

II. FINDINGS OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS IN THE ASSASSINATION OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., IN MEMPHIS, TENN., APRIL 4, 1968

INTRODUCTION: THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND DR. KING

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., an eloquent Baptist minister from Atlanta, Ga., was one of the most prominent figures in the civil rights movement in America during its period of most visible achievement, 1955 to 1968. A disciple of nonviolence and love, Dr. King became the victim of savage violence, killed by a sniper's bullet as he stood on the balcony of a Memphis, Tenn., motel on April 4, 1968. His death signaled the seeming end of a period of civil rights progress that he had led and for which his life had become a symbol. Dr. King's legacy is one of profound change in the social fabric, not only for Black Americans, but for all citizens. But for some, after his death, as a Washington Post writer observed, "* * * his army of conscience disbanded, the banners fell, the movement unraveled * * *."

HISTORY OF CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLENCE(1)

Dr. King's tragic death in Memphis in 1968 was not, unfortunately, a historical aberration. The first Blacks arrived in colonial America at Jamestown, Va., in 1619 as slaves from Africa. As they were dispersed among Southern plantations, they were deprived of their traditions and separated from the rest of the population by custom and law. Their fate was determined by the white majority.

Civil rights violence dates back at least to the mid-18th century, with the slave revolts of that period and their brutal suppression by whites. Roaming bands of runaway slaves in the South attacked plantations, and, in 1775, fears of a general slave uprising led to the annihilation of at least one group of Blacks by white soldiers in Georgia.

After the American Revolution, with the invention of the cotton gin, slavery in the South intensified. Black Americans provided most of the labor to support the economy of that region. Laws restricting Black mobility and educational opportunity were adopted by Southern legislatures, while the rights of slaveholders were jealously protected. Involuntary servitude was, however, outlawed in the North, and leaders of the new Nation such as Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and John Woolman called for an end to slavery.

During the 1830's, sentiment for emancipation of slaves solidified. The movement for the abolition of slavery, led by "radicals," sparked violence throughout the United States. In 1835, a proslavery band seized abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and dragged him through the streets of Boston. Two years later, the presses of the radical Alton, Ill., Observer were destroyed, and its editor, Elijah P. Lovejoy, was shot to death by white vandals.

In the 1850's, violence presaged the struggle that was to tear the Union asunder. The pillaging and burning of Lawrence, Kans., by a proslavery mob on May 21, 1856, led abolitionist John Brown to launch a bloody retaliatory raid on Potawatamie, Kans., 3 days later. The massacre touched off a guerrilla war that lasted until Kansas was granted statehood in 1861. In 1859, Brown seized the Federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, W. Va., in the hope of arming a Black force that would free slaves in the South. The arsenal was recaptured 2 days after Brown's raid, and Brown was hanged following his trial and conviction of treason, conspiracy, and murder.

Sectional differences led to the Civil War that fractured the Union in 1861; it lasted 4 years and became one of the bloodiest military conflicts in U.S. history. Blacks served a limited role in the Union Army; over 200,000 of them were inducted. Their presence in battle infuriated Confederate military leaders, some of whom approved a no-prisoner policy for Blacks. Combat reports indicate that Black prisoners were murdered by Southern troops following, for example, the 1864 Battles of Fort Pillow, Tenn., Poison Spring, Ark., and the Crater at Petersburg, Va.

In the decade following the Northern victory in 1865 and the freeing of slaves from bondage, a spate of laws, engineered to guarantee the rights of newly emancipated Blacks, were adopted. They included the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments and 7 civil rights acts. The promise of equality during postwar Reconstruction, the period of reestablishment of the seceded States into the Union, however, was not realized. Reforms were ultimately defeated by Southern white intransigence and violence. With emancipation, a wave of murders swept the South, and Reconstruction became the bloodiest period of civil rights violence in U.S. history, as the caste system of segregation was violently institutionalized. Militant groups such as the White Leagues and the Ku Klux Klan organized to oppose the new challenge to white supremacy.

Outbursts of violence were commonplace throughout the South during this period:

According to General Philip Sheridan, commander of troops in Louisiana and Texas during Reconstruction, 3,500 civil rights advocates were slain in Louisiana alone in the decade following the Civil War, 1,884 of them in 1868 alone.

