just before leaving I want to say this. I want to urge you. You have voted, and you have done it with a great deal of enthusiasm, and I want to express my appreciation to you, on behalf of everybody here. Now let us go out to stick together and stay with this thing until the end. Now it means sacrificing, yes, it means sacrificing at points. But there are some things that we've got to learn to sacrifice for. And we've got to come to the point that we are determined not to accept a lot of things that we have been accepting in the past.

So I'm urging you now. We have the facilities for you to get to your jobs, and we are putting, we have the cabs there at your service. Automobiles will be at your service, and don't be afraid to use up any of the gas. If you have it, if you are fortunate enough to have a little money, use it for a good cause. Now my automobile is gonna be in it, it has been in it, and I'm not concerned about how much gas I'm gonna use. I want to see this thing work.

And we will not be content until oppression is wiped out of Montgomery, and really out of America. We won't be content until that is done. We are merely insisting on the dignity and worth of every human personality. And I don't stand here, I'm not arguing for any selfish person. I've never been on a bus in Montgomery. But I would be less than a Christian if I stood back and said, because I don't ride the bus, I don't have to ride a bus, that it doesn't concern me. I will not be content. I can hear a voice saying, "If you do it unto the least of these, my brother, you do it unto me."[8]

And I won't rest, I will face intimidation, and everything else, along with these other stalwart fighters for democracy and for citizenship. We don't mind it, so long as justice comes out of it. And I've come to see now that as we struggle for our rights, maybe some of them will have to die. But somebody said, if a man doesn't have something that he'll die for, he isn't fit to live.

Now, let me tell you this. You know, it takes money to do what we're about to do. We can't do it clapping hands now and we can't do it saying "Amen." That's not enough. That is, that encourages the speaker to go on, but that isn't enough. We need money to do this and we're gonna have to get ourselves some money tonight. And we're gonna ask everybody here, that's everybody outside and inside, to get ready to make a contribution to this cause. And the money will be well used. And the committee will tell you, someone will tell you what it will be used for.

King, Martin Luther. "Address to the First Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) Mass Meeting." In *A Call to Conscience: the Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, 1–12. New York: IPM (Intellectual Properties Management), in association with Grand Central Publishing, 2001.

[8] *Matthew 25:40*

ABBREVIATED

Mass Meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church - Dec 5, 1955

In Montgomery, Alabama, as elsewhere in the Deep South, segregation laws forbade African Americans the privilege of sitting where they wanted on city buses. During 1955, more than five African American women had been arrested for defying these segregation laws including 15 year-old Claudette Colvin and 18 year-old Mary Louise Smith. On December 1, 1955, seamstress and NAACP Secretary Rosa Parks was arrested for not giving up her seat to a white passenger. After being released on bail, a group of ministers and businessmen organized the Montgomery Improvement Association and a group of African American women known as the Women's Political Council collaborated and decided to boycott the city buses. The boycott began on Monday December 5, 1955 and it was an immediate success. That same night, the Montgomery Improvement Association elected the 26 year-old pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to serve as its chairperson. Below is an excerpt of the speech he gave that evening, his first as a civil rights leader.

National Civil Rights Museum

And certainly, certainly, this is the glory of America, with all of its faults. (Yeah)[1] This is the glory of our Democracy. If we were incarcerated behind the iron curtains of a Communistic nation we couldn't do this. If we were dropped in the dungeon of a totalitarian regime we couldn't do this. (All right) But the great glory of American democracy is the right to protest for right. (That's right) [applause] My friends, don't let anybody make us feel that we are to be compared in our actions with the Ku Klux Klan or with the White Citizens Council.[2] [applause] There will be no crosses burned at any bus stops in Montgomery. (Well, That's right) There will be no white persons pulled out of their homes and taken out on some distant road and lynched for not cooperating. [applause] There will be nobody amid, among us who will stand up and defy the Constitution of this nation. [applause] We only assemble here because of our desire to see right exist. [applause] My friends, I want it to be known that we're going to work with grim and bold determination to gain justice on the buses in this city. [applause]

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[1] *The term "Negro" was considered appropriate at the time. Today, the appropriate terms are either African American or Black. A common cultural practice in the African American Protestant Church is for the audience to comment or shout in agreement during the preacher's sermon. Audience comments are usually short affirmations rooted in the Black American call and response tradition which is rooted in West African culture. The audience comments are noted here in parentheses.*

[2] *The Ku Klux Klan was a White terrorist organization that used violence and lynching to enforce second-class citizenship for African Americans. White Citizens' Councils were public groups of white businessmen, civic leaders, and landowners who used economic retribution to enforce Jim Crow segregation and disenfranchisement laws.*

And we are not wrong, we are not wrong in what we are doing. (Well) If we are wrong, the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong.[3] (Yes sir) [applause] If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. (Yes) [applause] If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong. (That's right) [applause] If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer that never came down to earth. (Yes) [applause] If we are wrong, justice is a lie (Yes). Love has no meaning. [applause] And we are determined here in Montgomery to work and fight until justice runs down like water (Yes) [applause], and righteousness like a mighty stream.[4] (Keep talking) [applause]

I want to say that in all of our actions we must stick together. (That's right) [applause] Unity is the great need of the hour (Well, That's right), and if we are united we can get many of the things that we not only desire but which we justly deserve. (Yeah) And don't let anybody frighten you. (Yeah) We are not afraid of what we are doing (Oh no), because we are doing it within the law. (All right) There is never a time in our American democracy that we must ever think we're wrong when we protest. (Yes sir) We reserve that right. When labor all over this nation came to see that it would be trampled over by capitalistic power, it was nothing wrong with labor getting together and organizing and protesting for its rights. (That's right)

We, the disinherited of this land, we who have been oppressed so long, are tired of going through the long night of captivity. And now we are reaching out for the daybreak of freedom and justice and equality. [applause] May I say to you my friends, as I come to a close, and just giving some idea of why we are assembled here, that we must keep-and I want to stress this, in all of our doings, in all of our deliberations here this evening and all of the week and while-whatever we do, we must keep God in the forefront. (Yeah) Let us be Christian in all of our actions. (That's right) But I want to tell you this evening that it is not enough for us to talk about love, love is one of the pivotal points of the Christian face, faith. There is another side called justice. And justice is really love in calculation. (All right) Justice is love correcting that which revolts against love. (Well)

The Almighty God himself is not the only, not the, not the God just standing out saying through Hosea, "I love you, Israel." He's also the God that stands up before the nations and said: "Be still and know that I'm God (Yeah), that if you don't obey me I will break the backbone of your power (Yeah) and slap you out of the orbits of your international and national relationships." (That's right) Standing beside love is always justice, and we are only using the tools of justice. Not only are we using the tools of persuasion, but we've come to see that we've got to use the tools of coercion. Not only is this thing a process of education, but it is also a process of legislation. [applause] As we stand and sit here this evening and as we prepare ourselves for what lies ahead, let us go out with a grim and bold determination that we

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--- French and Abernathy speak --

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I can hear a voice saying, "If you do it unto the least of these, my brother, you do it unto me."[5]

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[5] *Matthew 25:40*

National Civil Rights Museum

"Where Do We Go From Here?": Address Delivered at the 10th SCLC Convention

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Weeks after Dr. King delivered his controversial "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" speech, he began receiving criticism from other civil rights leaders, the mainstream media and the United States government. His views and philosophies remained nonviolent; however, his tone and demeanor towards peace and justice were not as passive as they once were. Deeply concerned with the overwhelming amounts of poverty in the United States, Dr. King targeted reform of the economic disparities between the funding of the war and the American people who were fighting the war. Delivered in August 1967 at the 10th annual SCLC conference in Atlanta, Dr. King's "Where Do We Go From Here" was his most radical to date. Dr. King, first and foremost a preacher, gave this speech to a room of fellow preachers. The following is a full transcript of that speech.

"WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?": ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE 10TH SCLC CONVENTION:

Dr. Abernathy, our distinguished vice president, fellow delegates to this, the tenth annual session of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, my brothers and sisters from not only all over the South, but from all over the United States of America: ten years ago during the piercing chill of a January day and on the heels of the year-long Montgomery bus boycott, a group of approximately one hundred Negro leaders from across the South assembled in this church and agreed on the need for an organization to be formed that could serve as a channel through which local protest organizations in the South could coordinate their protest activities.[1] It was this meeting that gave birth to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

And when our organization was formed ten years ago, racial segregation was still a structured part of the architecture of southern society. Negroes with the pangs of hunger and the anguish of thirst were denied access to the average lunch counter. The downtown restaurants were still off-limits for the black man. Negroes, burdened with the fatigue of travel, were still barred from the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. Negro boys and girls in dire need of recreational activities were not allowed to inhale the fresh air of the big city parks. Negroes in desperate need of allowing their mental buckets to sink deep into the wells of knowledge were confronted with a firm "no" when they sought to use the city libraries. Ten years ago, legislative halls of the South were still ringing loud with such words as "interposition" and "nullification."

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All types of conniving methods were still being used to keep the Negro from becoming a registered voter. A decade ago, not a single Negro entered the legislative chambers of the South except as a porter or a chauffeur. Ten years ago, all too many Negroes were still harried by day and haunted by night by a corroding sense of fear and a nagging sense of nobody-ness. (Yeah)

But things are different now. In assault after assault, we caused the sagging walls of segregation to come tumbling down. During this era the entire edifice of segregation was profoundly shaken. This is an accomplishment whose consequences are deeply felt by every southern Negro in his daily life. (Oh yeah) It is no longer possible to count the number of public establishments that are open to Negroes. Ten years ago, Negroes seemed almost invisible to the larger society, and the facts of their harsh lives were unknown to the majority of the nation. But today, civil rights is a dominating issue in every state, crowding the pages of the press and the daily conversation of white Americans. In this decade of change, the Negro stood up and confronted his oppressor. He faced the bullies and the guns, and the dogs and the tear gas. He put himself squarely before the vicious mobs and moved with strength and dignity toward them and decisively defeated them. And the courage with which he confronted enraged mobs dissolved the stereotype of the grinning, submissive Uncle Tom.[2] He came out of his struggle integrated only slightly in the external society, but powerfully integrated within. This was a victory that had to precede all other gains.

In short, over the last ten years the Negro decided to straighten his back up, realizing that a man cannot ride your back unless it is bent. (Yes, That's right) We made our government write new laws to alter some of the cruelest injustices that affected us. We made an indifferent and unconcerned nation rise from lethargy and subpoenaed its conscience to appear before the judgment seat of morality on the whole question of civil rights. We gained manhood in the nation that had always called us "boy." It would be hypocritical indeed if I allowed modesty to forbid my saying that SCLC stood at the forefront of all of the watershed movements that brought these monumental changes in the South. For this, we can feel a legitimate pride. But in spite of a decade of significant progress, the problem is far from solved. The deep rumbling of discontent in our cities is indicative of the fact that the plant of freedom has grown only a bud and not yet a flower.

And before discussing the awesome responsibilities that we face in the days ahead, let us take an inventory of our programmatic action and activities over the past year. Last year as we met in Jackson, Mississippi, we were painfully aware of the struggle of our brothers in Grenada, Mississippi. After living for a hundred or more years under the yoke of total segregation, the Negro citizens of this northern Delta hamlet banded together in nonviolent warfare against racial discrimination under the leadership of

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[2] *The term "Uncle Tom" is taken from Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 abolitionist novel Uncle Tom's Cabin. The contemporary use of "Uncle Tom" refers to African Americans who are overly subservient to Whites, and willing to betray their cultural and community to gain favor with Whites.*

our affiliate chapter and organization there. The fact of this non-destructive rebellion was as spectacular as were its results. In a few short weeks the Grenada County Movement challenged every aspect of the society's exploitative life. Stores which denied employment were boycotted; voter registration increased by thousands. We can never forget the courageous action of the people of Grenada who moved our nation and its federal courts to powerful action in behalf of school integration, giving Grenada one of the most integrated school systems in America. The battle is far from over, but the black people of Grenada have achieved forty of fifty-three demands through their persistent nonviolent efforts.

Slowly but surely, our southern affiliates continued their building and organizing. Seventy-nine counties conducted voter registration drives, while double that number carried on political education and get-out-the-vote efforts. In spite of press opinions, our staff is still overwhelmingly a southern-based staff. One hundred and five persons have worked across the South under the direction of Hosea Williams. What used to be primarily a voter registration staff is actually a multifaceted program dealing with the total life of the community, from farm cooperatives, business development, tutorials, credit unions, etcetera. Especially to be commended are those ninety-nine communities and their staffs which maintain regular mass meetings throughout the year.

Our Citizenship Education Program continues to lay the solid foundation of adult education and community organization upon which all social change must ultimately rest. This year, five hundred local leaders received training at Dorchester and ten community centers through our Citizenship Education Program. They were trained in literacy, consumer education, planned parenthood, and many other things. And this program, so ably directed by Mrs. Dorothy Cotton, Mrs. Septima Clark, and their staff of eight persons, continues to cover ten southern states. Our auxiliary feature of C.E.P. is the aid which they have given to poor communities, poor counties in receiving and establishing O.E.O. projects. With the competent professional guidance of our marvelous staff member, Miss Mew Soong-Li, Lowndes and Wilcox counties in Alabama have pioneered in developing outstanding poverty programs totally controlled and operated by residents of the area.

Perhaps the area of greatest concentration of my efforts has been in the cities of Chicago and Cleveland.[3] Chicago has been a wonderful proving ground for our work in the North. There have been no earth-shaking victories, but neither has there been failure. Our open housing marches, which finally brought about an agreement which actually calls the power structure of Chicago to capitulate to the civil rights movement, these marches and the agreement have finally begun to pay off. After the season of delay around election periods, the Leadership Conference,

[3] *The Great Migration 1915 – 1960 was the massive movement of over 5 million African Americans from the south to urban centers in the North and West, like Chicago and Cleveland, to escape racial violence and pursue better economic opportunities.*

organized to meet our demands for an open city, has finally begun to implement the programs agreed to last summer.

But this is not the most important aspect of our work. As a result of our tenant union organizing, we have begun a four million dollar rehabilitation project, which will renovate deteriorating buildings and allow their tenants the opportunity to own their own homes. This pilot project was the inspiration for the new home ownership bill, which Senator Percy introduced in Congress only recently.

The most dramatic success in Chicago has been Operation Breadbasket. Through Operation Breadbasket we have now achieved for the Negro community of Chicago more than twenty-two hundred new jobs with an income of approximately eighteen million dollars a year, new income to the Negro community. [Applause] But not only have we gotten jobs through Operation Breadbasket in Chicago; there was another area through this economic program, and that was the development of financial institutions which were controlled by Negroes and which were sensitive to problems of economic deprivation of the Negro community. The two banks in Chicago that were interested in helping Negro businessmen were largely unable to loan much because of limited assets. Hi-Lo, one of the chain stores in Chicago, agreed to maintain substantial accounts in the two banks, thus increasing their ability to serve the needs of the Negro community. And I can say to you today that as a result of Operation Breadbasket in Chicago, both of these Negro-operated banks have now more than double their assets, and this has been done in less than a year by the work of Operation Breadbasket. [applause]

In addition, the ministers learned that Negro scavengers had been deprived of significant accounts in the ghetto.[4] Whites controlled even the garbage of Negroes. Consequently, the chain stores agreed to contract with Negro scavengers to service at least the stores in Negro areas. Negro insect and rodent exterminators, as well as janitorial services, were likewise excluded from major contracts with chain stores. The chain stores also agreed to utilize these services. It also became apparent that chain stores advertised only rarely in Negro-owned community newspapers. This area of neglect was also negotiated, giving community newspapers regular, substantial accounts. And finally, the ministers found that Negro contractors, from painters to masons, from electricians to excavators, had also been forced to remain small by the monopolies of white contractors. Breadbasket negotiated agreements on new construction and rehabilitation work for the chain stores. These several interrelated aspects of economic development, all based on the power of organized consumers, hold great possibilities for dealing with the problems of Negroes in other northern cities. The kinds of requests made by Breadbasket in Chicago can be made not only of chain stores, but of almost any major industry in any city in the country.

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[4] *By definition, a ghetto is a section of a city where minority groups are segregated -- often due to social, legal, or economic oppression. In reality, in the United States, ghettos are a result of the practice of redlining, denying home loans and financial services, or other forms of oppression to African Americans and other minorities.*

And so Operation Breadbasket has a very simple program, but a powerful one. It simply says, "If you respect my dollar, you must respect my person." It simply says that we will no longer spend our money where we can not get substantial jobs. [applause]

In Cleveland, Ohio, a group of ministers have formed an Operation Breadbasket through our program there and have moved against a major dairy company. Their requests include jobs, advertising in Negro newspapers, and depositing funds in Negro financial institutions. This effort resulted in something marvelous. I went to Cleveland just last week to sign the agreement with Sealtest. We went to get the facts about their employment; we discovered that they had 442 employees and only forty-three were Negroes, yet the Negro population of Cleveland is thirty-five percent of the total population. They refused to give us all of the information that we requested, and we said in substance, "Mr. Sealtest, we're sorry. We aren't going to burn your store down. We aren't going to throw any bricks in the window. But we are going to put picket signs around and we are going to put leaflets out and we are going to our pulpits and tell them not to sell Sealtest products, and not to purchase Sealtest products."

We did that. We went through the churches. Reverend Dr. Hoover, who pastors the largest church in Cleveland, who's here today, and all of the ministers got together and got behind this program. We went to every store in the ghetto and said, "You must take Sealtest products off of your counters. If not, we're going to boycott your whole store." (That's right) A&P refused. We put picket lines around A&P; they have a hundred and some stores in Cleveland, and we picketed A&P and closed down eighteen of them in one day. Nobody went in A&P. [applause] The next day Mr. A&P was calling on us, and Bob Brown, who is here on our board and who is a public relations man representing a number of firms, came in. They called him in because he worked for A&P, also; and they didn't know he worked for us, too. [laughter] Bob Brown sat down with A&P, and he said, they said, "Now, Mr. Brown, what would you advise us to do." He said, "I would advise you to take Sealtest products off of all of your counters." A&P agreed next day not only to take Sealtest products off of the counters in the ghetto, but off of the counters of every A&P store in Cleveland, and they said to Sealtest, "If you don't reach an agreement with SCLC and Operation Breadbasket, we will take Sealtest products off of every A&P store in the state of Ohio."

