

Excerpt from President Obama's Presidential Proclamation - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (2016)

by Barack Obama



Martin Luther King, 1964

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., challenged our Nation to recognize that our individual liberty relies upon our common equality. In communities marred by division and injustice, the movement he built from the ground up forced open doors to negotiation. The strength of his leadership was matched only by the power of his words, which still call on us to perfect those sacred ideals enshrined in our founding documents.

"We have an opportunity to make America a better Nation," Dr. King said on the eve of his death. "I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the promised land." Though we have made great strides since the turbulent era of Dr. King's movement, his work and our journey remain unfinished. Only when our children are free to pursue their full measure of success -- unhindered by the color of their skin, their gender, the faith in their heart, the people they love, or the fortune of their birth -- will we have reached our destination.

Today, we are closer to fulfilling America's promise of economic and social justice because we stand on the shoulders of giants like Dr. King, yet our future progress will depend on how we prepare our next generation of leaders. We must fortify their ladders of opportunity by correcting social injustice, breaking the cycle of poverty in struggling communities, and reinvesting in our schools. Education can unlock a child's potential and remains our strongest weapon against injustice and inequality.

Recognizing that our Nation has yet to reach Dr. King's promised land is not an admission of defeat, but a call to action. In these challenging times, too many Americans face limited opportunities, but our capacity to support each other remains limitless. Today, let us ask ourselves what Dr. King believed to be life's most urgent and persistent question: "What are you doing for others?"...

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. On the eve of his death, what did Dr. King say we have an opportunity to do?
 - A. to force open doors to negotiation
 - B. to strengthen his leadership
 - C. to stand on his shoulders
 - D. to make America a better nation

2. In the last paragraph of the text, what does President Obama try to persuade people to do?
 - A. to take action and support others
 - B. to admit that our nation has been defeated
 - C. to recognize that Americans face limited opportunities
 - D. to question the commitment of other people

3. Even after his death, Dr. King continues to challenge Americans to make America a better nation. What evidence from the text supports this conclusion?
 - A. The movement Dr. King built from the ground up forced open doors to negotiation.
 - B. Only when children are free to pursue their full measure of success will Americans have reached the "promised land."
 - C. Dr. King's words still call on Americans to perfect the ideals in America's founding documents.
 - D. Although too many Americans face limited opportunities, Americans' capacity to support each other remains limitless.

4. Based on this speech, what can you infer about economic and social justice in America?
 - A. They are impossible to fulfill.
 - B. They are easily attainable.
 - C. They are unimportant to most people.
 - D. They have not yet been achieved.

5. What is the main idea of this presidential proclamation?

- A. Dr. King challenged America to recognize that its individual liberty relies upon Americans' common equality.
- B. Although great strides have been made to reach Dr. King's "promised land," there is still work to be done to make America a better nation.
- C. The strength of Dr. King's leadership was matched only by the power of his words.
- D. Dr. King believed this was life's most urgent and persistent question: "What are you doing for others?"

6. Read this sentence from the text.

"Today, we are closer to fulfilling America's promise of economic and social justice because we stand on the shoulders of giants like Dr. King ..."

What might President Obama mean by saying "we stand on the shoulders of giants like Dr. King"?

- A. Americans are often blocked by Dr. King's work.
- B. Americans are building on Dr. King's work.
- C. Americans are unable to improve on Dr. King's work.
- D. Americans are ignoring Dr. King's work.

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Americans are closer today to fulfilling America's promise of economic and social justice; _____, America's future progress will depend on how Americans prepare their next generation of leaders,

- A. however
- B. therefore
- C. because
- D. whenever

8. What did Dr. King believe was life's most urgent and persistent question?

9. Name two ways Americans can prepare their next generation of leaders.

10. Read this sentence from the text.

"In these challenging times, too many Americans face limited opportunities, but our capacity to support each other remains limitless. Today, let us ask ourselves what Dr. King believed to be life's most urgent and persistent question: 'What are you doing for others?'"

Based on this proclamation, explain how Americans supporting each other could bring America closer to Dr. King's "promised land" of equality and opportunity.

Support your answer with evidence from the text.