When Blacks in Memphis, Tenn., appealed for their civil rights in 1866, rampaging white terrorists burned homes and churches in the Black section of that city and massacred 47 Blacks.

The killing of 27 delegates by a white mob at the Louisiana State Convention in New Orleans in 1866 was described by one observer as a "systematic massacre of Negroes by whites."

Of 16 Blacks elected as delegates to the Mississippi Constitutional Convention in 1868, two were assassinated by whites.

In the Alabama election campaign of 1870, four Black civil rights leaders were murdered when they attended a Republican rally.

White terrorists took control of Meridian, Miss., in 1871 after they killed a Republican judge and lynched an interracial group of civil rights leaders.

In the Mississippi election campaign of 1874, several Black leaders in Vicksburg were attacked and murdered by members of the Ku Klux Klan.

During the Louisiana election campaign of 1878, Klan gunmen fired on Blacks in Caddo Parish, killing 40 by one account, as many as 75 by another.

Systematic violence, designed to terrify Blacks asserting their right to vote, led Attorney General Alfonso Taft to declare in 1876, "It is the fixed purpose of the Democratic Party in the South that the Negro shall not vote and murder is a common means of intimidation to prevent them."

Radical Reconstruction in the South was defeated by 1877, and the last of the Black militias in the South were dissolved. Southern legislatures adopted laws to deprive Blacks of all opportunity for political or civil participation and to segregate all facilities for education, travel, and public accommodation. Despite the waning of Reconstruction, mob violence and lynching occurred almost unchecked in the South until World War I. Blacks were removed from public affairs by intimidation.

In the 1890's, the legislatures of all Southern States disenfranchised Black citizens. With its 1903 ruling in *Giles v. Harris*, the U.S. Supreme Court sanctioned this practice. A few years earlier, in 1896, the Court had also approved racial segregation, finding in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that "separate but equal" facilities were acceptable under the Constitution. As the Black vote disappeared in the South, the murder of civil rights leaders decreased dramatically, only to be replaced by other forms of white terrorism: riots and lynching. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1909 to deal with this intimidation at the expense of further assertion of Black political authority.

EQUALITY IN EDUCATION—THE 20TH CENTURY OBJECTIVE(2)

The civil rights movement that became a major social and political force in the 1950's, and matured in the 1960's, grew out of the efforts of organizations founded during the first half of the 20th century. One prominent organization of this period, the NAACP, was responsible for the gradual emergence of the Black protest movement. It sought an end to racial segregation primarily through the court system by providing counsel to Blacks whose rights had been denied. It also pushed for reform in the Congress and in State legislatures and initiated programs to educate the public about existing racial injustice. The National Urban League worked on behalf of middle-class Blacks. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a pacifist organization founded in 1942, attacked discrimination in places of public accommodation in Northern and Border States. CORE took the lead in nonviolent direct action, organizing, for example, sit-ins in Chicago in 1943, bus rides and stand-ins at Chicago's Palisades Pool in 1947-48, and, in 1947, the Journey of Reconciliation, a harbinger of later freedom rides. These activities of CORE, in fact, presaged the work of Dr. Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the late 1950's and 1960's.

With the signs of civil rights progress in the 1940's, particularly judicial responses to the NAACP, a mass movement began to develop. The U.S. Supreme Court prohibited all-white primary elections and declared unconstitutional racially restrictive real estate covenants. In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an Executive order urging fair employment practices in response to the threats of mass demonstrations from A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. The President's Committee on Civil Rights recommended the enactment of fair employment legislation in 1947, and in 1948, President Harry S. Truman barred segregation in the Armed Forces and Government agencies. The Congress, however, did not act on civil rights issues until 1957.

The modern civil rights movement set its roots in the field of education. The NAACP had initiated litigation in the 1930's to end segregation in education. At the beginning of 1954, 17 States and the District of Columbia required segregation in public schools, while three other States permitted localities to adopt the practice. Then, on May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court announced its unanimous decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. In delivering the opinion of the Court, Chief Justice Earl Warren said that "separate education facilities are inherently unequal." A year later, the Court followed with a ruling that the process of public school desegregation must proceed with "all deliberate speed," thus choosing a policy of gradualism rather than requiring desegregation by a fixed date as urged by the *Brown* plaintiffs through their NAACP attorneys.