The next day [applause], the next day the Sealtest people were talking nice [laughter], they were very humble. And I am proud to say that I went to Cleveland just last Tuesday, and I sat down with the Sealtest people and some seventy ministers from Cleveland, and we signed the agreement. This effort resulted in a number of jobs, which will bring almost five hundred thousand dollars of new income to the Negro community a year. [applause] We also said to Sealtest, "The problem that we face is that the ghetto is a domestic colony that's constantly drained without being replenished. And you are always telling us to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps, and yet we are being robbed every day. Put something back in the ghetto." So along with our demand for jobs, we said, "We also demand that you put money in the Negro savings and loan association and that you take ads, advertise, in the Cleveland

Call & Post, the Negro newspaper." So along with the new jobs, Sealtest has now deposited thousands of dollars in the Negro bank of Cleveland and has already started taking ads in the Negro newspaper in that city. This is the power of Operation Breadbasket. [applause]

Now, for fear that you may feel that it's limited to Chicago and Cleveland, let me say to you that we've gotten even more than that. In Atlanta, Georgia, Breadbasket has been equally successful in the South. Here the emphasis has been divided between governmental employment and private industry. And while I do not have time to go into the details, I want to commend the men who have been working with it here: the Reverend Bennett, the Reverend Joe Boone, the Reverend J. C. Ward, Reverend Dorsey, Reverend Greer, and I could go on down the line, and they have stood up along with all of the other ministers. But here is the story that's not printed in the newspapers in Atlanta: as a result of Operation Breadbasket, over the last three years, we have added about twenty-five million dollars of new income to the Negro community every year. [applause]

Now as you know, Operation Breadbasket has now gone national in the sense that we had a national conference in Chicago and agreed to launch a nationwide program, which you will hear more about.

Finally, SCLC has entered the field of housing. Under the leadership of attorney James Robinson, we have already contracted to build 152 units of low-income housing with apartments for the elderly on a choice downtown Atlanta site under the sponsorship of Ebenezer Baptist Church. This is the first project [applause], this is the first project of a proposed southwide Housing Development Corporation which we hope to develop in conjunction with SCLC, and through this corporation we hope to build housing from Mississippi to North Carolina using Negro workmen, Negro architects, Negro attorneys, and Negro financial institutions throughout. And it is our feeling that in the next two or three years, we can build right here in the South forty million dollars worth of new housing for Negroes, and with millions and millions of dollars in income coming to the Negro community.[5] [applause]

Now there are many other things that I could tell you, but time is passing. This, in short, is an account of SCLC's work over the last year. It is a record of which we can all be proud.

With all the struggle and all the achievements, we must face the fact, however, that the Negro still lives in the basement of the Great Society.[6] He is still at the bottom, despite the few who have penetrated to slightly higher levels. Even where the door has been forced partially open, mobility for the Negro is still sharply restricted. There is often no bottom at which

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[5] *Inadequate housing remains a civil rights issue in the United States. During Jim Crow, African Americans were forced into inferior housing by racist laws, redlining, and other unfair practices. The SCLC began projects to ensure safe and comfortable housing for the African American community while using all Black labor to ensure jobs for the community as well.*

[6] *The Great Society was President Lyndon B. Johnson's domestic policy initiative aimed at eliminating poverty and racial injustice.*

to start, and when there is there's almost no room at the top. In consequence, Negroes are still impoverished aliens in an affluent society. They are too poor even to rise with the society, too impoverished by the ages to be able to ascend by using their own resources. And the Negro did not do this himself; it was done to him. For more than half of his American history, he was enslaved. Yet, he built the spanning bridges and the grand mansions, the sturdy docks and stout factories of the South. His unpaid labor made cotton "King" and established America as a significant nation in international commerce. Even after his release from chattel slavery, the nation grew over him, submerging him. It became the richest, most powerful society in the history of man, but it left the Negro far behind.[7]

And so we still have a long, long way to go before we reach the promised land of freedom. Yes, we have left the dusty soils of Egypt, and we have crossed a Red Sea that had for years been hardened by a long and piercing winter of massive resistance, but before we reach the majestic shores of the promised land, there will still be gigantic mountains of opposition ahead and prodigious hilltops of injustice. We still need some Paul Revere of conscience to alert every hamlet and every village of America that revolution is still at hand. Yes, we need a chart; we need a compass; indeed, we need some North Star to guide us into a future shrouded with impenetrable uncertainties.

Now, in order to answer the question, "Where do we go from here?" which is our theme, we must first honestly recognize where we are now. When the Constitution was written, a strange formula to determine taxes and representation declared that the Negro was sixty percent of a person.[8] Today another curious formula seems to declare he is fifty percent of a person. Of the good things in life, the Negro has approximately one half those of whites. Of the bad things of life, he has twice those of whites. Thus, half of all Negroes live in substandard housing. And Negroes have half the income of whites. When we turn to the negative experiences of life, the Negro has a double share: There are twice as many unemployed; the rate of infant mortality among Negroes is double that of whites; and there are twice as many Negroes dying in Vietnam as whites in proportion to their size in the population.

In other spheres, the figures are equally alarming. In elementary schools, Negroes lag one to three years behind whites, and their segregated schools (Yeah) receive substantially less money per student than the white schools. (Those schools) One-twentieth as many Negroes as whites attend college. Of employed Negroes, seventy-five percent hold menial jobs. This is where we are.

Where do we go from here? First, we must massively assert our dignity and worth.

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[7] *By 1860, the American South, through enslaved labor, produced the vast majority of the world's cotton making it a "King" among crops.*

[8] *The Three-Fifths Compromise, introduced during the 1787 Constitutional Convention, determined the number of representatives and Electoral College votes per state, by counting three out of every five enslaved people. While the compromise was never intended to be an indicator of the humanity of Black people, it has been employed as a rhetorical device in illustrating the legacy of racial oppression and discrimination experienced by African Americans.*

We must stand up amid a system that still oppresses us and develop an unassailable and majestic sense of values. We must no longer be ashamed of being black. The job of arousing manhood within a people that have been taught for so many centuries that they are nobody is not easy.

Even semantics have conspired to make that which is black seem ugly and degrading. (Yes) In Roget's Thesaurus there are some 120 synonyms for blackness and at least sixty of them are offensive, such words as blot, soot, grim, devil, and foul. And there are some 134 synonyms for whiteness and all are favorable, expressed in such words as purity, cleanliness, chastity, and innocence. A white lie is better than a black lie. (Yes) The most degenerate member of a family is the "black sheep." (Yes) Ossie Davis has suggested that maybe the English language should be reconstructed so that teachers will not be forced to teach the Negro child sixty ways to despise himself, and thereby perpetuate his false sense of inferiority, and the white child 134 ways to adore himself, and thereby perpetuate his false sense of superiority. [applause] The tendency to ignore the Negro's contribution to American life and strip him of his personhood is as old as the earliest history books and as contemporary as the morning's newspaper.

To offset this cultural homicide, the Negro must rise up with an affirmation of his own Olympian manhood. Any movement for the Negro's freedom that overlooks this necessity is only waiting to be buried. As long as the mind is enslaved, the body can never be free. Psychological freedom, a firm sense of self-esteem, is the most powerful weapon against the long night of physical slavery. No Lincolnian Emancipation Proclamation, no Johnsonian civil rights bill can totally bring this kind of freedom.[9] The Negro will only be free when he reaches down to the inner depths of his own being and signs with the pen and ink of assertive manhood his own emancipation proclamation. And with a spirit straining toward true self-esteem, the Negro must boldly throw off the manacles of self-abnegation and say to himself and to the world, "I am somebody. I am a person. I am a man with dignity and honor. (Go ahead) I have a rich and noble history, however painful and exploited that history has been. Yes, I was a slave through my foreparents (That's right), and now I'm not ashamed of that. I'm ashamed of the people who were so sinful to make me a slave." (Yes sir) Yes [applause], yes, we must stand up and say, "I'm black , but I'm black and beautiful." This, this self-affirmation is the black man's need, made compelling by the white man's crimes against him.

Now another basic challenge is to discover how to organize our strength in to economic and political power. Now no one can deny that the Negro is in dire need of this kind of legitimate power. Indeed, one of the great problems that the Negro confronts is his lack of power. From the old plantations of the South to the newer ghettos of the North, the Negro has been confined to a life of voicelessness (That's true) and powerlessness. (So true)

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[9] *The Emancipation Proclamation (1863), a military order from President Abraham Licoln freeing enslaved people in Union-occupied parts of the Confederacy. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 federally outlawed segregation and discrimination based on race.*

Stripped of the right to make decisions concerning his life and destiny he has been subject to the authoritarian and sometimes whimsical decisions of the white power structure. The plantation and the ghetto were created by those who had power, both to confine those who had no power and to perpetuate their powerlessness. Now the problem of transforming the ghetto, therefore, is a problem of power, a confrontation between the forces of power demanding change and the forces of power dedicated to the preserving of the status quo. Now, power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change. Walter Reuther defined power one day. He said, "Power is the ability of a labor union like UAW to make the most powerful corporation in the world, General Motors, say, 'Yes' when it wants to say 'No.' That's power."[10]

Now a lot of us are preachers, and all of us have our moral convictions and concerns, and so often we have problems with power. But there is nothing wrong with power if power is used correctly.

You see, what happened is that some of our philosophers got off base. And one of the great problems of history is that the concepts of love and power have usually been contrasted as opposites, polar opposites, so that love is identified with a resignation of power, and power with a denial of love. It was this misinterpretation that caused the philosopher Nietzsche, who was a philosopher of the will to power, to reject the Christian concept of love. It was this same misinterpretation which induced Christian theologians to reject Nietzsche's philosophy of the will to power in the name of the Christian idea of love.

Now, we got to get this thing right. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best, power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love. (Speak) And this is what we must see as we move on.

Now what has happened is that we've had it wrong and mixed up in our country, and this has led Negro Americans in the past to seek their goals through love and moral suasion devoid of power, and white Americans to seek their goals through power devoid of love and conscience. It is leading a few extremists today to advocate for Negroes the same destructive and conscienceless power that they have justly abhorred in whites. It is precisely this collision of immoral power with powerless morality which constitutes the major crisis of our times. (Yes)

Now we must develop progress, or rather, a program—and I can't stay on this long—that will drive the nation to a guaranteed

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[10] *Founded in 1935, the United Auto Workers (UAW) is a union that originally began with auto workers and now supports workers in various industries, including auto, health, and education. The union was a strong ally of the Civil Rights Movement. Unions are organizations of workers that use collective action to achieve collective goals, like higher wages, safer worker conditions, and appropriate compensation.*

annual income. Now, early in the century this proposal would have been greeted with ridicule and denunciation as destructive of initiative and responsibility. At that time economic status was considered the measure of the individual's abilities and talents. And in the thinking of that day, the absence of worldly goods indicated a want of industrious habits and moral fiber. We've come a long way in our understanding of human motivation and of the blind operation of our economic system. Now we realize that dislocations in the market operation of our economy and the prevalence of discrimination thrust people into idleness and bind them in constant or frequent unemployment against their will. The poor are less often dismissed, I hope, from our conscience today by being branded as inferior and incompetent. We also know that no matter how dynamically the economy develops and expands, it does not eliminate all poverty.

The problem indicates that our emphasis must be twofold: We must create full employment, or we must create incomes. People must be made consumers by one method or the other. Once they are placed in this position, we need to be concerned that the potential of the individual is not wasted. New forms of work that enhance the social good will have to be devised for those for whom traditional jobs are not available. In 1879 Henry George anticipated this state of affairs when he wrote in Progress and Poverty:

The fact is that the work which improves the condition of mankind, the work which extends knowledge and increases power and enriches literature and elevates thought, is not done to secure a living. It is not the work of slaves driven to their tasks either by the, that of a taskmaster or by animal necessities. It is the work of men who somehow find a form of work that brings a security for its own sake and a state of society where want is abolished.

Work of this sort could be enormously increased, and we are likely to find that the problem of housing, education, instead of preceding the elimination of poverty, will themselves be affected if poverty is first abolished. The poor, transformed into purchasers, will do a great deal on their own to alter housing decay. Negroes, who have a double disability, will have a greater effect on discrimination when they have the additional weapon of cash to use in their struggle.

Beyond these advantages, a host of positive psychological changes inevitably will result from widespread economic security. The dignity of the individual will flourish when the decisions concerning his life are in his own hands, when he has the assurance that his income is stable and certain, and when he knows that he has the means to seek self-improvement. Personal conflicts between husband, wife, and children will diminish when the unjust measurement of human worth on a scale of dollars is eliminated.

Now, our country can do this. John Kenneth Galbraith said that a guaranteed annual income could be done for about twenty billion dollars a year. And I say to you today, that if our nation can spend thirty-five billion dollars a year to fight an unjust, evil war in Vietnam, and twenty billion dollars to put a man on the moon, it can spend billions of dollars to put God's children on their own two feet right here on earth.

Now, let me rush on to say we must reaffirm our commitment to nonviolence. And I want to stress this. The futility of violence in the struggle for racial justice has been tragically etched in all the recent Negro riots. Now, yesterday, I tried to analyze the riots and deal with the causes for them. Today I want to give the other side. There is something painfully sad about a riot. One sees screaming youngsters and angry adults fighting hopelessly and aimlessly against impossible odds. And deep down within them, you perceive a desire for self-destruction, a kind of suicidal longing.

Occasionally, Negroes contend that the 1965 Watts riot and the other riots in various cities represented effective civil rights action. But those who express this view always end up with stumbling words when asked what concrete gains have been won as a result. At best, the riots have produced a little additional anti-poverty money allotted by frightened government officials and a few water sprinklers to cool the children of the ghettos. It is something like improving the food in the prison while the people remain securely incarcerated behind bars. Nowhere have the riots won any concrete improvement such as have the organized protest demonstrations.

And when one tries to pin down advocates of violence as to what acts would be effective, the answers are blatantly illogical. Sometimes they talk of overthrowing racist state and local governments and they talk about guerrilla warfare. They fail to see that no internal revolution has ever succeeded in overthrowing a government by violence unless the government had already lost the allegiance and effective control of its armed forces. Anyone in his right mind knows that this will not happen in the United States. In a violent racial situation, the power structure has the local police, the state troopers, the National Guard, and finally, the army to call on, all of which are predominantly white. (Yes) Furthermore, few, if any, violent revolutions have been successful unless the violent minority had the sympathy and support of the non-resisting majority. Castro may have had only a few Cubans actually fighting with him and up in the hills (Yes), but he would have never overthrown the Batista regime unless he had had the sympathy of the vast majority of Cuban people. It is perfectly clear that a violent revolution on the part of American blacks would find no sympathy and support from the white population and very little from the majority of the Negroes themselves.

This is no time for romantic illusions and empty philosophical debates about freedom. This is a time for action. What is needed is a strategy for change, a tactical program that will bring the Negro into the mainstream of American life as quickly as possible. So far, this has only been offered by the nonviolent movement. Without recognizing this we will end up with solutions that don't solve, answers that don't answer, and explanations that don't explain.

And so I say to you today that I still stand by nonviolence. And I am still convinced, and I'm still convinced that it is the most potent weapon available to the Negro in his struggle for justice in this country.

And the other thing is, I'm concerned about a better world. I'm concerned about justice; I'm concerned about brotherhood; I'm concerned about truth. And when one is concerned about that, he can never advocate

violence. For through violence you may murder a murderer, but you can't murder murder. Through violence you may murder a liar, but you can't establish truth. Through violence you may murder a hater, but you can't murder hate through violence. Darkness cannot put out darkness; only light can do that.

And I say to you, I have also decided to stick with love, for I know that love is ultimately the only answer to mankind's problems. And I'm going to talk about it everywhere I go. I know it isn't popular to talk about it in some circles today. (No) And I'm not talking about emotional bosh when I talk about love; I'm talking about a strong, demanding love. (Yes) For I have seen too much hate. I've seen too much hate on the faces of sheriffs in the South. I've seen hate on the faces of too many Klansmen and too many White Citizens Councilors in the South to want to hate, myself, because every time I see it, I know that it does something to their faces and their personalities, and I say to myself that hate is too great a burden to bear.[11] I have decided to love. [applause] If you are seeking the highest good, I think you can find it through love. And the beautiful thing is that we aren't moving wrong when we do it, because John was right, God is love. (Yes) He who hates does not know God, but he who loves has the key that unlocks the door to the meaning of ultimate reality.

And so I say to you today, my friends, that you may be able to speak with the tongues of men and angels (All right); you may have the eloquence of articulate speech; but if you have not love, it means nothing. (That's right) Yes, you may have the gift of prophecy; you may have the gift of scientific prediction (Yes sir) and understand the behavior of molecules (All right); you may break into the storehouse of nature (Yes sir) and bring forth many new insights; yes, you may ascend to the heights of academic achievement (Yes sir) so that you have all knowledge (Yes sir, Yes); and you may boast of your great institutions of learning and the boundless extent of your degrees; but if you have not love, all of these mean absolutely nothing. (Yes) You may even give your goods to feed the poor (Yes sir); you may bestow great gifts to charity (Speak); and you may tower high in philanthropy; but if you have not love, your charity means nothing. (Yes sir) You may even give your body to be burned and die the death of a martyr, and your spilt blood may be a symbol of honor for generations yet unborn, and thousands may praise you as one of history's greatest heroes; but if you have not love (Yes, All right), your blood was spilt in vain. What I'm trying to get you to see this morning is that a man may be self-centered in his self-denial and self-righteous in his self-sacrifice. His generosity may feed his ego, and his piety may feed his pride. (Speak) So without love, benevolence becomes egotism, and martyrdom becomes spiritual pride.

I want to say to you as I move to my conclusion, as we talk about "Where do we go from here?" that we must honestly face the fact that the movement must address itself to the question of restructuring the whole of American society. There are forty

[11] *White Citizens' Councils were public groups of white businessmen, civic leaders, and landowners who used economic retribution and other tactics to enforce segregation and disenfranchisement laws.*

million poor people here, and one day we must ask the question, "Why are there forty million poor people in America?" And when you begin to ask that question, you are raising a question about the economic system, about a broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalistic economy. And I'm simply saying that more and more, we've got to begin to ask questions about the whole society. We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life's marketplace. But one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. It means that questions must be raised. And you see, my friends, when you deal with this you begin to ask the question, "Who owns the oil?" You begin to ask the question, "Who owns the iron ore?" You begin to ask the question, "Why is it that people have to pay water bills in a world that's two-thirds water?" These are words that must be said.

Now, don't think you have me in a bind today. I'm not talking about communism. What I'm talking about is far beyond communism. My inspiration didn't come from Karl Marx; my inspiration didn't come from Engels; my inspiration didn't come from Trotsky; my inspiration didn't come from Lenin. Yes, I read Communist Manifesto and Das Kapital a long time ago, and I saw that maybe Marx didn't follow Hegel enough. He took his dialectics, but he left out his idealism and his spiritualism. And he went over to a German philosopher by the name of Feuerbach, and took his materialism and made it into a system that he called "dialectical materialism." I have to reject that.

What I'm saying to you this morning is communism forgets that life is individual. Capitalism forgets that life is social. And the kingdom of brotherhood is found neither in the thesis of communism nor the antithesis of capitalism, but in a higher synthesis. It is found in a higher synthesis that combines the truths of both. Now, when I say questioning the whole society, it means ultimately coming to see that the problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war are all tied together. These are the triple evils that are interrelated.

