

Primary Source

Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here?*
1967



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.

Building Context

By 1967, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his allies had won several hard-fought victories for the civil rights movement with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The movement, however, was far from over. Many debated the appropriate paths it should take and the methods it should use. King considered these questions in the following speech, delivered to fellow members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in August 1967.

Martin Luther King, Jr., Where Do We Go From Here? 1967

Source: <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/justice/social-justice/where-do-we-go-from-here>

<p>I'm concerned about a better world . . . And when one is concerned about that, he can never advocate violence . . . 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 . . .</p> <p>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?" . . . 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 . . .</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 . . .</p> <p>What I'm saying today is that we must go from this convention and say, "America, you must be born again!"</p>	<p><i>Notes</i></p>
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Comprehension and Analysis Questions

1. Did King advocate a change of methods for the civil rights movement? Explain.

2. What were the triple evils, according to King?

3. According to King, what impact did slavery have on American society?

4. What was the next step in the civil rights movement, according to King in this speech?