The *Brown* decision signaled the beginning of a long struggle, for it was not readily accepted in the South. Segregationist and States rights groups emerged to oppose the goal of integration, and militant organizations such as the White Citizens Councils and the Ku Klux Klans attracted a new following. Violence was resumed. On August 28, 1955, for example, a white mob in Mississippi kidnapped and lynched Emmett Till, a 14-year-old boy from Chicago who had been visiting his relatives.

A NEW LEADER EMERGES

Many historians believe the beginning of the modern Black revolt against inequality was marked in Montgomery, Ala., on December 1, 1955. Four Black passengers were asked by the driver of a downtown bus to give up their seats. Rosa Parks, a 42-year-old Black seamstress, refused and was arrested under a local segregation ordinance. In protest, Black leaders organized a boycott of the Montgomery bus system that lasted 382 days, ending only when the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the buses integrated.

The bus boycott was guided by the words of a 27-year-old Baptist minister who emerged as a fresh and dynamic force among Blacks. Preaching the "Christian doctrine of love operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence," Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., represented a new leadership. In Montgomery, he demonstrated that non-violent direct action could be used effectively to achieve social justice. From that time until his death in 1968, Dr. King's life was inextricably interwoven with the events of the civil rights movement.

Dr. King was born in Atlanta, Ga., on January 15, 1929, the son of a Baptist minister, Martin Luther King, Sr., and the maternal grandson of another Baptist minister. He enrolled at Atlanta's all-Black Morehouse College at age 15 and, in his junior year, decided to enter the clergy. In 1947, he was ordained a minister at his father's Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. The following year, he continued his studies at the Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pa. He was elected president of his class in his senior year and was named outstanding student when he graduated first in his class. At Crozer, he became acquainted with the work of Christian social theologians, as well as Mohandas K. Gandhi's doctrine of nonviolent direct action, Satyagraha (Sanskrit for truth-force), and Henry David Thoreau's essay, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience."

With a fellowship he received to pursue his doctorate, King entered graduate school at Boston University in 1951. His doctoral thesis compared the conceptions of God in the thinking of Paul Tillich and Harry Nelson Weiman. He received his doctorate in the spring of 1955.

In Boston, he met Coretta Scott, a graduate of Antioch College who was attending the New England Conservatory of Music. They were married in June 1953, and in the ensuing years had four children: Yolanda, Martin Luther III, Dexter Scott, and Bernice.

At the beginning of 1954, as he continued work toward his doctorate, Martin Luther King was hired as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala., the city where he was to begin his civil rights career.

As president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), Dr. King led the bus boycott with the assistance of Montgomery Black leaders E. D. Nixon, a civil rights activist who had worked with A. Philip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Reverend Ralph David Abernathy, and Reverend E. N. French. At the first meeting of the MIA on December 5, 1955, Dr. King enunciated the principle from which he would never waver: "We will not resort to violence. We will not degrade ourselves with hatred. Love will be returned for hate." In the tradition of Gandhi, leader of the struggle for Indian independence and an advocate of passive resistance, Dr. King urged his followers to forswear violence and to work for ultimate reconciliation with their opponents by returning good for evil.

After mass arrests, threats and physical attacks, including the dynamiting of Dr. King's home, the Montgomery bus boycott ended successfully in December 1956. That month the Southern Regional Council announced that 25 other Southern cities had desegregated their buses either voluntarily or as the result of boycotts.

Despite the successful Montgomery bus boycott, 1956 was also marked by disappointments to the rising hopes of Black Americans. The admission of Autherine Lucy to the University of Alabama in February was met by white mob violence. To avert further disturbances, she was expelled by university officials. That decision was upheld by a Federal district court and the University of Alabama remained segregated until 1963. Also in 1956, 101 members of Congress from the 11 States that had comprised the Confederacy signed the Southern Manifesto, which declared that the school desegregation decisions of the Supreme Court were a "clear abuse of judicial power." Noting that

neither the Constitution nor the 14th amendment mentioned education and that the *Brown* decision had abruptly reversed precedents established in *Plessy v. Ferguson* and subsequent cases, the manifesto signers vowed "to use all lawful means to bring about a reversal of this decision which is contrary to the Constitution and to prevent the use of force in its implementation."

