

A Look at Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's "The Other America"

And how it informs Advancement Project National Office's fight for justice

"... There are literally two Americas. One America is flowing with the milk of prosperity and the honey of equality. That America is the habitat of millions of people who have food and material necessities for their bodies, culture and education for their minds, freedom and human dignity for their spirits ...

In this other America, thousands, yea, even millions, of young people are forced to attend inadequate, substandard, inferior, quality-less schools, and year after year thousands of young people in this other America finish our high schools reading at an eighth- and a ninth-grade level sometimes. Not because they are dumb, not because they don't have innate intelligence, but because the schools are so inadequate, so overcrowded, so devoid of quality, so segregated, if you will, that the best in these minds can never come out."



In 1967, MLK spoke about "The Other America" in a speech at Stanford University. What does the "other America" look like today in 2019?

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's speech is incredibly relevant today because of its commentary on racism and "white backlash." He says during his address that:

- ▶ Racism is alive and well and more widespread than many people realize;
- ▶ "White backlash" is merely a new name for an old phenomenon. White Americans have been "backlashing" on Blacks and other disadvantaged groups for more than 300 years;
- ▶ The "other America" is a place where people:
 - 1) Are surrounded by injustice and the daily indignities that perpetuate the lie that they are inferior;
 - 2) Experience food insecurity;
 - 3) Live in inadequate housing;
 - 4) Lack freedom and opportunity.

One of the most salient points King makes – and one that is extremely relevant to the work that **Advancement Project National Office** leads – is that, "The greatest tragedy of this America is what it does to little children. In this other America children grow up with clouds of inferiority forming in their little mental skies."

Through our support of grassroots organizations on the ground, Advancement Project National Office sees this "other America" every day. Despite the fact that unemployment is at 4 percent and some communities are thriving despite the partial shutdown of the federal government that began at the start of 2019, we see the divestment from communities of color across the country and the impact it has on young people, schools and families. We see the impact it has on the criminal legal system and the way systemic racism affects the treatment of refugees and immigrants. We see the way in which the nation's "promise of freedom and justice have not been met."



ADVANCEMENT PROJECT 20 YEARS

In 2019, it is Advancement Project National Office's goal to advance organizing campaigns that will make communities of color free and safe.


- ▶ Because we know that in the “other America,” adults prioritize the policing of students in school instead of investing in high-quality teachers, student supports, counselors, and mental health services, we are integrally working as part of the movement to remove police from schools.
- ▶ In today's “other America,” the criminal legal system, based on slavery and Jim Crow era policies, over-criminalizes Black and Brown communities, fuels mass incarceration and fails to hold police accountable for misconduct. That's why we are working with partners in Detroit, St. Louis and New Orleans to re-imagine public safety and dismantle racist systems that target communities.
- ▶ In today's “other America,” those in power use their position to silence the voice of those attempting to build it. This means implementing policies that make it more difficult to vote and stripping returning citizens of their fundamental right to vote. That's why Advancement Project National Office is working in states like Florida to assist with the implementation of Amendment 4, which reverses a century-old tradition of disenfranchising those with felony convictions.




*Judith Browne Dianis, Executive Director,
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We completely agree with King. To dismantle institutional racism, there must be massive, positive action programs. We must organize and build multi-racial networks because no one community can do it alone. We must “build a coalition of the conscious” to create a truly just and free society. Creating this society where people of color are free and safe will come through the “tireless effort and persistent work of the dedicated.” And we are honored to be part of that work.

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