

Messages from Martin Martin Luther King on Inequality

By

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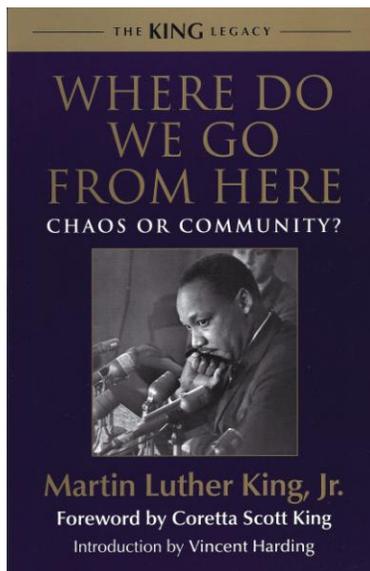
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Dr. Martin Luther King was one of our most perceptive and thoughtful observers of inequality in the U.S. In his last book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (1968) King described the effects of three centuries of racial inequality on the lives of ordinary people. This book was part of an Ithaca-area community read in 2010–2011.

On the other side of this sheet are a few selected quotes from King’s book.

Messages from Dr. Martin Luther King from 1968

What are your reactions to these statements? Do they seem true today or are they mere remnants of the past? Or were they never accurate? Do they inspire, annoy or otherwise affect you?

“The daily life of the Negro is still lived in the basement of the Great Society.” (page 19)

“...no white person can ever understand what it means to be a Negro.”

“...being a Negro in Americameans trying to hold onto physical life amidst psychological death.” (page 127)

“The time has come to civilize ourselves by the total, direct and immediate abolition of poverty.” (page 175)

“Whites...are not putting in a mass effort to reeducate themselves out of their racial ignorance. It is an aspect of their sense of superiority that the white people of America believe they have so little to learn.” (page 10)

“Negroes hold only one key to the double lock of peaceful change. The other is in the hands of the white community.” (page 22)

“Why is equality so assiduously avoided?” (page 4)

“The history books, which have almost completely ignored the contribution of the Negro in American history, have only served to intensify the Negroes’ sense of worthlessness and to augment the anachronistic doctrine of white supremacy.” (page 42)

“Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself.” (page 180)

“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.” (page 201)