And if you will let me be a preacher just a little bit. One day, one night, a juror came to Jesus and he wanted to know what he could do to be saved. Jesus didn't get bogged down on the kind of isolated approach of what you shouldn't do. Jesus didn't say, "Now Nicodemus, you must stop lying." He didn't say, "Nicodemus, now you must not commit adultery." He didn't say, "Now Nicodemus, you must stop cheating if you are doing that." He didn't say, "Nicodemus, you must stop drinking liquor if you are doing that excessively." He said something altogether different, because Jesus realized something basic: that if a man will lie, he will steal. And if a man will steal, he will kill. So instead of just getting bogged down on one thing, Jesus looked at him and said, "Nicodemus, you must be born again."[12]

In other words, "Your whole structure must be changed." A nation that will keep people in slavery for 244 years will "thingify" them and make them things. And therefore, they will exploit them and poor people generally economically. And a nation that will exploit economically will have to have foreign investments and everything else, and it will have to use its military might to protect them. All of these problems are tied together.

What I'm saying today is that we must go from this convention and say, "America, you must be born again!"

And so, I conclude by saying today that we have a task, and let us go out with a divine dissatisfaction.

Let us be dissatisfied until America will no longer have a high blood pressure of creeds and an anemia of deeds.

Let us be dissatisfied until the tragic walls that separate the outer city of wealth and comfort from the inner city of poverty and despair shall be crushed by the battering rams of the forces of justice.

Let us be dissatisfied until those who live on the outskirts of hope are brought into the metropolis of daily security.

Let us be dissatisfied until slums are cast into the junk heaps of history, and every family will live in a decent, sanitary home.

Let us be dissatisfied until the dark yesterdays of segregated schools will be transformed into bright tomorrows of quality integrated education.

Let us be dissatisfied until integration is not seen as a problem but as an opportunity to participate in the beauty of diversity.

Let us be dissatisfied until men and women, however black they may be, will be judged on the basis of the content of their character, not on the basis of the color of their skin. Let us be dissatisfied.

Let us be dissatisfied until every state capitol will be housed by a governor who will do justly, who will love mercy, and who will walk humbly with his God.

Let us be dissatisfied until from every city hall, justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Let us be dissatisfied until that day when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and every man will sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid.

Let us be dissatisfied, and men will recognize that out of one blood God made all men to dwell upon the face of the earth.

Let us be dissatisfied until that day when nobody will shout, "White Power!" when nobody will shout, "Black Power!" but everybody will talk about God's power and human power.

And I must confess, my friends, that the road ahead will not always be smooth. There will still be rocky places of frustration and meandering points of bewilderment. There will be inevitable setbacks here and there. And there will be those moments when the buoyancy of hope will be transformed into the fatigue of despair. Our dreams will sometimes be shattered and our ethereal hopes blasted. We may again, with tear-drenched eyes, have to stand before the bier of some courageous civil rights worker whose life will be snuffed out by the dastardly acts of bloodthirsty mobs. But difficult and painful as it is, we must walk on in the days ahead with an audacious faith in the future. And as we continue our charted course,

[12] *John 3:1 -21*

we may gain consolation from the words so nobly left by that great black bard, who was also a great freedom fighter of yesterday, James Weldon Johnson:

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod
Felt in the days
When hope unborn had died.
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place
For which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way
That with tears has been watered.
We have come treading our paths
Through the blood of the slaughtered.
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the bright gleam
Of our bright star is cast.[13]

Let this affirmation be our ringing cry. It will give us the courage to face the uncertainties of the future. It will give our tired feet new strength as we continue our forward stride toward the city of freedom. When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.

Let us realize that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. Let us realize that William Cullen Bryant is right: "Truth, crushed to earth, will rise again." Let us go out realizing that the Bible is right: "Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."[14] This is our hope for the future, and with this faith we will be able to sing in some not too distant tomorrow, with a cosmic past tense, "We have overcome! We have overcome! Deep in my heart, I did believe we would overcome."

King, Martin Luther. “Where Do We Go From Here?”. In *A Call to Conscience: the Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, 165–200. New York: IPM (Intellectual Properties Management), in association with Grand Central Publishing, 2001.

[13] *Excerpted from Lift Every Voice And Sing, also known as the Black National Anthem. Lyrics by James Weldon Johnson and music by his brother John Rosamond Johnson.*
[14] *Galatians 6:7*

ABBREVIATED
"Where Do We Go From Here?": Address Delivered at the 10th SCLC Convention

Weeks after Dr. King delivered his controversial "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" speech, he began receiving criticism from other civil rights leaders, the mainstream media and the United States government. His views and philosophies remained nonviolent; however, his tone and demeanor towards peace and justice were not as passive as they once were. Deeply concerned with the overwhelming amounts of poverty in the United States, Dr. King targeted reform of the economic disparities between the funding of the war and the American people who were fighting the war. Delivered in August 1967 at the 10th annual SCLC conference in Atlanta, Dr. King's "Where Do We Go From Here" was his most radical to date. Dr. King's final book, published in 1967, shares the same title. Below is an excerpt from that speech.

Dr. Abernathy, our distinguished vice president, fellow delegates to this, the tenth annual session of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, my brothers and sisters from not only all over the South, but from all over the United States of America: ten years ago during the piercing chill of a January day and on the heels of the year-long Montgomery bus boycott, a group of approximately one hundred Negro leaders from across the South assembled in this church and agreed on the need for an organization to be formed that could serve as a channel through which local protest organizations in the South could coordinate their protest activities.[1] It was this meeting that gave birth to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

And when our organization was formed ten years ago, racial segregation was still a structured part of the architecture of southern society. Negroes with the pangs of hunger and the anguish of thirst were denied access to the average lunch counter. The downtown restaurants were still off-limits for the black man. Negroes, burdened with the fatigue of travel, were still barred from the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. Negro boys and girls in dire need of recreational activities were not allowed to inhale the fresh air of the big city parks. ….

A decade ago, not a single Negro entered the legislative chambers of the South except as a porter or a chauffeur. Ten years ago, all too many Negroes were still harried by day and haunted by night by a corroding sense of fear and a nagging sense of nobody-ness. (Yeah)

But things are different now. … But today, civil rights is a dominating issue in every state, crowding the pages of the

[1] *The term "Negro" was considered appropriate at the time. Today, the appropriate terms are either African American or Black. A common cultural practice in the African American Protestant Church is for the audience to comment or shout in agreement during the preacher's sermon. Audience comments are usually short affirmations rooted in the Black American call and response tradition which is rooted in West African culture. The audience comments are noted here in parentheses.*

press and the daily conversation of white Americans. In this decade of change, the Negro stood up and confronted his oppressor. He faced the bullies and the guns, and the dogs and the tear gas. He put himself squarely before the vicious mobs and moved with strength and dignity toward them and decisively defeated them. And the courage with which he confronted enraged mobs dissolved the stereotype of the grinning, submissive Uncle Tom.[2] He came out of his struggle integrated only slightly in the external society, but powerfully integrated within. This was a victory that had to precede all other gains.

In short, over the last ten years the Negro decided to straighten his back up, realizing that a man cannot ride your back unless it is bent. … We gained manhood in the nation that had always called us "boy." It would be hypocritical indeed if I allowed modesty to forbid my saying that SCLC stood at the forefront of all of the watershed movements that brought these monumental changes in the South. For this, we can feel a legitimate pride.

With all the struggle and all the achievements, we must face the fact, however, that the Negro still lives in the basement of the Great Society.[3] He is still at the bottom, despite the few who have penetrated to slightly higher levels. Even where the door has been forced partially open, mobility for the Negro is still sharply restricted. There is often no bottom at which to start, and when there is there's almost no room at the top. In consequence, Negroes are still impoverished aliens in an affluent society. They are too poor even to rise with the society, too impoverished by the ages to be able to ascend by using their own resources. And the Negro did not do this himself; it was done to him. For more than half of his American history, he was enslaved. Yet, he built the spanning bridges and the grand mansions, the sturdy docks and stout factories of the South. His unpaid labor made cotton "King" and established America as a significant nation in international commerce.[4] Even after his release from chattel slavery, the nation grew over him, submerging him. It became the richest, most powerful society in the history of man, but it left the Negro far behind.

Now, in order to answer the question, "Where do we go from here?" which is our theme, we must first honestly recognize where we are now. When the Constitution was written, a strange formula to determine taxes and representation declared that the Negro was sixty percent of a person.[5] Today

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[2] *The term "Uncle Tom" is taken from Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 abolitionist novel Uncle Tom's Cabin whose protagonist is an older enslaved man who ultimately dies protecting the identity of slaves who ran away. The contemporary use of "Uncle Tom" refers to African Americans who are overly subservient to Whites, and willing to betray their cultural and community to gain favor with Whites.*

[3] *The Great Society was President Lyndon B. Johnson's domestic policy initiative aimed at eliminating poverty and racial injustice.*

[4] *By 1860, the American South, through enslaved labor , produced the vast majority of the world's cotton making it a "King" among crops.*

[5] *The Three-Fifths Compromise, introduced during the 1787 Constitutional Convention, determined the number of representatives and Electoral College votes per state, by counting three out of every five enslaved people. While the compromise was never intended to be an indicator of the humanity of Black people, it has been employed as a rhetorical device in illustrating the legacy of racial oppression and discrimination experienced by African Americans.*

another curious formula seems to declare he is fifty percent of a person. Of the good things in life, the Negro has approximately one half those of whites. Of the bad things of life, he has twice those of whites. Thus, half of all Negroes live in substandard housing. And Negroes have half the income of whites. When we turn to the negative experiences of life, the Negro has a double share: There are twice as many unemployed; the rate of infant mortality among Negroes is double that of whites; and there are twice as many Negroes dying in Vietnam as whites in proportion to their size in the population.

Where do we go from here? First, we must massively assert our dignity and worth. We must stand up amid a system that still oppresses us and develop an unassailable and majestic sense of values. We must no longer be ashamed of being black. (All right) The job of arousing manhood within a people that have been taught for so many centuries that they are nobody is not easy.

Now another basic challenge is to discover how to organize our strength in to economic and political power. Now no one can deny that the Negro is in dire need of this kind of legitimate power. Indeed, one of the great problems that the Negro confronts is his lack of power. From the old plantations of the South to the newer ghettos of the North, the Negro has been confined to a life of voicelessness and powerlessness.[6] Stripped of the right to make decisions concerning his life and destiny he has been subject to the authoritarian and sometimes whimsical decisions of the white power structure. The plantation and the ghetto were created by those who had power, both to confine those who had no power and to perpetuate their powerlessness. Now the problem of transforming the ghetto, therefore, is a problem of power, a confrontation between the forces of power demanding change and the forces of power dedicated to the preserving of the status quo. Now, power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change.

Now we must develop progress, or rather, a program—and I can't stay on this long—that will drive the nation to a guaranteed annual income. Now, early in the century this proposal would have been greeted with ridicule and denunciation as destructive of initiative and responsibility. At that time economic status was considered the measure of the individual's abilities and talents. And in the thinking of that day, the absence of worldly goods indicated a want of industrious habits and moral fiber. We've come a long way in our understanding of human motivation and of the blind operation of our economic system. Now we realize that dislocations in the market operation of our economy and the prevalence of discrimination thrust people into idleness and bind them in constant or frequent unemployment against their will. The poor are less often dismissed, I hope, from our conscience today by being branded as inferior and incompetent. We

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[6] *By definition, a ghetto is a section of a city where minority groups are segregated -- often due to social, legal, or economic oppression. In reality, in the United States, ghettos are a result of the practice of redlining, denying home loans and financial services, or other forms of oppression to African Americans and other minorities.*

also know that no matter how dynamically the economy develops and expands, it does not eliminate all poverty.

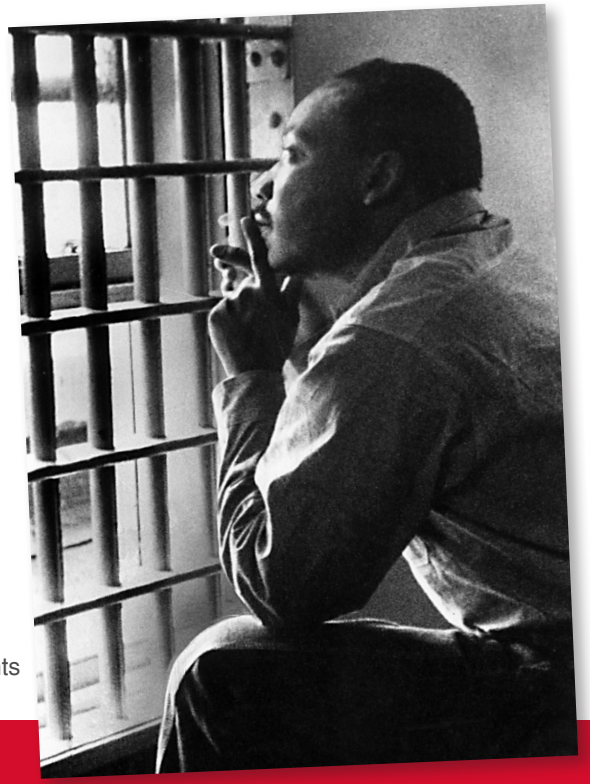
I want to say to you as I move to my conclusion, as we talk about "Where do we go from here?" that we must honestly face the fact that the movement must address itself to the question of restructuring the whole of American society. There are forty million poor people here, and one day we must ask the question, "Why are there forty million poor people in America?" And when you begin to ask that question, you are raising a question about the economic system, about a broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalistic economy. And I'm simply saying that more and more, we've got to begin to ask questions about the whole society. We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life's marketplace. But one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. It means that questions must be raised. And you see, my friends, when you deal with this you begin to ask the question, "Who owns the oil?" You begin to ask the question, "Who owns the iron ore?" You begin to ask the question, "Why is it that people have to pay water bills in a world that's two-thirds water?" These are words that must be said.

King, Martin Luther. “Where Do We Go From Here?”. In *A Call to Conscience: the Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, 165–200. New York: IPM (Intellectual Properties Management), in association with Grand Central Publishing, 2001.

Letter from a Birmingham Jail 1963

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Following a minor setback in Albany Georgia in 1962, Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference vowed to continue the struggle for justice. They traveled to what was known as the most segregated city in the United States in 1963; Birmingham, Alabama. Dr. King and others continued using nonviolent direct action to desegregate downtown business stores. As expected, they were met with hostility and violence specifically from the city's Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor. On Good Friday, April 12, 1963, Dr. King and others were arrested for attempting to march after the city of Birmingham filed an injunction to prevent the protest. During his one week in jail, Dr. King responded to an editorial from local white clergymen as to why the Birmingham Campaign cannot cease. Below, known as the Letter From a Birmingham Jail, Dr. King counters pervasive injustice that would deliver the biggest victory in the civil rights movement to date.



National Civil Rights Museum

LETTER FROM A BIRMINGHAM JAIL 1963:

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights.[1] Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct action program if such were deemed

[1] *Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) - founded in 1956 by 12 Birmingham pastors to dismantle segregation in the city.*

necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here. I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here.[2] Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.[3]

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self purification; and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation.

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[2] *The Birmingham Campaign, an economic boycott and protest designed to desegregate Birmingham's business district, began in early 1963. Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) organized the campaign and invited Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).*

[3] *The term "Negro" was considered appropriate at the time. Today, the appropriate terms are either African American or Black.*

Then, last September, came the opportunity to talk with leaders of Birmingham's economic community. In the course of the negotiations, certain promises were made by the merchants--for example, to remove the stores' humiliating racial signs. On the basis of these promises, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to a moratorium on all demonstrations. As the weeks and months went by, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. A few signs, briefly removed, returned; the others remained. As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?" We decided to schedule our direct action program for the Easter season, realizing that except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic-withdrawal program would be the by product of direct action, we felt that this would be the best time to bring pressure to bear on the merchants for the needed change.

Then it occurred to us that Birmingham's mayoral election was coming up in March, and we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that the Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, had piled up enough votes to be in the run off, we decided again to postpone action until the day after the run off so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues.[4] Like many others, we waited to see Mr. Connor defeated, and to this end we endured postponement after postponement. Having aided in this community need, we felt that our direct action program could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise

[4] Eugene "Bull" Connor (1897 - 1973) was a civic leader in Birmingham, most notably as Commissioner of Public Safety during the Birmingham Campaign. he opposed racial integration and used violent methods, including police dogs and high-powered fire hoses, to maintain segregation in Birmingham.

from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. The purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely. Some have asked: "Why didn't you give the new city administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this query is that the new Birmingham administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one, before it will act. We are sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Albert Boutwell as mayor will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is a much more gentle person than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists, dedicated to maintenance of the status quo.[5] I have hope that Mr. Boutwell will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.[6]

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights.[7] The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek

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[5] *Bull Connor lost the mayoral election on April 2, 1963 to Albert Boutwell, a moderate segregationist.*

[6] *Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) was an American theologian and frequently commented on the cross section of religion, politics, and American public life.*

[7] *In August 1619, the first enslaved Africans arrived in the British colonies, at Jamestown, Virginia.*

to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"--then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience. You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws.[8] One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I it" relationship for an "I thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and sinful. Paul Tillich has said that sin is separation. Is not

[8] On May 17, 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Brown v. the Board of Education outlawed the concept of "separate but equal" in education as established in the 1896 Supreme Court Case Plessy v. Ferguson.

segregation an existential expression of man's tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? Thus it is that I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court, for it is morally right; and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong.

Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal. Let me give another explanation. A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout Alabama all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered. Can any law enacted under such circumstances be considered democratically structured?

Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I have been arrested on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong in having an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade. But such an ordinance becomes unjust when it is used to maintain segregation and to deny citizens the First-Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest.

I hope you are able to see the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience.

We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice;[9] who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God consciousness and never ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber. I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning time in relation to the struggle for freedom.

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[9] *White Citizens' Councils were public groups of white businessmen, civic leaders, and landowners who used economic retribution to enforce Jim Crow segregation and disenfranchisement laws. The Ku Klux Klan was a white terrorist organization that used violence and lynching to enforce second-class citizenship for African Americans.*

I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." Such an attitude stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I began thinking about the fact that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency, made up in part of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, are so drained of self respect and a sense of "somebodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation; and in part of a few middle-class Negroes who, because of a degree of academic and economic security and because in some ways they profit by segregation, have become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred, and it comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up across the nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement. Nourished by the Negro's frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination, this movement is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incorrigible "devil."

