

Civic Friendship and Faithful Distrust
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I argue that distrust can be of democratic value because it can move people to engage in actions that promote justice, democracy, and civic friendship. In support of this conclusion, I argue that distrust of the white moderates was one of the motivations behind Martin Luther King, Jr. and his supporters' political demonstrations during the Civil Rights Movement. King worried that, on its own, distrust could be dangerous. Distrust can lead to aversive emotions such as despair, shame, and guilt. These emotions can block the path toward the "beloved community," something that King hoped to take realistic steps toward. However, the fact that distrust can be dangerous does not mean – as critics have suggested – that distrust is without political value. Rather, it suggests, distrust must be properly qualified. As King knew, when distrust is qualified by faith in humanity it is no longer so dangerous and can become a catalyst for civic friendship and the creation of the beloved community. I argue that King and his supporters' faithful distrust of the white moderates induced the white moderates to see their own moral failure, to be roused out of complacency, and to support the movement for racial justice in the United States. I close by arguing that this sort of political action can not only be a catalyst but is an appropriate basis for civic friendship.