

# In 2004, What Would Dr. King Do?

*Our nation is at a crossroads. In 2004, we are faced with the choice between genuine peace and permanent war; between justice and oppression, between democracy and repression.*

*We have been here before. Forty years ago, another president convinced Congress to give him a blank check to wage a war without limit. The result was Vietnam: 58,000 young Americans and more than three million Vietnamese dead; a society broken and scarred; illegal assaults on our civil liberties, all in the name of patriotism. Now we are told that an endless "war on terrorism" justifies defiance of international law, invasions and occupations, and sweeping erosions in basic human rights for all Americans, particularly people of color.*

*In April 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at New York's Riverside Church about what Vietnam meant for the United States. His words remind us of the choices we face in 2004, and how profoundly wrong are Bush's current policies—in Iraq, in the Middle East and around the world, here at home.*

*"I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.*

*"It became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the young black men who had been crippled in our society and sending them 8000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem.*

*"I knew I could never again raise my voice against the*

*violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government.*

*"The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality we will find ourselves ... marching and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy....*

*"[W]e as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. When machines and computers, profit and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.*

*"A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies.... A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."*

*Thirty-six years later, Dr. King's challenge to us remains. Our country can make a change, a turn towards humanity and law and decency. Or we can continue down the road of deepening racial injustice and permanent war. A war against the vast majority of the world's people, who are coming to fear us. A war at home, against immigrants, against dissenters, against people of color, against all those without special influence in the halls of power.*

*It's time for our government to turn to the values of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Take action in 2004 to make that change.*



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