I have tried to stand between these two forces, saying that we need emulate neither the "do nothingism" of the complacent nor the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. For there is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I am grateful to God that, through the influence of the Negro church, the way of nonviolence became an integral part of our struggle. If this philosophy had not emerged, by now many streets of the South would, I am convinced, be flowing with blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as "rabble rousers" and "outside agitators" those of us who employ nonviolent direct action, and if they refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes will, out of frustration and despair, seek solace and security in black nationalist ideologies--a development that

would inevitably lead to a frightening racial nightmare. Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice.[10] If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides -and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist. But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."[11] Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream."[12] Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."[13] Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal . . ." So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime--the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

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[10] *Zeitgeist is a German philosophical term meaning "spirit of the age," referring to the intellectual, moral, and cultural characteristics of an era.*

[11] *Matthew 5:44*

[12] *"Justice runs down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream." is a passage from Amos 5:24 found in the Old Testament. King would rhetorically use this phrase throughout his career.*

[13] *Galatians 6:17*

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I had hoped that the white moderate would see this need. Perhaps I was too optimistic; perhaps I expected too much. I suppose I should have realized that few members of the oppressor race can understand the deep groans and passionate yearnings of the oppressed race, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers in the South have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still all too few in quantity, but they are big in quality. Some -such as Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden, James McBride Dabbs, Ann Braden and Sarah Patton Boyle--have written about our struggle in eloquent and prophetic terms. Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They have languished in filthy, roach infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of policemen who view them as "dirty nigger-lovers." Unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, they have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation. Let me take note of my other major disappointment. I have been so greatly disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Reverend Stallings, for your Christian stand on this past Sunday, in welcoming Negroes to your worship service on a nonsegregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Spring Hill College several years ago.

But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say this as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen.

When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church.[14] I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained glass windows.

[14] *Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955. Dr. King served as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, a group formed to lead the year-long boycott.*

In spite of my shattered dreams, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could reach the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed.

I have heard numerous southern religious leaders admonish their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers declare: "Follow this decree because integration is morally right and because the Negro is your brother." In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churchmen stand on the sideline and mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say: "Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern." And I have watched many churches commit themselves to a completely other worldly religion which makes a strange, un-Biblical distinction between body and soul, between the sacred and the secular.

I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the other southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at the South's beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlines of her massive religious education buildings. Over and over I have found myself asking: "What kind of people worship here? Who is their God? Where were their voices when the lips of Governor Barnett dripped with words of interposition and nullification?[15] Where were they when Governor Wallace gave a clarion call for defiance and hatred? Where were their voices of support when bruised and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?"

Yes, these questions are still in my mind. In deep disappointment I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the church. How could I do otherwise? I am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson and the great grandson of preachers. Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and through fear of being nonconformists.

There was a time when the church was very powerful--in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Whenever the early Christians entered a town, the people in power became disturbed

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[15] *Ross R. Barnett was the governor of Mississippi from 1960 - 1964. He was a leader of the Dixiecrats, southern Democrats who supported racial segregation.*

and immediately sought to convict the Christians for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators.'" But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven," called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." By their effort and example they brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contests. Things are different now. So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an archdefender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent--and often even vocal--sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust.

Perhaps I have once again been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and the world? Perhaps I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual church, the church within the church, as the true ekklesia and the hope of the world. But again I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom. They have left their secure congregations and walked the streets of Albany, Georgia, with us. They have gone down the highways of the South on tortuous rides for freedom. Yes, they have gone to jail with us. Some have been dismissed from their churches, have lost the support of their bishops and fellow ministers. But they have acted in the faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. Their witness has been the spiritual salt that has preserved the true meaning of the gospel in these troubled times. They have carved a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment. I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are at present misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny. Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence across the pages of history, we were here. For more than two centuries our forebears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross injustice and shameful humiliation -and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands. Before closing I feel impelled to mention one other

point in your statement that has troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping "order" and "preventing violence." I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I cannot join you in your praise of the Birmingham police department.

It is true that the police have exercised a degree of discipline in handling the demonstrators. In this sense they have conducted themselves rather "nonviolently" in public. But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the past few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. Perhaps Mr. Connor and his policemen have been rather nonviolent in public, as was Chief Pritchett in Albany, Georgia, but they have used the moral means of nonviolence to maintain the immoral end of racial injustice. As T. S. Eliot has said: "The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason."

I wish you had commended the Negro sit inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths, with the noble sense of purpose that enables them to face jeering and hostile mobs, and with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. They will be old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy two year old woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride segregated buses, and who responded with ungrammatical profundity to one who inquired about her weariness: "My feets is tired, but my soul is at rest." They will be the young high school and college students, the young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience' sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judaeo Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Never before have I written so long a letter. I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil-rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood,
Martin Luther King, Jr.

King, Martin Luther. "Letter from the Birmingham jail." In *Why We Can't Wait*, ed. Martin Luther King, Jr., 77-100, 1963.

National Civil Rights Museum

ABBREVIATED
Letter from a Birmingham Jail 1963

Birmingham, Alabama in the 1960s was the most segregated city in the United States. It led the nation in racially motivated bombings, earning the city the nickname "Bombingham." In the spring of 1963, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) organized an economic boycott of the downtown business district during the second-busiest shopping season of the year, the six weeks leading up to Easter. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested on April 12, Good Friday. The same day, an open letter called "A Call to Unity" was published by eight white clergymen, urging activists to refrain from protesting. Dated April 16, Dr. King responded in "A Letter from Birmingham Jail," excerpted below.

One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely.[1] Some have asked: "Why didn't you give the new city administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this query is that the new Birmingham administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one, before it will act. We are sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Albert Boutwell as mayor will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is a much more gentle person than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists, dedicated to maintenance of the status quo.[2] I have hope that Mr. Boutwell will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity.[3] This "Wait" has almost always meant

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[1] *The Birmingham Campaign, an economic boycott and protest designed to desegregate Birmingham's business district, began in early 1963. Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) organized the campaign and invited Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).*

[2] *Eugene "Bull" Connor lost the mayoral election on April 2, 1963 to Albert Boutwell, a moderate segregationist.*

[3] *The term "Negro" was considered appropriate at the time. Today, the appropriate terms are either African American or Black.*

"Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights.[4] The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"--then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience. You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws.[5] One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral

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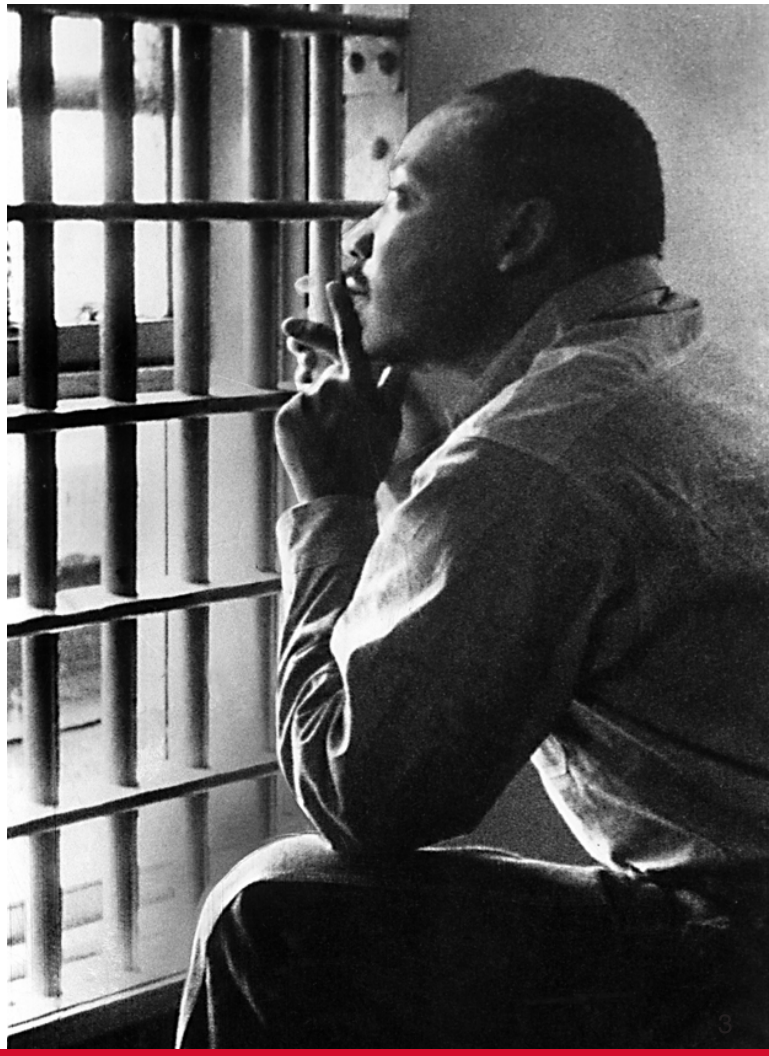
[4] *In August 1619, the first enslaved Africans arrived in the British colonies, at Jamestown, Virginia.*

[5] *On May 17, 1954 with the Brown vs the Board of Education decision, the US Supreme Court struck down 'separate but equal' in Plessy vs. Ferguson in education.*

responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I it" relationship for an "I thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and sinful. Paul Tillich has said that sin is separation. Is not segregation an existential expression of man's tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? Thus it is that I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court, for it is morally right; and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice;[6] who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of



[6] *White Citizens' Councils were public groups of white businessmen, civic leaders, and landowners who used economic retribution to enforce Jim Crow segregation and disenfranchisement laws. The Ku Klux Klan was a white terrorist organization that used violence and lynching to enforce second-class citizenship for African Americans.*

time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God consciousness and never ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber. I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning time in relation to the struggle for freedom. I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." Such an attitude stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe

to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice.[7] If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides -and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist. But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."[8] Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream."[9] Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."[10] Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal . . ." So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime--the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ,

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[7] *Zeitgeist is a German philosophical term meaning "spirit of the age," referring to the intellectual, moral, and cultural characteristics of an era.*

[8] *Matthew 5:44*

[9] *"Justice runs down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream." is a passage from Amos 5:24 found in the Old Testament. King would rhetorically use this phrase throughout his career.*

[10] *Galatians 6:17*

was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say this as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen.

When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church.[11] I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could reach the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed.

I have heard numerous southern religious leaders admonish their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers declare: "Follow this decree because integration is morally right and because the Negro is your brother." In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churchmen stand on the sideline and mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say: "Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern." And I have watched many churches commit themselves to a completely other worldly religion which makes a strange, un-Biblical distinction between body and soul, between the sacred and the secular.

National Civil Rights Museum

[11] *Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955. Dr. King served as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, a group formed to lead the year-long boycott.*

I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the other southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at the South's beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlines of her massive religious education buildings. Over and over I have found myself asking: "What kind of people worship here? Who is their God? Where were their voices when the lips of Governor Barnett[12] dripped with words of interposition and nullification? Where were they when Governor Wallace gave a clarion call for defiance and hatred? Where were their voices of support when bruised and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?"

King, Martin Luther. "Letter from the Birmingham jail." In *Why We Can't Wait*, ed. Martin Luther King, Jr., 77-100, 1963.

[12] *Ross R. Barnett was the governor of Mississippi from 1960 - 1964. He was a leader of the Dixiecrats, southern Democrats who supported racial segregation.*

National Civil Rights Museum

VIETNAM WAR

The Vietnam War remains one of the most controversial wars in American history. The United States' military involvement in the former French colony located in Southeast Asia began as early as the 1940s. The conflict lacked clear military objectives and never received a formal declaration of war. By the 1960s, the major television networks were regularly broadcasting footage from the frontlines along with casualty statistics of Vietcong, the enemy, and the number of U.S. troops killed or missing in action.

These broadcasts made Vietnam the first televised war in American history. The constant onslaught of the mortality statistics made people question whether this was a "winnable" war. The escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam led to a higher demand for military personnel, and the draft for men 18 – 26 years old was initiated. By the end of 1966, over 300,000 soldiers were in Vietnam, with the number quickly climbing. Among these soldiers were a large number of African Americans, poor, and working class young men.

Professors and students began questioning the war in the early 1960s. As the military presence grew, so did the anti-war protests.

Associated Press

For the soldiers, whether drafted or enlisted, they returned home to a tense environment. They were not welcomed or celebrated like their World War II counterparts.

In October 1967, the largest Anti-Vietnam War rally was held at the Lincoln Memorial. In January 1968, the Vietcong launched the Tet Offensive, a major military campaign that resulted in the American public more broadly questioning the country's presence in Vietnam. In 1969, Daniel Ellsberg discovered and later released the *Pentagon Papers* which revealed the truth behind the country's involvement in Vietnam. While the *Pentagon Papers* helped to change public perception about Vietnam, the U.S. would not formally pull out of Vietnam until the fall of Saigon in 1975.

"A country that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

Martin Luther King, Jr., April 4, 1967

Beyond Vietnam 1967

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

By 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders had accomplished ending de jure segregation with nationally highlighted campaigns in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma, Alabama. Dr. King was by far the most widely known of the civil rights leaders and his popularity continued to rise. After the successful Selma to Montgomery marches resulted in President Lyndon Johnson signing the Voting Rights Acts of 1965, Dr. King became concerned with the United States' involvement in Vietnam. By 1966, thousands of young men (with a higher percentage of African American men) were drafted and dying at a disturbingly high rate. Dr. King came to realize that his view on peace did not just pertain to racial discrimination, but to moral peace globally. In what became known as the "Time to Break Silence" speech, Dr. King publicly spoke out against the Vietnam War on April 4, 1967 at the Riverside Church in New York City.

BEYOND VIETNAM 1967:

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I need not pause to say how very delighted I am to be here tonight, and how very delighted I am to see you expressing your concern about the issues that will be discussed tonight by turning out in such large numbers. I also want to say that I consider it a great honor to share this program with Dr. Bennett, Dr. Commager, and Rabbi Heschel, some of the distinguished leaders and personalities of our nation. And of course it's always good to come back to Riverside Church. Over the last eight years, I have had the privilege of preaching here almost every year in that period, and it is always a rich and rewarding experience to come to this great church and this great pulpit.

John C. Goodwin

Dr. King publicly denounced the Vietnam War on April 4, 1967, at Riverside Church, located on Manhattan's Upper West Side. The church has since hosted dignitaries like Nelson Mandela, Cesar Chavez, and Desmond Tutu.

I come to this magnificent house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice. I join you in this meeting because I am in deepest agreement with the aims and work of the organization which has brought us together, Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam. The recent statements of your executive committee are the sentiments of my own heart, and I found myself in full accord when I read its opening lines: "A time comes when silence is betrayal." That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam.[1] The truth of these words is beyond doubt, but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover, when the issues at hand seem as perplexing as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict, we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty. But we must move on.

Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movement, and pray that our own inner being may be sensitive to its guidance. For we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.

Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns, this query has often loomed large and loud: "Why are you speaking about the war, Dr. King? Why are you joining the voices of dissent?" "Peace and civil rights don't mix," they say. "Aren't you hurting the cause of your people?" they ask. And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment, or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live. In the light of such tragic misunderstanding, I deem it of signal importance to try to state clearly, and I trust concisely, why I believe that the path from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church -- the church in Montgomery, Alabama, where I began my pastorate -- leads clearly to this sanctuary tonight.

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[1] *The Vietnam War was a conflict between pro-communist and anti-communist forces between 1955-1975, with direct American involvement from 1965-1973. The war was very unpopular in the United States, leading to widespread backlash and protests. Black Americans were more likely to be drafted than their white counterparts. Black activists like Muhammad Ali and Dr. King spoke out against this inequality.*

I come to this platform tonight to make a passionate plea to my beloved nation. This speech is not addressed to Hanoi or to the National Liberation Front. It is not addressed to China or to Russia. Nor is it an attempt to overlook the ambiguity of the total situation and the need for a collective solution to the tragedy of Vietnam. Neither is it an attempt to make North Vietnam or the National Liberation Front paragons of virtue, nor to overlook the role they must play in the successful resolution of the problem. While they both may have justifiable reasons to be suspicious of the good faith of the United States, life and history give eloquent testimony to the fact that conflicts are never resolved without trustful give and take on both sides. Tonight, however, I wish not to speak with Hanoi and the National Liberation Front, but rather to my fellow Americans.

Since I am a preacher by calling, I suppose it is not surprising that I have seven major reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I and others have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor, both black and white, through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam, and I watched this program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war.[2] And I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps a more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools.[3]

So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would hardly live on the same block in Chicago. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

My third reason moves to an even deeper level of awareness, for it grows out of my experience in the ghettos of the North over

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[2] *American involvement in the Vietnam War escalated under President John F. Kennedy, leading to the first combat troops landing on Vietnamese soil in March 1965.*

[3] *The term "Negro" was considered appropriate at the time. Today, the appropriate terms are either African American or Black.*

the last three years, especially the last three summers.[4] As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems.[5] I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they asked, and rightly so, "What about Vietnam?" They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.

For those who ask the question, "Aren't you a civil rights leader?" and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In 1957, when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: "To save the soul of America." We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself until the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear. In a way we were agreeing with Langston Hughes, that black bard of Harlem, who had written earlier:

> O, yes, I say it plain,
> America never was America to me,
> And yet I swear this oath --
> America will be![6]

Now it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America's soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read "Vietnam." It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over. So it is that those of us who are yet determined that "America will be" are led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land.

As if the weight of such a commitment to the life and health of America were not enough, another burden of responsibility was placed upon me in 1954. And I cannot forget that the Nobel Peace Prize was also a commission, a commission to work harder than I had ever worked before for the brotherhood of man. This is a calling that takes me beyond national allegiances.

But even if it were not present, I would yet have to live with the meaning of my

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[4] *By definition, a ghetto is a section of a city where minority groups are segregated -- often due to social, legal, or economic oppression. In reality, in the United States, ghettos are a result of the practice of redlining, denying home loans and financial services, or other forms of oppression to African Americans and other minorities.*

[5] *During the 1960s, the United States saw a series of urban uprisings, often called "race riots," during the summer months. These armed rebellions were often in response to unequal housing and labor practices or police brutality. One of the more famous examples of these are the Watts riots of 1965.*

[6] *Langston Hughes, "Let America Be America Again," 1936.*

commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ. To me, the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against the war. Could it be that they do not know that the Good News was meant for all men -- for communist and capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and for white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the one who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them? What then can I say to the Vietcong or to Castro or to Mao as a faithful minister of this one? Can I threaten them with death or must I not share with them my life?

Finally, as I try to explain for you and for myself the road that leads from Montgomery to this place, I would have offered all that was most valid if I simply said that I must be true to my conviction that I share with all men the calling to be a son of the living God. Beyond the calling of race or nation or creed is this vocation of sonship and brotherhood. Because I believe that the Father is deeply concerned, especially for His suffering and helpless and outcast children, I come tonight to speak for them. This I believe to be the privilege and the burden of all of us who deem ourselves bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond our nation's self-defined goals and positions. We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation, for those it calls "enemy," for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers.

