

Primary Source (Image)

Images of 1968 Riots, Washington, DC



What progress has been made in the twentieth century in the fight to realize Founding principles of liberty, equality, and justice for African Americans? What work must still be done?

- ☐ I can interpret primary sources related to Founding principles of liberty, equality, and justice in the 1960s to the present day.
- ☐ I can explain how laws and policy, courts, and individuals and groups contributed to or pushed back against the quest for liberty, equality, and justice for African Americans.
- ☐ I can explain why the civil rights movement fractured in the 1960s.
- ☐ I can compare movements for liberty, equality, and justice for African Americans over time.
- ☐ I can create an argument using evidence from primary sources.
- ☐ I can analyze issues in history to help find solutions to present-day challenges.

Essential Vocabulary

white flight	The phenomenon of white people moving out of urban areas, particularly those with significant minority populations, and into suburban areas.
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Building Context

In the mid-1960s, race riots erupted in several cities to protest police brutality and express frustration with unequal living conditions. On April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. As the news broke, riots erupted across several cities in the United States. The most damaging took place in Baltimore, Chicago, and Washington, DC. Widespread looting and violence wracked Washington from April 4–8. The District’s police force was overwhelmed by crowds, and President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered the National Guard to assist them. The riots devastated Washington’s urban economy and accelerated **white flight** out of the city. Crime in the devastated neighborhoods increased, and many blocks in Washington, DC, took decades to recover.

Images of 1968 Riots, Washington, DC



A soldier stands at the intersection of 7th and N Streets, with smoking ruins in the background.

(Credit: Library of Congress)

Source Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003688168/>



Troops stand guard in front of the U.S. Capitol.
(Credit: Library of Congress)

Source Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017646314/>



After the riots, food is distributed to the community at a local church.
(Credit: Library of Congress)

Source Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2009632336/>



Riot damage was extensive in the area of 7th to 14th Streets NW.
(Credit: Library of Congress)

Source Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017650255/>

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

1. What was the immediate cause of the riot in Washington, DC?



2. Consider the goals and achievements of the civil rights movement. What else might account for the violence seen in cities like Washington, DC, in 1968?