And as I ponder the madness of Vietnam and search within myself for ways to understand and respond in compassion, my mind goes constantly to the people of that peninsula. I speak now not of the soldiers of each side, not of the ideologies of the Liberation Front, not of the junta in Saigon, but simply of the people who have been living under the curse of war for almost three continuous decades now. I think of them, too, because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution there until some attempt is made to know them and hear their broken cries.

Associated Press

They must see Americans as strange liberators. The Vietnamese people proclaimed their own independence in 1954 -- in 1945 rather -- after a combined French and Japanese occupation and before the communist revolution in China. They were led by Ho Chi Minh. Even though they quoted the American Declaration of Independence in their own document of freedom, we refused to recognize them. Instead, we decided to support France in its reconquest of her former colony. Our government felt then that the Vietnamese people were not ready for independence, and we again fell victim to the deadly Western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so long. With that tragic decision we rejected a revolutionary

government seeking self-determination and a government that had been established not by China -- for whom the Vietnamese have no great love -- but by clearly indigenous forces that included some communists. For the peasants this new government meant real land reform, one of the most important needs in their lives.

For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right of independence. For nine years we vigorously supported the French in their abortive effort to recolonize Vietnam. Before the end of the war we were meeting eighty percent of the French war costs. Even before the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu, they began to despair of their reckless action, but we did not. We encouraged them with our huge financial and military supplies to continue the war even after they had lost the will. Soon we would be paying almost the full costs of this tragic attempt at recolonization.

After the French were defeated, it looked as if independence and land reform would come again through the Geneva Agreement. But instead there came the United States, determined that Ho should not unify the temporarily divided nation, and the peasants watched again as we supported one of the most vicious modern dictators, our chosen man, Premier Diem. The peasants watched and cringed as Diem ruthlessly rooted out all opposition, supported their extortionist landlords, and refused even to discuss reunification with the North. The peasants watched as all of this was presided over by United States influence and then by increasing numbers of United States troops who came to help quell the insurgency that Diem's methods had aroused. When Diem was overthrown they may have been happy, but the long line of military dictators seemed to offer no real change, especially in terms of their need for land and peace.

The only change came from America as we increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept, and without popular support. All the while the people read our leaflets and received the regular promises of peace and democracy and land reform. Now they languish under our bombs and consider us, not their fellow Vietnamese, the real enemy. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move on or be destroyed by our bombs.

So they go, primarily women and children and the aged. They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious trees. They wander into the hospitals with at least twenty casualties from American firepower for one Vietcong-inflicted injury. So far we may have killed a million of them, mostly children. They wander into the towns and see thousands of the children, homeless, without clothes, running in packs on the streets like animals. They see the children degraded by our soldiers as they beg for food. They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers.

What do the peasants think as we ally ourselves with the landlords and as we refuse to put any action into our many

words concerning land reform? What do they think as we test out our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe? Where are the roots of the independent Vietnam we claim to be building? Is it among these voiceless ones?

We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops. We have cooperated in the crushing of the nation's only noncommunist revolutionary political force, the unified Buddhist Church. We have supported the enemies of the peasants of Saigon. We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men.

Now there is little left to build on, save bitterness. Soon the only solid physical foundations remaining will be found at our military bases and in the concrete of the concentration camps we call "fortified hamlets." The peasants may well wonder if we plan to build our new Vietnam on such grounds as these. Could we blame them for such thoughts? We must speak for them and raise the questions they cannot raise. These, too, are our brothers.

Perhaps a more difficult but no less necessary task is to speak for those who have been designated as our enemies. What of the National Liberation Front, that strangely anonymous group we call "VC" or "communists"? What must they think of the United States of America when they realize that we permitted the repression and cruelty of Diem, which helped to bring them into being as a resistance group in the South? What do they think of our condoning the violence which led to their own taking up of arms? How can they believe in our integrity when now we speak of "aggression from the North" as if there were nothing more essential to the war? How can they trust us when now we charge them with violence after the murderous reign of Diem and charge them with violence while we pour every new weapon of death into their land? Surely we must understand their feelings, even if we do not condone their actions. Surely we must see that the men we supported pressed them to their violence. Surely we must see that our own computerized plans of destruction simply dwarf their greatest acts.

How do they judge us when our officials know that their membership is less than twenty-five percent communist, and yet insist on giving them the blanket name? What must they be thinking when they know that we are aware of their control of major sections of Vietnam, and yet we appear ready to allow national elections in which this highly organized political parallel government will not have a part? They ask how we can speak of free elections when the Saigon press is censored and controlled by the military junta. And they are surely right to wonder what kind of new government we plan to help form without them, the only party in real touch with the peasants. They question our political goals and they deny the reality of a peace settlement from which they will be excluded. Their questions are frighteningly relevant. Is our nation planning to build on political myth again, and then shore it up upon the power of a new violence?

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the enemy's point of

view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

So, too, with Hanoi. In the North, where our bombs now pummel the land, and our mines endanger the waterways, we are met by a deep but understandable mistrust. To speak for them is to explain this lack of confidence in Western words, and especially their distrust of American intentions now. In Hanoi are the men who led the nation to independence against the Japanese and the French, the men who sought membership in the French Commonwealth and were betrayed by the weakness of Paris and the willfulness of the colonial armies. It was they who led a second struggle against French domination at tremendous costs, and then were persuaded to give up the land they controlled between the thirteenth and seventeenth parallel as a temporary measure at Geneva. After 1954 they watched us conspire with Diem to prevent elections which could have surely brought Ho Chi Minh to power over a united Vietnam, and they realized they had been betrayed again. When we ask why they do not leap to negotiate, these things must be remembered.

Also, it must be clear that the leaders of Hanoi considered the presence of American troops in support of the Diem regime to have been the initial military breach of the Geneva Agreement concerning foreign troops. They remind us that they did not begin to send troops in large numbers and even supplies into the South until American forces had moved into the tens of thousands.

Hanoi remembers how our leaders refused to tell us the truth about the earlier North Vietnamese overtures for peace, how the president claimed that none existed when they had clearly been made. Ho Chi Minh has watched as America has spoken of peace and built up its forces, and now he has surely heard the increasing international rumors of American plans for an invasion of the North. He knows the bombing and shelling and mining we are doing are part of traditional pre-invasion strategy. Perhaps only his sense of humor and of irony can save him when he hears the most powerful nation of the world speaking of aggression as it drops thousands of bombs on a poor, weak nation more than eight hundred, or rather, eight thousand miles away from its shores.

At this point I should make it clear that while I have tried in these last few minutes to give a voice to the voiceless in Vietnam and to understand the arguments of those who are called "enemy," I am as deeply concerned about our own troops there as anything else. For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese, and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy, and the secure, while we create a hell for the poor. Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those

whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home, and dealt death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as one who loves America, to the leaders of our own nation: The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours.

This is the message of the great Buddhist leaders of Vietnam. Recently one of them wrote these words, and I quote:

> Each day the war goes on the hatred increases in the hearts of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom, and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism.

Unquote.

If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. If we do not stop our war against the people of Vietnam immediately, the world will be left with no other alternative than to see this as some horrible, clumsy, and deadly game we have decided to play. The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit

that we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam, that we have been detrimental to the life of the Vietnamese people. The situation is one in which we must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways. In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war.

I would like to suggest five concrete things that our government should do immediately to begin the long and difficult process of extricating ourselves from this nightmarish conflict:

1. **Number one:** End all bombing in North and South Vietnam.

2. **Number two:** Declare a unilateral cease-fire in the hope that such action will create the atmosphere for negotiation.

3. **Three:** Take immediate steps to prevent other battlegrounds in Southeast Asia by curtailing our military buildup in Thailand and our interference in Laos.

4. **Four:** Realistically accept the fact that the National Liberation Front has substantial support in South Vietnam and must thereby play a role in any meaningful negotiations and any future Vietnam government.

5. **Five:** Set a date that we will remove all foreign troops from Vietnam in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreement. [sustained applause]

Part of our ongoing [applause continues], **part of our ongoing commitment might well express itself in an offer to grant asylum to any Vietnamese who fears for his life under a new regime which included the Liberation Front.** Then we must make what reparations we can for the damage we have done. We must provide the medical aid that is badly needed, making it available in this country if necessary. Meanwhile [applause], meanwhile, we in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must continue to raise our voices and our lives if our nation persists in its perverse ways in Vietnam. We must be prepared to match actions with words by seeking out every creative method of protest possible.

As we counsel young men concerning military service, we must clarify for them our nation's role in Vietnam and challenge them with the alternative of conscientious objection. [sustained applause] I am pleased to say that this is a path now chosen by more than seventy students at my own alma mater, Morehouse College, and I recommend it to all who find the American course in Vietnam a dishonorable and unjust one. [applause] Moreover, I would encourage all ministers of draft age to give up their ministerial exemptions and seek status as conscientious objectors. [applause] These are the times for real choices and not false ones. We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest.

Now there is something seductively tempting about stopping there and sending us all off on what in some circles has

become a popular crusade against the war in Vietnam. I say we must enter that struggle, but I wish to go on now to say something even more disturbing.

The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality [applause], **and if we ignore this sobering reality, we will find ourselves organizing "clergy and laymen concerned" committees for the next generation.** They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy. [sustained applause] So such thoughts take us beyond Vietnam, but not beyond our calling as sons of the living God.

In 1957 a sensitive American official overseas said that it seemed to him that our nation was on the wrong side of a world revolution. During the past ten years we have seen emerge a pattern of suppression which has now justified the presence of U.S. military advisors in Venezuela. This need to maintain social stability for our investments accounts for the counterrevolutionary action of American forces in Guatemala. It tells why American helicopters are being used against guerrillas in Cambodia and why American napalm and Green Beret forces have already been active against rebels in Peru.

It is with such activity in mind that the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." [applause] Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken, the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investments. I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin [applause], we must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. [applause]

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for

the social betterment of the countries, and say, "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of South America and say, "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just.

A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death. [sustained applause]

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing except a tragic death wish to prevent us from reordering our priorities so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood.

This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against communism. [applause] War is not the answer. Communism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons. Let us not join those who shout war and, through their misguided passions, urge the United States to relinquish its participation in the United Nations. These are days which demand wise restraint and calm reasonableness. We must not engage in a negative anticommunism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy [applause], realizing that our greatest defense against communism is to take offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity, and injustice, which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops.

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wounds of a frail world, new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. We in the West must support these revolutions.

It is a sad fact that because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of communism, and our proneness to adjust to injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now become the arch antirevolutionaries. This has driven many to feel that only Marxism has a revolutionary spirit. Therefore, communism is a judgment against our failure to make democracy real and follow through on the revolutions that we initiated. Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores, and thereby speed the day when "every valley

shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low [Audience:] (Yes); the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.

This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all mankind. This oft misunderstood, this oft misinterpreted concept, so readily dismissed by the Nietzsches of the world as a weak and cowardly force, has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I'm not speaking of that force which is just emotional bosh. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. This Hindu-Muslim-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the first epistle of Saint John: "Let us love one another (Yes), for love is God. (Yes) And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. . . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us." Let us hope that this spirit will become the order of the day.[7]

We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate. As Arnold Toynbee says: "Love is the ultimate force that makes for the saving choice of life and good against the damning choice of death and evil. Therefore the first hope in our inventory must be the hope that love is going to have the last word." Unquote.

We are now faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with a lost opportunity. The tide in the affairs of men does not remain at flood -- it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is adamant to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words, "Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. Omar Khayyam is right: "The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on."

We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation. We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world, a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without

[7] *1 John 4: 7-8; 12*

compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter, but beautiful, struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men, and we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message -- of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise, we must choose in this crucial moment of human history.

As that noble bard of yesterday, James Russell Lowell, eloquently stated:

> Once to every man and nation comes a moment to decide,
>
> In the strife of Truth and Falsehood, for the good or evil side;
>
> Some great cause, God's new Messiah offering each the bloom or blight,
>
> And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.
>
> Though the cause of evil prosper, yet 'tis truth alone is strong
>
> Though her portions be the scaffold, and upon the throne be wrong
>
> Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown
>
> Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.[8]

[8] *James Russell Lowell, "The Perfect Crisis," 1845.*

And if we will only make the right choice, we will be able to transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of peace. If we will make the right choice, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our world into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. If we will but make the right choice, we will be able to speed up the day, all over America and all over the world, when justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream. [sustained applause]

King, Martin Luther. "Beyond Vietnam." In *A Call to Conscience: the Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, 133–64. New York: IPM (Intellectual Properties Management), in association with Grand Central Publishing, 2001.

John C. Goodwin

ABBREVIATED
Beyond Vietnam 1967

By 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders had accomplished ending de jure segregation with nationally highlighted campaigns in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma, Alabama. Dr. King was by far the most widely known of the civil rights leaders and his popularity continued to rise. After the successful Selma to Montgomery marches resulted in President Lyndon Johnson signing the Voting Rights Acts of 1965, Dr. King became concerned with the United States' involvement in Vietnam. By 1966, thousands of young men (with a higher percentage of African American men) were drafted and dying at a disturbingly high rate. Dr. King came to realize that his view on peace did not just pertain to racial discrimination, but to moral peace globally. In what became known as the "Time to Break Silence" speech, Dr. King publicly spoke out against the Vietnam War on April 4, 1967 at the Riverside Church in New York City. The section below has been edited for brevity.

Since I am a preacher by calling, I suppose it is not surprising that I have seven major reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision.[1] There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I and others have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor, both black and white, through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam, and I watched this program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war.[2] And I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps a more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel

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[1] *The Vietnam War was a conflict between pro-communist and anti-communist forces between 1955-1975, with direct American involvement from 1965-1973. The war was very unpopular in the United States, leading to widespread backlash and protests. Black Americans were more likely to be drafted than their white counterparts. Black activists like Muhammad Ali and Dr. King spoke out against this inequality.*

[2] *American involvement in the Vietnam War escalated under President John F. Kennedy, leading to the first combat troops landing on Vietnamese soil in March 1965.*

irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools[3]. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would hardly live on the same block in Chicago. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

My third reason moves to an even deeper level of awareness, for it grows out of my experience in the ghettos of the North over the last three years, especially the last three summers[4]. As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems[5]. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they asked, and rightly so, "What about Vietnam?" They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.

For those who ask the question, "Aren't you a civil rights leader?" and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In 1957, when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: "To save the soul of America." We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself until the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear. In a way we were agreeing with Langston Hughes, that black bard of Harlem, who had written earlier:

> O, yes, I say it plain,
> America never was America to me,
> And yet I swear this oath --
> America will be![6]

Now it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America's soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read "Vietnam." It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men

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[3] The term "Negro" was considered appropriate at the time. Today, the appropriate terms are either African American or Black.

[4] By definition, a ghetto is a section of a city where minority groups are segregated -- often due to social, legal, or economic oppression. In reality, in the United States, ghettos are a result of the practice of redlining, denying home loans and financial services, or other forms of oppression to African Americans and other minorities.

[5] During the 1960s, the United States saw a series of urban uprisings, often called "race riots," during the summer months. These armed rebellions were often in response to unequal housing and labor practices or police brutality. One of the more famous examples of these are the Watts riots of 1965.

[6] Langston Hughes, "Let America Be America Again," 1936.

the world over. So it is that those of us who are yet determined that "America will be" are led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land.

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

At this point I should make it clear that while I have tried in these last few minutes to give a voice to the voiceless in Vietnam and to understand the arguments of those who are called "enemy," I am as deeply concerned about our own troops there as anything else. For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese, and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy, and the secure, while we create a hell for the poor. Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home, and dealt death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as one who loves America, to the leaders of our own nation: The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours.

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say, "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of South America and say, "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just.

A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death. [sustained applause]

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing

except a tragic death wish to prevent us from reordering our priorities so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood.

We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate. As Arnold Toynbee says: "Love is the ultimate force that makes for the saving choice of life and good against the damning choice of death and evil. Therefore the first hope in our inventory must be the hope that love is going to have the last word." Unquote.

We are now faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with a lost opportunity. The tide in the affairs of men does not remain at flood -- it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is adamant to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words, "Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. Omar Khayyam is right: "The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on."

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Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter, but beautiful, struggle for a new world. This is

the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men, and we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message -- of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise, we must choose in this crucial moment of human history.

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Associated Press

Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech 1964

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

1963 was a year of triumph and tragedy in the world of the civil rights movement. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the SCLC successfully desegregated Birmingham, Alabama, prompting President John F. Kennedy to propose a civil rights bill. Because of the success in Birmingham, civil rights leaders organized the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where Dr. King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. At 34 years old, Dr. King was named Time Magazine's Man of the Year. His accolades continued when he was selected to win the Nobel Peace Prize, presented to him in Oslo, Norway in December 1964. The following is a full transcript of that speech.

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE ACCEPTANCE SPEECH 1964:

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, Mr. President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen: I accept the Nobel Prize for Peace at a moment when twenty-two million Negroes of the United States are engaged in a creative battle to end the long night of racial injustice.[1] I accept this award on behalf of a civil rights movement which is moving with determination and a majestic scorn for risk and danger to establish a reign of freedom and a rule of justice.

I am mindful that only yesterday in Birmingham, Alabama, our children, crying out for brotherhood, were answered with fire hoses, snarling dogs, and even death.[2] I am mindful that only yesterday in Philadelphia, Mississippi, young people seeking to secure the right to vote were brutalized and murdered.[3] I am mindful that debilitating and grinding poverty afflicts my people and chains them to the lowest rung of the economic ladder.

Therefore, I must ask why this prize is awarded to a movement which is beleaguered and committed to unrelenting struggle, and to a movement which has

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1 *The term "Negro" was considered appropriate at the time. Today, the appropriate terms are either African American or Black.*

2 *The Birmingham Campaign, an economic boycott and protest designed to desegregate Birmingham's business district, began in 1963. Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) organized the campaign and invited Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Hundreds of students would join the protest by marching nonviolently through downtown Birmingham on May 2 and 3, also known as the Children's Crusade, they were arrested as well as attacked by police with dogs and firehoses. Months later on September 15, White Supremacists bombed the 16th Street Baptist Church killing four young girls and injuring one.*

3 *On June 21, 1964 three activists participating in Mississippi Freedom Summer, a statewide voter registration effort led by the Council of Federated Organizations: James Chaney, African American activist from Meridian Mississippi, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, White activists from New York City, were abducted and murdered by the Ku Klux Klan. 44 days later their remains were found buried in an earthen dam.*

not yet won the very peace and brotherhood which is the essence of the Nobel Prize. After contemplation, I conclude that this award, which I receive on behalf of that movement, is a profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time: the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression.

Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts. Negroes of the United States, following the people of India, have demonstrated that nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation.[4] Sooner or later, all the peoples of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

The torturous road which has led from Montgomery, Alabama, to Oslo bears witness to this truth, and this is a road over which millions of Negroes are traveling to find a new sense of dignity.[5] This same road has opened for all Americans a new


Getty Images

era of progress and hope. It has led to a new civil rights bill, and it will, I am convinced, be widened and lengthened into a superhighway of justice as Negro and white men in increasing numbers create alliances to overcome their common problems.[6]

I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind. I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history.

I refuse to accept the idea that the "is-ness" of man's present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal "ought-ness" that forever confronts him.

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[4] *Over the course of 90 years (1857-1947), the people of India fought to free themselves from colonial British rule. From 1921 on, Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi led the movement and introduced the idea of nonviolent direct action on a large political scale. India became an independent nation on August 15, 1947.*

[5] *On December 1, 1955, NAACP secretary Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white passenger. Her arrest set off a year long protest and boycott that ended in the desegregation of Montgomery's city buses.*

[6] *The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits legal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Additionally, it prohibits race-based application of voter registration requirements and outlaws racial segregation in public schools, employment, and public accommodations.*

I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life, unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him.[7]

I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.

I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of nuclear annihilation.

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.

I believe that even amid today's mortar bursts and whining bullets, there is still hope for a brighter tomorrow.

I believe that wounded justice, lying prostrate on the blood-flowing streets of our nations, can be lifted from this dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men.

I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits.

I believe that what self-centered men have torn down, men other-centered can build up.

I still believe that one day mankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed and nonviolent redemptive goodwill proclaimed the rule of the land. And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid.[8]

I still believe that we shall overcome.

This faith can give us courage to face the uncertainties of the future. It will give our tired feet new strength as we continue our forward stride toward the city of freedom. When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds and our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, we will know that we are living in the creative turmoil of a genuine civilization struggling to be born.

Today I come to Oslo as a trustee, inspired and with renewed dedication to humanity. I accept this prize on behalf of all men who love peace and brotherhood. I say I come as a trustee, for in the depths of my heart I am aware that this prize is much more than an honor to me personally. Every time I take a flight I am always mindful of the many people who make a successful journey possible, the known pilots and the unknown ground crew. You honor the dedicated pilots of our struggle, who have sat at the controls as the freedom movement soared into orbit. You honor, once

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[7] *Flotsam and jetsam are legal definitions of certain types of shipwrecks -- used here in the sense of "useless or discarded objects."*

[8] *Isaiah 11:6 / Micah 4:4*

again, Chief Lutuli of South Africa, whose struggles with and for his people are still met with the most brutal expression of man's inhumanity to man.[9] You honor the ground crew, without whose labor and sacrifice the jet flights to freedom could never have left the earth. Most of these people will never make the headlines, and their names will never appear in Who's Who. Yet, when years have rolled past and when the blazing light of truth is focused on this marvelous age in which we live, men and women will know and children will be taught that we have a finer land, a better people, a more noble civilization because these humble children of God were willing to suffer for righteousness' sake.

I think Alfred Nobel would know what I mean when I say I accept this award in the spirit of a curator of some precious heirloom which he holds in trust for its true owners: all those to whom truth is beauty, and beauty, truth, and in whose eyes the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace is more precious than diamonds or silver or gold.[10] Thank you. [applause]

King, Martin Luther. "Acceptance Address for the Nobel Peace Prize." In *A Call to Conscience: the Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, 101–10. New York: IPM (Intellectual Properties Management), in association with Grand Central Publishing, 2001.

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[9] *Chief Albert John Mvumbi Lutuli (1898-1967) was the first person of African descent to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. A South African teacher, politician, and activist, he was a leader in the anti-apartheid movement.*

[10] *Alfred Nobel (1833-1896) was a Swedish inventor, chemist, engineer, and businessman. He is notable for donating his fortune to the Nobel Prize foundation, which annually awards prizes in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, and peace.*

ABBREVIATED
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I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits.

I believe that what self-centered men have torn down, men other-centered can build up.

King, Martin Luther. "Acceptance Address for the Nobel Peace Prize." In *A Call to Conscience: the Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, 101–10. New York: IPM (Intellectual Properties Management), in association with Grand Central Publishing, 2001.

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[5] *Flotsam and jetsam are legal definitions of certain types of shipwrecks -- used here in the sense of "useless or discarded objects."*

I've Been to the Mountaintop 1968

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

By 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had become the most renowned civil rights leader in the world. After successfully desegregating cities in the Deep South and helping fight for the right to vote for African Americans, he transitioned his campaign to the war on poverty and the Vietnam War. While on the trail of the Poor People's Campaign, Dr. King took a detour to Memphis, Tennessee, on behalf of striking sanitation workers in March 1968. After an unsuccessful march that ended in violence forcing Dr. King to flee for his life, he returned to Memphis on April 3, 1968. After checking in at the Lorraine Motel, Ralph Abernathy urged Dr. King to go to Mason Temple and address a crowd of 2000 people who gathered despite the inclement weather outside. The impromptu speech he gave that night turned out to be his last -- he was assassinated on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel the next day. The following is a full transcript of that speech.

Courtesy of The Commercial Appeal

I'VE BEEN TO THE MOUNTAINTOP 1968:

Thank you very kindly, my friends. As I listened to Ralph Abernathy and his eloquent and generous introduction and then thought about myself, I wondered who he was talking about. [Laughter] It's always good to have your closest friend and associate to say something good about you, and Ralph Abernathy is the best friend that I have in the world.

I'm delighted to see each of you here tonight in spite of a storm warning. You reveal that you are determined [Audience:] (Right) to go on anyhow. (Yeah, All right) Something is happening in Memphis, something is happening in our world. And you know, if I were standing at the beginning of time with the possibility of taking a kind of general and panoramic view of the whole of human history up to now, and the Almighty said to me, "Martin Luther King, which age would you like to live in?" I would take my mental flight by Egypt (Yeah), and I would watch God's children in their magnificent trek from the dark dungeons of Egypt through, or rather, across the Red Sea, through the wilderness, on toward the Promised Land.[1] And in spite of its magnificence, I wouldn't stop there. (All right)

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[1] *In the Book of Exodus, Moses leads the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, across the parted Red Sea, and to freedom in the Promised Land -- the land believed to have been promised to the Israelites by God. A common cultural practice in the African American Protestant Church is for the audience to comment or shout in agreement during the preacher's sermon. Audience comments are usually short affirmations rooted in the Black American call and response tradition which is rooted in West African culture. The audience comments are noted here in parentheses.*

I would move on by Greece, and take my mind to Mount Olympus. And I would see Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Euripides, and Aristophanes assembled around the Parthenon [Applause], and I would watch them around the Parthenon as they discussed the great and eternal issues of reality.[2] But I wouldn't stop there. (Oh yeah)

I would go on even to the great heyday of the Roman Empire (Yes), and I would see developments around there, through various emperors and leaders. But I wouldn't stop there. (Keep on)

I would even come up to the day of the Renaissance and get a quick picture of all that the Renaissance did for the cultural and aesthetic life of man. But I wouldn't stop there. (Yeah)

I would even go by the way that the man for whom I'm named had his habitat, and I would watch Martin Luther as he tacks his ninety-five theses on the door at the church of Wittenberg.[3] But I wouldn't stop there. (All right) But I wouldn't stop there. (Yeah) [Applause]

I would come on up even to 1863 and watch a vacillating president by the name of Abraham Lincoln finally come to the conclusion that he had to sign the Emancipation Proclamation.[4] But I wouldn't stop there. (Yeah) [Applause]

I would even come up to the early thirties and see a man grappling with the problems of the bankruptcy of his nation, and come with an eloquent cry that "we have nothing to fear but fear itself."[5] But I wouldn't stop there. (All right)

Strangely enough, I would turn to the Almighty and say, "If you allow me to live just a few years in the second half of the twentieth century, I will be happy." [Applause]

Now that's a strange statement to make because the world is all messed up. The nation is sick, trouble is in the land, confusion all around. That's a strange statement. But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars. (All right, Yes) And I see God working in this period of the twentieth century in a way that men in some strange way are responding. Something is happening in our world. (Yeah) The masses of people are rising up. And wherever they are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; Accra, Ghana; New York City; Atlanta, Georgia; Jackson, Mississippi; or Memphis, Tennessee, the cry is always the same: "We want to be free." [Applause]

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[2] *Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Euripides, and Aristophanes were Greek philosophers and playwrights whose ideologies and works continue to influence Western thought.*

[3] *Martin Luther (1483 - 1546) was a German priest who played a key role in the Protestant Reformation. In 1517, he wrote a list of 95 theses, or theories, about Christianity that challenged the authority of the Pope and the Catholic Church.*

[4] *The Emancipation Proclamation (1863), a military order from President Abraham Lincoln freeing enslaved people in Union-occupied parts of the Confederacy.*

[5] *During the Great Depression, the largest economic depression of the twentieth century, President Franklin D. Roosevelt enacted the New Deal -- a series of programs designed to revitalize the American economy.*

And another reason I'm happy to live in this period is that we have been forced to a point where we are going to have to grapple with the problems that men have been trying to grapple with through history, but the demands didn't force them to do it. Survival demands that we grapple with them. (Yes) Men for years now have been talking about war and peace. But now no longer can they just talk about it. It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence in this world; it's nonviolence or nonexistence. That is where we are today. [Applause]

And also, in the human rights revolution, if something isn't done and done in a hurry to bring the colored peoples of the world out of their long years of poverty; their long years of hurt and neglect, the whole world is doomed. (All right) [Applause] Now I'm just happy that God has allowed me to live in this period, to see what is unfolding. And I'm happy that he's allowed me to be in Memphis. (Oh yeah)

I can remember [Applause], I can remember when Negroes were just going around, as Ralph has said so often, scratching where they didn't itch and laughing when they were not tickled.[6] [Laughter, applause] But that day is all over. (Yeah) [Applause] We mean business now and we are determined to gain our rightful place in God's world. (Yeah) [Applause] And that's all this whole thing is about. We aren't engaged in any negative protest and in any negative arguments with anybody. We are saying that we are determined to be men. We are determined to be people. (Yeah) We are saying [Applause], we are saying that we are God's children. (Yeah) [Applause] And if we are God's children, we don't have to live like we are forced to live.

Now what does all this mean in this great period of history? It means that we've got to stay together. (Yeah) We've got to stay together and maintain unity. You know, whenever Pharaoh wanted to prolong the period of slavery in Egypt, he had a favorite, favorite formula of doing it. What was that? He kept the slaves fighting among themselves. [Applause] But whenever the slaves get together, something happens in Pharaoh's court, and he cannot hold the slaves in slavery. When the slaves get together, that's the beginning of getting out of slavery. [Applause] Now let us maintain unity.

Secondly, let us keep the issues where they are. (Right) The issue is injustice. The issue is the refusal of Memphis to be fair and honest in its dealings with its public servants, who happen to be sanitation workers. [Applause] Now we've got to keep attention on that. (That's right) That's always the problem with a little violence. You know what happened the other day, and the press dealt only with the window breaking. (That's right) I read the articles. They very seldom got around to mentioning the fact that 1,300 sanitation workers are on strike, and that Memphis is not being fair to them, and that Mayor Loeb is in dire need of a doctor. They didn't get around to that. (Yeah) [Applause]

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[6] *The term "Negro" was considered appropriate at the time. Today, the appropriate terms are either African American or Black.*

Now we're going to march again, and we've got to march again (Yeah), in order to put the issue where it is supposed to be (Yeah) [Applause] and force everybody to see that there are thirteen hundred of God's children here suffering (That's right), sometimes going hungry, going through dark and dreary nights wondering how this thing is going to come out. That's the issue. (That's right) And we've got to say to the nation, we know how it's coming out. For when people get caught up with that which is right and they are willing to sacrifice for it, there is no stopping point short of victory. [Applause]

We aren't going to let any mace stop us. We are masters in our nonviolent movement in disarming police forces. They don't know what to do. I've seen them so often. I remember in Birmingham, Alabama, when we were in that majestic struggle there, we would move out of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church day after day.[7] By the hundreds we would move out, and Bull Connor would tell them to send the dogs forth, and they did come. But we just went before the dogs singing, "Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around." [Applause] Bull Connor next would say, "Turn the fire hoses on." (Yeah) And as I said to you the other night, Bull Connor didn't know history. He knew a kind of physics that somehow didn't relate to the trans-physics that we knew about. And that was the fact that there was a certain kind of fire that no water could put out. [Applause] And we went before the fire hoses. (Yeah) We had known water. (All right) If we were Baptist or some other denominations, we had been immersed. If we were Methodist or some others, we had been sprinkled. But we knew water. That couldn't stop us. [Applause]

And we just went on before the dogs and we would look at them, and we'd go on before the water hoses and we would look at it. And we'd just go on singing, "Over my head, I see freedom in the air." (Yeah) [Applause] And then we would be thrown into paddy wagons, and sometimes we were stacked in there like sardines in a can. (All right) And they would throw us in, and old Bull would say, "Take 'em off." And they did, and we would just go on in the paddy wagon singing, "We Shall Overcome." (Yeah) And every now and then we'd get in jail, and we'd see the jailers looking through the windows being moved by our prayers (Yes) and being moved by our words and our songs. (Yes) And there was a power there which Bull Connor couldn't adjust to (All right), and so we ended up transforming Bull into a steer, and we on our struggle in Birmingham. [Applause]

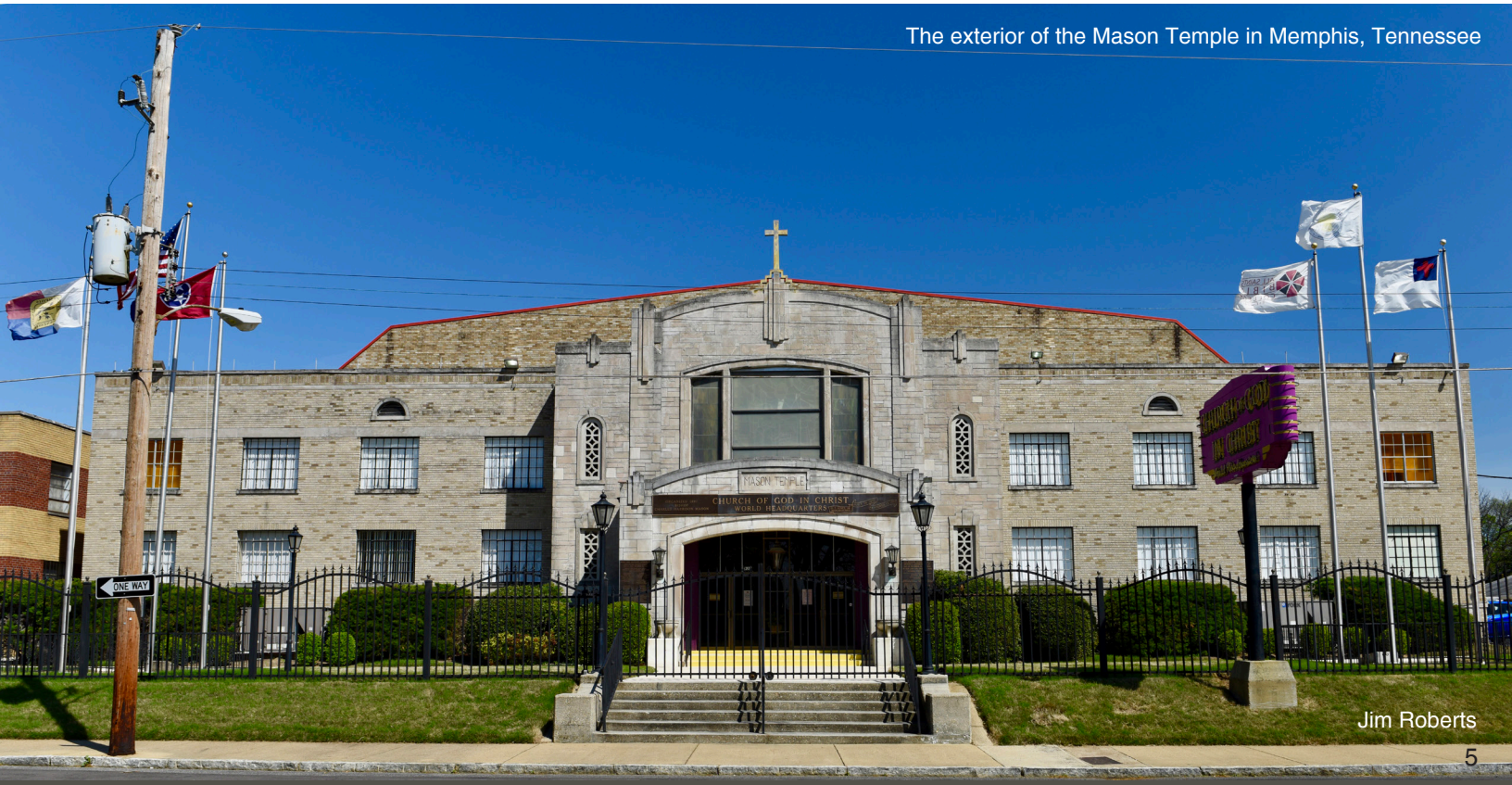
Now we've got to go on in Memphis just like that. I call upon you to be with us when we go out Monday. (Yes) Now about injunctions. We have an injunction and we're going into court tomorrow morning (Go ahead) to fight this illegal, unconstitutional injunction. All we say to America is to be true to what you said on paper. [Applause] If I lived in China or even Russia, or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand some of these illegal injunctions. Maybe I could understand

[7] *In 1963, Dr. King and other leaders organized a campaign in Birmingham, Alabama, to protest segregation. The campaign is seen as a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement and helped to gain passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.*

the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges, because they haven't committed themselves to that over there. But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read (Yes) of the freedom of speech. (Yes) Somewhere I read (All right) of the freedom of press. (Yes) Somewhere I read (Yes) that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right. [Applause] And so just as I say we aren't going to let any dogs or water hoses turn us around, we aren't going to let any injunction turn us around. [Applause] We are going on. We need all of you.

You know, what's beautiful to me is to see all of these ministers of the Gospel. (Amen) It's a marvelous picture. (Yes) Who is it that is supposed to articulate the longings and aspirations of the people more than the preacher? Somewhere the preacher must have a kind of fire shut up in his bones (Yes), and whenever injustice is around he must tell it. (Yes) Somehow the preacher must be an Amos, who said, "When God Speaks, who can but prophesy?" (Yes) Again with Amos, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." (Yes) Somehow the preacher must say with Jesus, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me (Yes), because He hath anointed me (Yes), and He's anointed me to deal with the problems of the poor."
(Go ahead)

And I want to commend the preachers, under the leadership of these noble men: James Lawson, one who has been in this struggle for many years. He's been to jail for struggling; he's been kicked out of Vanderbilt University for this struggling; but he's still going on, fighting for the rights of his people. [Applause] Reverend Ralph Jackson, Billy Kyles; I could just go right on down the list, but time will not permit. But I want to thank all of them, and I want you to thank them because



The exterior of the Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee

Jim Roberts

so often preachers aren't concerned about anything but themselves. [Applause] And I'm always happy to see a relevant ministry. It's all right to talk about long white robes over yonder, in all of its symbolism, but ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. [Applause] It's all right to talk about streets flowing with milk and honey, but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here and His children who can't eat three square meals a day. [Applause] It's all right to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day God's preacher must talk about the new New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee. [Applause] This is what we have to do.

Now the other thing we'll have to do is this: always anchor our external direct action with the power of economic withdrawal. Now we are poor people, individually we are poor when you compare us with white society in America. We are poor. Never stop and forget that collectively, that means all of us together, collectively we are richer than all the nations in the world, with the exception of nine. Did you ever think about that? After you leave the United States, Soviet Russia, Great Britain, West Germany, France, and I could name the others, the American Negro collectively is richer than most nations of the world. We have an annual income of more than thirty billion dollars a year, which is more than all of the exports of the United States and more than the national budget of Canada.[8] Did you know that? That's power right there, if we know how to pool it. (Yeah) [Applause]

We don't have to argue with anybody. We don't have to curse and go around acting bad with our words. We don't need any bricks and bottles; we don't need any Molotov cocktails. (Yes) We just need to go around to these stores (Yes sir), and to these massive industries in our country (Amen), and say, "God sent us by here (All right) to say to you that you're not treating His children right. (That's right) And we've come by here to ask you to make the first item on your agenda fair treatment where God's children are concerned. Now if you are not prepared to do that, we do have an agenda that we must follow. And our agenda calls for withdrawing economic support from you." [Applause]

And so, as a result of this, we are asking you tonight (Amen) to go out and tell your neighbors not to buy Coca-Cola in Memphis. (Yeah) [Applause] Go by and tell them not to buy Sealtest milk. (Yeah) [Applause] Tell them not to buy–what is the other bread?–Wonder Bread. [Applause] And what is the other bread company, Jesse? Tell them not to buy Hart's bread.[9] [Applause] As Jesse Jackson has said, up to now only the garbage men have been feeling pain. Now we must kind of redistribute that pain. [Applause] We are choosing these companies because they haven't been fair in their hiring policies, and we are choosing them because they can begin the process of saying they are going to support the needs and the rights of these men who are on strike. And then they can move on downtown and tell Mayor Loeb to do what is right. (That's right, Speak) [Applause]

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[8] *$224 billion in 2021 dollars.*
[9] *A white owned bakery based in Memphis, Tennessee.*

Now not only that, we've got to strengthen black institutions. (That's right, Yeah) I call upon you to take your money out of the banks downtown and deposit your money in Tri-State Bank.[10] (Yeah) [Applause] We want a "bank-in" movement in Memphis. (Yes) Go by the savings and loan association. I'm not asking you something that we don't do ourselves in SCLC. Judge Hooks and others will tell you that we have an account here in the savings and loan association from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. We are telling you to follow what we're doing, put your money there. [Applause] You have six or seven black insurance companies here in the city of Memphis. Take out your insurance there. We want to have an "insurance-in." [Applause] Now these are some practical things that we can do. We begin the process of building a greater economic base, and at the same time, we are putting pressure where it really hurts. (There you go) And I ask you to follow through here. [Applause]

Now let me say as I move to my conclusion that we've got to give ourselves to this struggle until the end. (Amen) Nothing would be more tragic than to stop at this point in Memphis. We've got to see it through. [Applause] And when we have our march, you need to be there. If it means leaving work, if it means leaving school, be there. [Applause] Be concerned about your brother. You may not be on strike (Yeah), but either we go up together or we go down together. [Applause] Let us develop a kind of dangerous unselfishness.

One day a man came to Jesus and he wanted to raise some questions about some vital matters of life. At points he wanted to trick Jesus (That's right), and show him that he knew a little more than Jesus knew and throw him off base. [Recording interrupted] Now that question could have easily ended up in a philosophical and theological debate. But Jesus immediately pulled that question from midair and placed it on a dangerous curve between Jerusalem and Jericho. (Yeah) And he talked about a certain man who fell among thieves. (Sure) You remember that a Levite (Sure) and a priest passed by on the other side; they didn't stop to help him. Finally, a man of another race came by. (Yes sir) He got down from his beast, decided not to be compassionate by proxy. But he got down with him, administered first aid, and helped the man in need. Jesus ended up saying this was the good man, this was the great man because he had the capacity to project the "I" into the "thou," and to be concerned about his brother.[11]

Now, you know, we use our imagination a great deal to try to determine why the priest and the Levite didn't stop. At times we say they were busy going to a church meeting, an ecclesiastical gathering, and they had to get on down to Jerusalem so they wouldn't be late for their meeting. (Yeah) At other times we would speculate that there was a religious law that one who was engaged in religious ceremonials was not to touch a human body twenty-four hours before the ceremony. (All right) And every now and then we begin to wonder whether maybe they

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[10] *Tri-State Bank was an African American owned bank founded in 1946 in Memphis, Tennessee.*
[11] *The Parable of the Good Samaritan -- Luke 10:25-37*

were not going down to Jerusalem, or down to Jericho, rather, to organize a Jericho Road Improvement Association. [Laughter] That's a possibility. Maybe they felt it was better to deal with the problem from the causal root, rather than to get bogged down with an individual effect. [Laughter]

But I'm going to tell you what my imagination tells me. It's possible that those men were afraid. You see, the Jericho Road is a dangerous road. (That's right) I remember when Mrs. King and I were first in Jerusalem. We rented a car and drove from Jerusalem down to Jericho. (Yeah) And as soon as we got on that road I said to my wife, "I can see why Jesus used this as the setting for his parable." It's a winding, meandering road. (Yes) It's really conducive for ambushing. You start out in Jerusalem, which is about twelve hundred miles, or rather, twelve hundred feet above sea level. And by the time you get down to Jericho fifteen or twenty minutes later, you're about twenty-two feet below sea level. That's a dangerous road. (Yes) In the days of Jesus it came to be known as the "Bloody Pass." And you know, it's possible that the priest and the Levite looked over that man on the ground and wondered if the robbers were still around. (Go ahead) Or it's possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking (Yeah), and he was acting like he had been robbed and hurt in order to seize them over there, lure them there for quick and easy seizure. (Oh yeah) And so the first question that the priest asked, the first question that the Levite asked was, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" (All right)

But then the Good Samaritan came by, and he reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?" That's the question before you tonight. (Yes) Not, "If I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to my job?" Not, "If I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to all of the hours that I usually spend in my office every day and every week as a pastor?" (Yes) The question is not, "If I stop to help this man in need, what will happen to me?" The question is, "If I do not stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to them?" That's the question. [Applause]

Let us rise up tonight with a greater readiness. Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge, to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make America a better nation. (Amen)

And I want to thank God, once more, for allowing me to be here with you. (Yes sir) You know, several years ago I was in New York City autographing the first book that I had written. And while sitting there autographing books, a demented black woman came up. The only question I heard from her was, "Are you Martin Luther King?" And I was looking down writing and I said, "Yes."[12]

The next minute I felt something beating on my chest. Before I knew it I had been stabbed by this demented woman. I was rushed to Harlem Hospital. It was a dark Saturday afternoon. And that blade had gone through, and the X rays revealed that the tip

[12] *On September 20, 1958, Izola Ware Curry,an undiagnosed paranoid schizophrenic, stabbed Dr. King during a book signing in Harlem, New York.*

of the blade was on the edge of my aorta, the main artery. And once that's punctured you're drowned in your own blood, that's the end of you. (Yes sir) It came out in the New York Times the next morning that if I had merely sneezed, I would have died.

Well, about four days later, they allowed me, after the operation, after my chest had been opened and the blade had been taken out, to move around in the wheelchair of the hospital. They allowed me to read some of the mail that came in, and from all over the states and the world kind letters came in. I read a few, but one of them I will never forget. I had received one from the president and the vice president; I've forgotten what those telegrams said. I'd received a visit and a letter from the governor of New York, but I've forgotten what that letter said. (Yes)

But there was another letter (All right) that came from a little girl, a young girl who was a student at the White Plains High School. And I looked at that letter and I'll never forget it. It said simply, "Dear Dr. King: I am a ninth-grade student at the White Plains High School." She said, "While it should not matter, I would like to mention that I'm a white girl. I read in the paper of your misfortune and of your suffering. And I read that if you had sneezed, you would have died. And I'm simply writing you to say that I'm so happy that you didn't sneeze." (Yes) [Applause]

And I want to say tonight [Applause], I want to say tonight that I, too, am happy that I didn't sneeze. Because if I had sneezed (All right), I wouldn't have been around here in 1960 (Well), when students all over the South started sitting-in at lunch counters.[13] And I knew that as they were sitting in, they were really standing up (Yes sir) for the best in the American dream and taking the whole nation back to those great wells of democracy, which were dug deep by the founding fathers in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

If I had sneezed (Yes), I wouldn't have been around here in 1961, when we decided to take a ride for freedom and ended segregation in interstate travel.[14] (All right)

If I had sneezed (Yes), I wouldn't have been around here in 1962, when Negroes in Albany, Georgia, decided to straighten their backs up.[15] And whenever men and women straighten their backs up, they are going somewhere, because a man can't ride your back unless it is bent.

If I had sneezed [Applause], if I had sneezed, I wouldn't have been here in 1963 (All right), when the black people of Birmingham, Alabama, aroused the conscience of this nation and brought into being the Civil Rights Bill.

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[13] *The Sit-In movement began on February 1, 1960. The sit-ins were a nonviolent student-driven movement across the South aimed at desegregating restaurants and lunch counters.*

[14] *The Freedom Rides, an interracial movement led by the Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, led to the desegregation of interstate buses like Greyhound.*

[15] *The Albany Movement was a voter rights and desegregation movement in Southwest Georgia, based in Albany, GA.*

If I had sneezed, I wouldn't have had a chance later that year, in August, to try to tell America about a dream that I had had.[16] (Yes)

If I had sneezed [Applause], I wouldn't have been down in Selma, Alabama, to see the great movement there.[17]

If I had sneezed, I wouldn't have been in Memphis to see a community rally around those brothers and sisters who are suffering. (Yes) I'm so happy that I didn't sneeze.

And they were telling me. [Applause] **Now it doesn't matter now.** (Go ahead) It really doesn't matter what happens now. I left Atlanta this morning, and as we got started on the plane–there were six of us–the pilot said over the public address system: "We are sorry for the delay, but we have Dr. Martin Luther King on the plane. And to be sure that all of the bags were checked, and to be sure that nothing would be wrong on the plane, we had to check out everything carefully. And we've had the plane protected and guarded all night."

And then I got into Memphis. And some began to say the threats, or talk about the threats that were out (Yeah), or what would happen to me from some of our sick white brothers.

Well, I don't know what will happen now; we've got some difficult days ahead. (Amen) But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. (Yeah) [Applause] And I don't mind. [Applause continues] Like anybody, I would like to live a long life—longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. (Yeah) And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. (Go ahead) And I've looked over (Yes sir), and I've seen the Promised Land. (Go ahead) I may not get there with you. (Go ahead) But I want you to know tonight (Yes), that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. [Applause] (Go ahead, Go ahead) And so I'm happy tonight; I'm not worried about anything; I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. [Applause]

King, Martin Luther. "I've Been to the Mountaintop." In *A Call to Conscience: the Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, 201-23. New York: IPM (Intellectual Properties Management),in association with Grand Central Publishing, 2001.

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[16] *Dr. King's "I Have A Dream" speech delivered at the March on Washington on August 28, 1963 remains one of his most popular and famous speeches.*

[17] *The Selma to Montgomery marches took place in early 1965 to protest voter disenfranchisement and police brutality.*

ABBREVIATED
I've Been to the Mountaintop 1968

By 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had become the most renowned civil rights leader in the world. After successfully desegregating cities in the Deep South and helping fight for the right to vote for African Americans, he transitioned his campaign to the war on poverty and the Vietnam War. While on the trail of the Poor People's Campaign, Dr. King took a detour to Memphis, Tennessee, on behalf of striking sanitation workers in March 1968. After an unsuccessful march that ended in violence forcing Dr. King to flee for his life, he returned to Memphis on April 3, 1968. After checking in at the Lorraine Motel, Ralph Abernathy urged Dr. King to go to Mason Temple and address a crowd of 2000 people who gathered despite the inclement weather outside. The impromptu speech he gave that night turned out to be his last -- he was assassinated on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel the next day.

Courtesy of The Commercial Appeal

Now the other thing we'll have to do is this: always anchor our external direct action with the power of economic withdrawal. Now we are poor people, individually we are poor when you compare us with white society in America. We are poor. Never stop and forget that collectively, that means all of us together, collectively we are richer than all the nations in the world, with the exception of nine. Did you ever think about that? After you leave the United States, Soviet Russia, Great Britain, West Germany, France, and I could name the others, the American Negro collectively is richer than most nations of the world.[1] We have an annual income of more than thirty billion dollars a year, which is more than all of the exports of the United States and more than the national budget of Canada.[2] Did you know that? That's power right there, if we know how to pool it. (Yeah) [Applause]

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[1] *The term "Negro" was considered appropriate at the time. Today, the appropriate terms are either African American or Black. A common cultural practice in the African American Protestant Church is for the audience to comment or shout in agreement during the preacher's sermon. Audience comments are usually short affirmations rooted in the Black American call and response tradition which is rooted in West African culture. The audience comments are noted here in parentheses.*

[2] *$224 billion in 2021 dollars.*

We don't have to argue with anybody. We don't have to curse and go around acting bad with our words. We don't need any bricks and bottles; we don't need any Molotov cocktails. (Yes) We just need to go around to these stores (Yes sir), and to these massive industries in our country (Amen), and say, "God sent us by here (All right) to say to you that you're not treating His children right. (That's right) And we've come by here to ask you to make the first item on your agenda fair treatment where God's children are concerned. Now if you are not prepared to do that, we do have an agenda that we must follow. And our agenda calls for withdrawing economic support from you." [Applause]

And so, as a result of this, we are asking you tonight (Amen) to go out and tell your neighbors not to buy Coca-Cola in Memphis. (Yeah) [Applause] Go by and tell them not to buy Sealtest milk. (Yeah) [Applause] Tell them not to buy–what is the other bread?–Wonder Bread. [Applause] And what is the other bread company, Jesse? Tell them not to buy Hart's bread.[3] [Applause] As Jesse Jackson has said, up to now only the garbage men have been feeling pain. Now we must kind of redistribute that pain. [Applause] We are choosing these companies because they haven't been fair in their hiring policies, and we are choosing them because they can begin the process of saying they are going to support the needs and the rights of these men who are on strike. And then they can move on downtown and tell Mayor Loeb to do what is right. (That's right, Speak) [Applause]

Now not only that, we've got to strengthen black institutions. (That's right, Yeah) I call upon you to take your money out of the banks downtown and deposit your money in Tri-State Bank.[4] (Yeah) [Applause] We want a "bank-in" movement in Memphis. (Yes) Go by the savings and loan association. I'm not asking you something that we don't do ourselves in SCLC. Judge Hooks and others will tell you that we have an account here in the savings and loan association from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. We are telling you to follow what we're doing, put your money there. [Applause] You have six or seven black insurance companies here in the city of Memphis. Take out your insurance there. We want to have an "insurance-in." [Applause] Now these are some practical things that we can do. We begin the process of building a greater economic base, and at the same time, we are putting pressure where it really hurts. (There you go) And I ask you to follow through here. [Applause]

And I want to thank God, once more, for allowing me to be here with you. (Yes sir) You know, several years ago I was in New York City autographing the first book that I had written. And while sitting there autographing books, a demented black woman came up. The only question I heard from her was, "Are you Martin Luther King?" And I was looking down writing and I said, "Yes."[5]

The next minute I felt something beating on my chest. Before I knew it I had been stabbed by this demented woman. I was

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[3] *A White-owned Memphis bakery.*

[4] *Tri-State Bank was an African American owned bank founded in 1946 in Memphis, Tennessee.*

[5] *On September 20, 1958, Izola Ware Curry,an undiagnosed paranoid schizophrenic, stabbed Dr. King during a book signing in Harlem, New York.*

rushed to Harlem Hospital. It was a dark Saturday afternoon. And that blade had gone through, and the X rays revealed that the tip of the blade was on the edge of my aorta, the main artery. And once that's punctured you're drowned in your own blood, that's the end of you. (Yes sir) It came out in the New York Times the next morning that if I had merely sneezed, I would have died.

Well, about four days later, they allowed me, after the operation, after my chest had been opened and the blade had been taken out, to move around in the wheelchair of the hospital. They allowed me to read some of the mail that came in, and from all over the states and the world kind letters came in. I read a few, but one of them I will never forget. I had received one from the president and the vice president; I've forgotten what those telegrams said. I'd received a visit and a letter from the governor of New York, but I've forgotten what that letter said. (Yes)

But there was another letter (All right) that came from a little girl, a young girl who was a student at the White Plains High School. And I looked at that letter and I'll never forget it. It said simply, "Dear Dr. King: I am a ninth-grade student at the White Plains High School." She said, "While it should not matter, I would like to mention that I'm a white girl. I read in the paper of your misfortune and of your suffering. And I read that if you had sneezed, you would have died. And I'm simply writing you to say that I'm so happy that you didn't sneeze." (Yes) [Applause]

And I want to say tonight [Applause], I want to say tonight that I, too, am happy that I didn't sneeze. Because if I had sneezed (All right), I wouldn't have been around here in 1960 (Well), when students all over the South started sitting-in at lunch counters.[6] And I knew that as they were sitting in, they were really standing up (Yes sir) for the best in the American dream and taking the whole nation back to those great wells of democracy, which were dug deep by the founding fathers in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

And they were telling me. [Applause] Now it doesn't matter now. (Go ahead) It really doesn't matter what happens now. I left Atlanta this morning, and as we got started on the plane–there were six of us–the pilot said over the public address system: "We are sorry for the delay, but we have Dr. Martin Luther King on the plane. And to be sure that all of the bags were checked, and to be sure that nothing would be wrong on the plane, we had to check out everything carefully. And we've had the plane protected and guarded all night."

And then I got into Memphis. And some began to say the threats, or talk about the threats that were out (Yeah), or what would happen to me from some of our sick white brothers.

Well, I don't know what will happen now; we've got some difficult days ahead. (Amen) But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. (Yeah) [Applause] And I don't mind. [Applause

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[6] *The Sit-In movement began on February 1, 1960. The sit-ins were a nonviolent student-driven movement across the South aimed at desegregating restaurants and lunch counters.*

continues] Like anybody, I would like to live a long life—longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. (Yeah) And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. (Go ahead) And I've looked over (Yes sir), and I've seen the Promised Land. (Go ahead) I may not get there with you. (Go ahead) But I want you to know tonight (Yes), that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. [Applause] (Go ahead, Go ahead) And so I'm happy tonight; I'm not worried about anything; I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. [Applause]

King, Martin Luther. "I've Been to the Mountaintop." In *A Call to Conscience: the Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, 201-23. New York: IPM (Intellectual Properties Management),in association with Grand Central Publishing, 2001.

The exterior of the Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee

Jim Roberts

CRAFTIVISM = Crafts + Activism
Create a Book of Your BIG Words

Lesson Plan for K-6th Graders:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will learn about the ideals that Dr. King believed in such as freedom, equal rights, justice, nonviolence and peace
2. Students will listen and participate in a read aloud of the book, *Martin's Big Words*, by Doreen Rappaport and illustrated by Bryan Collier.
3. Students will consider the *BIG* words that are significant to them.
4. Students will think of what it means to build a legacy and think of ways that they can create positive social change today and in the future.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What are some words that remind you of Martin Luther King, Jr.?

What were Dr. King's *BIG* words?

What are your *BIG* words? What are the words that help to guide you as you make choices about how to make the world a better place?

ACTIVITIES:

- Read *Martin's Big Words* aloud to students and ask students to read big words in text aloud with you.
- As you read the book, talk about the relevance of specific objects to the story and let students examine them closely. Use these objects such as:
  - » the sign from Jim Crow segregation (after reading page of book where it mentions a "Whites Only" sign)
  - » picture of the Nobel Peace Prize (or a Freedom Award Medallion)
  - » I AM A MAN protest sign (after reading page final page of book when the author mentions Dr. King coming to Memphis to help the "garbage collectors who were on strike.")
- Using the template below, create a book of your *BIG* words by drawing or writing the words that are most important to you.
- Alternatively: Students can make a poster of their *BIG* words or of one of their *BIG* words.

National Civil Rights Museum

My BIG Words

by

National Civil Rights Museum®

AT THE LORRAINE MOTEL

CRAFTIVISM = Crafts + Activism
What's Your Sign?

Lesson Plan for making protest signs with Elementary or Middle School students:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will understand the power of protest to spread awareness and create positive change both historically and in a modern day context.
2. Students will consider tools of nonviolent protest, such as songs, paintings, buttons or protest signs.
3. Students will consider issues that are important to them and their community.
4. Students will engage in civil discussion about world issues or in their communities, where they hope to see progress and positive change.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- 5” x 8” Index cards OR Cardstock (light colored) OR Poster board (any size)
- Pencil
- Markers OR Crayons
- Jumbo Craft Stick OR Chopsticks OR a Paint stirrer OR a Ruler
- Tape or Glue
- Images (either printed photos or digital images) of protestors holding a variety of protest signs, wearing t-shirts or buttons with protest messages (use a photo of Sanitation Workers in 1968 holding an “I AM A MAN” sign and show #BLM protestors in modern context)

B. Christopher/Alamy Stock Photo

Art Shay

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What are some issues or problems in the world or in your community?
- What are the issues that you feel are most important to speak up about?

ACTIVITY:

Introduction:
Set class rules for the class to be a safe space for courageous conversations. Remind students that every person views the world differently and that while our opinions on these issues may vary, it is important to be respectful of all students' opinions. Tell students they each have a right to their own ideas and beliefs. Allow each student an uninterrupted opportunity to share their thoughts.

1. Show photos of protestors holding protest signs or wearing protest buttons or t-shirts with protest messages. Ask students to read the messages and try to determine what the people in the photos are protesting for or what they are resisting/fighting against.
2. Have students make a list of issues in the world that matter to them, or problems that they feel need addressing - Prompt students with questions such as "what are the issues or problems in our world or in our community that we should try to change? What should we speak up about? What can we do or say to help?
3. Ask students if anyone wants to share those ideas allowed.
4. Have students write (first in pencil) the message they have chosen on their posterboard or index card in as large of letters as possible Modification for youngest learners who are not writing yet: Have students draw a picture of an idea they want to share on their poster or index card, (e.g. hearts, peace signs, the earth or people holding hands)
5. Have students go over their writing or drawings with markers or crayons to make the poster or sign bolder and easier to read from a far
6. *If students are making a protest sign with index cards, they can attach the "handle" (chopsticks, straw, paint stirrer, or craft stick) to the back of their sign with masking tape.
7. *If students are attaching a handle and want two-sided signs, they should put two tape loops on the back of their first sign, repeat steps 3 & 4 to make a second sign and then stick it to the back of the first sign, sandwiching the handle between the signs.

*Handles are optional, not a necessity. Handles just allow people to hold their sign higher for extra visibility. Protest posters or banners share a message, just as effectively with or without a handle.

Note: Protest signs with wooden handles are sometimes taken away by law enforcement officers because they may be seen as weapons. There is also an additional material cost for buying supplies to make handles, so in many instances, protestors make protest signs without handles.

Wrap up:
Ask students to share their signs with the class and (if they would like to) share why they chose that particular message.

Conclude the activity and discussion by reminding students that they have strong and powerful voices. By using their words and through their peaceful actions, they can be changemakers for a more just world.

CRAFTIVISM = Crafts + Activism
Commemorative Stamp

Lesson Plan for K-6th Graders:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will learn processes for how stamps are designed, selected and chosen for production, produced and distributed.
2. Students will understand how postage stamps function and the importance of postage stamps to the mail system.
3. Students will design their own stamp and share or create an exhibit with their personally designed commemorative stamps.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What Does a Stamp Do?

Little postage stamps have many big jobs. A stamp is a receipt - it shows that someone has paid for a letter to be delivered. Some stamps have a special coating that helps machines process the mail. Under special lights the coating appears to glow, which helps the machine find the stamp to cancel it. Many people collect stamps for their beauty. Stamps also preserve history by honoring special events, places, or people.

How are Stamp Designs Chosen?

Americans throughout the country suggest ideas for new stamp designs. They send their suggestions to the U. S. Postal Service's Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee made up of artists, historians, business people and stamp collectors. The committee selects the subjects they think most Americans would really enjoy. The Postmaster General makes the final decision.

If you were going to design a stamp, what subject would you choose?

Think carefully about who you would honor. You might write a letter to the committee explaining why your subject should be chosen. You can send your suggestions for stamp designs for consideration to the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee, at the address provided in the "Submit Your Stamp for Consideration" section.

National Civil Rights Museum

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Look at some sample stamps that have commemorated Civil Rights Heroes by visiting this link OR use a magnifier to examine stamps we have collected and included here.
2. Think of a person, a group or an event you want to commemorate or memorialize. You can choose to base your stamp design around any of the following subjects:
   - A PERSON, such as Dr. King or another civil rights activist or person involved in creating social change. This could also be a GROUP such as the Memphis Sanitation Strikers.
   - A PLACE, such as the Lorraine Motel or the Dr. King Memorial.
   - A SPECIAL EVENT, such as the Silent March or the Sanitation Workers Strike, a special event in your community, or Dr. King's birthday.
   - AN IMPORTANT ISSUE, something that is important to you or to our world, such as human rights, climate change, or ending gun violence.
3. Consider and discuss with classmates why you selected this particular person, group, place, event, or issue to be represented on your stamp.
4. Draw the image(s) you want to commemorate or honor on your stamp. Your subject should be at the center of the template, to draw the viewers' eyes to focus on that subject. Color and shade the image(s). Consider using bold colors and outlines.
5. Choose one to three words to include in your stamp. Keep the words legible and neat but also interesting. Include stamp value and country of origin.
6. Include stamp value and country of origin.
7. Share your newly designed stamp with the class.

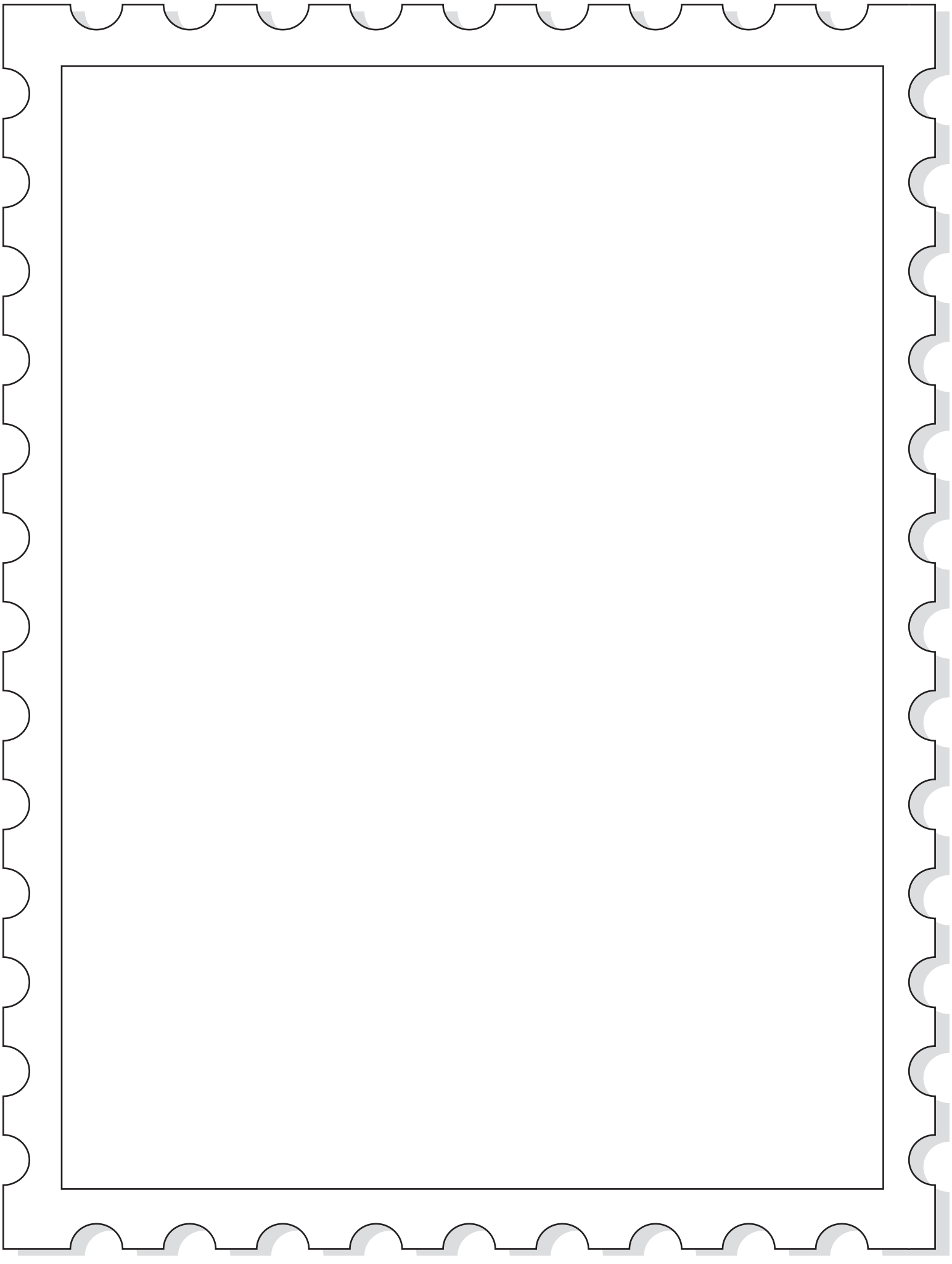
Create an Exhibit of Your Stamps:
Cut out your stamp, mount it to black (or colorful) construction paper and place them on a wall to make an exhibit of your classes' commemorative stamps!

Submit Your Stamp for Consideration:
Send your stamp design with a letter explaining your stamp's meaning and requesting that your stamp be considered for official design, production and release to:

Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee Stamp Development Branch
U.S. Postal Service
Washington, DC 20260

Use this link to explore the Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

For more Craftivism activities visit this link.



CRAFTIVISM = Crafts + Activism
Pinwheels for Peace

Lesson Plan for K-6th Graders and families.

SUMMARY:

April 4, 2018 marked 50 years since a great civil rights hero, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel. The National Civil Rights Museum celebrates Dr. King's life and legacy of peace, in many ways. This activity, Pinwheels for Peace, reminds us that Dr. King believed in peace and wanted a peaceful world where all people have equal rights.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To consider what peace means to them and how they can create a more peaceful world.

2. To think about ways that we support equality and create fairness in our community.

3. To create pinwheels that promote ideas of peace and equality to honor Dr. King.

KEY WORDS:

to Introduce and discuss

Peace

Nonviolence

Equality

Protest

Justice

Fairness

Community

Rights

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- What does "peace" mean to you? What does equality mean to you?
- Why did Dr. King believe that equality is important? Why is it important to you?
- How *YOU* can make the world more peaceful and fair with your words and actions? How can you help to build what Dr. King called a "beloved community"?

National Civil Rights Museum

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Pinwheel templates and instructions

Scissors

Colored pencils, markers or crayons

Pencil or wooden dowel rod

Straight pin or small nail

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS:

Create a Pinwheel for Peace by following these steps:

1. Draw pictures or write words on your pinwheel that show what peace means to you or how you can create peace in the world.
2. Use scissors or ask an adult to help you cut out the pinwheel on the dotted lines. Cut out the peace symbol too! You can glue it to the middle of the pinwheel when you're all done.
3. Take the corners with stars and stack them onto the star in the middle of the square.
4. Ask an adult to push a pin or small nail through your pinwheel to fasten it onto a pencil. The pin should go through any of the holes in the metal part of the eraser. Now you can glue your peace sign to the middle and begin to enjoy your pinwheel!

The Museum cannot accept pinwheels or pinwheel gardens. We ask that you keep them and display your individual Pinwheel for Peace or ask others to make pinwheels and put them in floral foam or in the ground to create Peace Pinwheel Gardens.

Take pictures and post them on your favorite social media platform and feel free to share far and wide with friends and family!

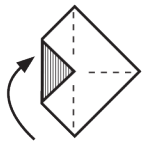
National Civil Rights Museum

National Civil Rights Museum
AT THE LORRAINE MOTEL

Pinwheels *for* Peace

The National Civil Rights Museum celebrates Dr. King's life and legacy of peace, in many ways. This activity, ***Pinwheels for Peace***, reminds us that Dr. King believed in peace and wanted a peaceful world where all people have equal rights.

1



Think about what peace means to you and how you can create peace in the world. Draw pictures or write words on the square on both sides.

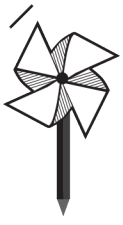
2

Cut out the pinwheel on the dotted lines. Then cut out the circle with the solid peace sign. You can glue it to the middle of the pinwheel, when you're all done.

3

Take the corners with stars and stack them onto the star in the middle of the square.

4



Ask an adult to push a pin or small nail through your pinwheel to fasten it onto a pencil. The pin should go through the metal part of the eraser. Now you can glue your peace sign to the middle. Then blow on the pinwheel to watch it twirl!

Inspired by pinwheelsforpeace.com

To learn more about the National Civil Rights Museum, visit www.civilrightsmuseum.org

Human Rights

Civil rights and human rights are closely related; at their core, they each assert that every person has a fundamental dignity and should be treated equally.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Civil rights are a critical component of democracy and define a person's relationship to the law and society. Although civil rights can differ from country to country, they provide citizens protection from the government, and ensure that every citizen has the right to choose how they are treated by the government. Civil rights include the right to vote, the right to an education, the right to a fair trial, freedom of thought and expression, freedom of the press, freedom from discrimination, and many more. The key assumption in civil rights is the equal application of the law to all people regardless of race, class, gender, sexual identity, religion, ethnicity, and other social identifiers.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are universal. Every person, regardless of where they live, is entitled to human rights. In 1948, the United Nations developed the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which defined human rights in 30 articles. Human rights include the right to life and a safe existence; freedom from torture or inhumane treatment; the freedom of movement including to and from one's home country; the freedom to work and choose one's employment, the right to receive payment for that work; the right to a standard quality of life that ensures one's well-being; as well as the right to security. Human rights are protected by international law and are a fundamental part of our existence.

For more information about the Youth for Human Rights organization, visit this link.

For students Elementary and Middle School students, visit this link for a Craft + Activism activity.

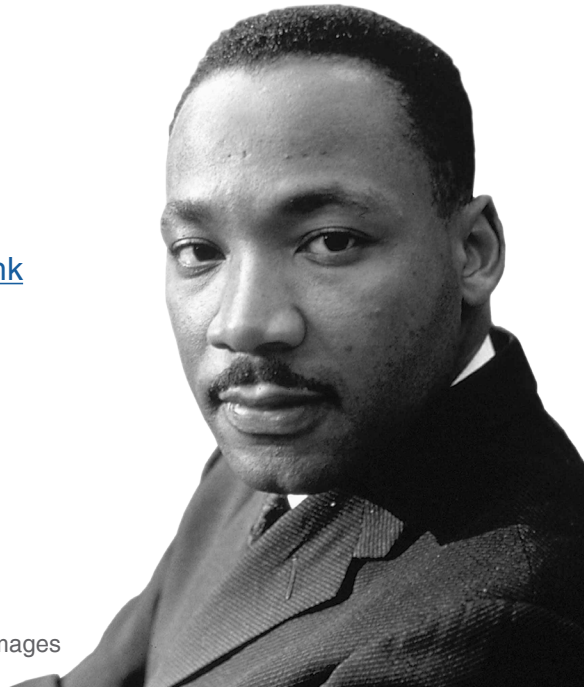


Photo by Howard Sochurek/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images

28. A FAIR and FREE World

8. Your Human Rights are **PROTECTED BY LAW**

26. The Right To **EDUCATION**

21 The **RIGHT** to **DEOMOCRACY**

4 NO SLAVERY

13. Freedom to Move

1. We are all born **FREE** *and* **EQUAL**

12. The Right to **PRIVACY**

14. THE RIGHT TO SEEK A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE

17. The Right to Your Own Things

19. Freedom of **EXPRESSION**

27. COPYRIGHT

20. The Right to **PUBLIC ASSEMBLY**

25. Food and Shelter for ALL

30

no one can take away your human rights

TEN The RIGHT To TRIAL

23 WORKERS' RIGHTS

7. We are all **EQUAL** before THE LAW

18. Freedom of **THOUGHT**

2. Don't **Discriminate**

29. RESPONSIBILITY

6. YOU HAVE RIGHTS NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO

9. *NO* Unfair Detainment

15 The **RIGHT** to a **NATIONALITY**

5. *NO* **TORTURE**

THREE The **RIGHT** To **LIFE**

16. Marriage *and* Family

11. We are all **INNOCENT** Till Proven Guilty

22. SOCIAL SECURITY

24. The Right to **Play**

National Civil Rights Museum AT THE LORRAINE MOTEL