A PHILOSOPHY OF NONVIOLENCE

White resistance notwithstanding, the civil rights movement continued its growth in 1957. Recognizing the need for a mass movement to capitalize on the Montgomery bus boycott, Black leaders formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) early in the year, and the boycott leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was elected its first president. Adopting a nonviolent approach and focusing on the South, the SCLC was dedicated to the integration of Blacks in all aspects of American life.

In May 1957, to commemorate the third anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Brown* ruling on school desegregation, Dr. King led a prayer pilgrimage in Washington, D.C., the first large-scale Black demonstration in the capital since World War II. In his first national address, Dr. King returned to a theme that had lain dormant for 80 years, the right to vote. "Give us the ballot," he pleaded, "and we will no longer have to worry the Federal Government about our basic rights * * * we will quietly and nonviolently, without rancor or bitterness, implement the Supreme Court's decision." Dr. King was on his way to becoming one of the most influential Black leaders of his time, a symbol of the hopes for equality for all Americans.

It was a time of fast-moving events, actions and counteractions, in a continuing conflict. On September 9, 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the first Civil Rights Act since 1875. The law markedly enlarged the Federal role in race relations. It established a Civil Rights Commission and a Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice. Most important, it gave the Attorney General authority to seek injunctions against obstruction of voting rights.

That same month, in Little Rock, Ark., violent rioting erupted over the integration of Central High School. Nine Black students were successfully enrolled, but not before 1,000 paratroopers and 10,000 National Guardsmen were sent into the beleaguered city. The appearance of Federal troops in Little Rock brought back unpleasant memories of Reconstruction, and the price of progress was a polarization of southern attitudes. Meanwhile, as Dr. King continued to carry the civil rights banner, he became the victim of a near fatal assault on September 20, 1957. As he was autographing copies of his first book, "Stride Toward Freedom," in a Harlem department store, a deranged Black woman, Izola Curry, stabbed him with an 8-inch letter opener. Though the weapon penetrated near his heart, Dr. King recovered after 2 weeks of hospitalization.

1960: THE YEAR OF THE SIT-INS

Civil rights activism intensified in 1960, the year of the sit-ins. On February 1, 1960, four Black students dedicated to nonviolent direct

action sat at the lunch counter of a Greensboro, N.C., Woolworth's store. Though they were refused service, the students sat at the counter until the store closed, and each succeeding day they returned with more students. The sit-in movement spread to cities in Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky, and Florida. Recognizing the need for organization of this new movement, the SCLC provided the impetus for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in April 1960.

The sit-ins that continued throughout the year became a successful means to protest. By the end of 1960, Blacks were being served at lunch counters in hundreds of southern stores.

Inevitably, there was white resistance. As the sit-ins set the pace of a campaign to open up public facilities of all sorts, there were thousands of arrests and occasional outbreaks of violence. Dr. King was arrested with other demonstrators at an Atlanta, Ga., department store sit-in in October 1960. Trespass charges were dropped against him at his trial, but he was sentenced to 4 months hard labor at the Reidsville State Prison Farm on the pretext that he had violated probation for an earlier minor traffic offense. National concern for Dr. King's safety prompted the intercession of Democratic Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy, which led to the civil rights leader's release. Some observers believed this action contributed to Kennedy's narrow election victory over Vice President Richard M. Nixon a week later by attracting Black support.

Violence increased with attempts to integrate the interstate transportation system in 1961, the year of the freedom rides. They began in May when members of CORE boarded two buses in Washington, D.C., and set out for New Orleans, determined to test southern segregation laws on buses as well as in terminals en route. Trouble broke out when the buses reached Alabama. One bus was burned and stoned by whites in Anniston, and, in Birmingham, protestors on the second bus were brutally beaten by a mob awaiting their arrival. Another group of students left Atlanta, Ga., for Montgomery, Ala., the following week. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy sent 500 Federal marshals to protect them, but the students arrived before the marshals and were savagely beaten. The next evening an angry throng of whites surrounded a church where Dr. King was scheduled to speak. The marshals and federalized National Guard troops had to rescue the congregation and Dr. King from the mob. Although the freedom riders met with little violence in Mississippi, they did have to reckon with an unsympathetic legal system. Over 300 demonstrators were arrested for breach of the peace and for disobeying police orders to disperse in segregated Mississippi terminals.

In response to the attacks on freedom riders, Attorney General Kennedy petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to adopt stricter regulations against segregation. On September 22, 1961, the ICC announced new rules prohibiting segregation on interstate buses and in terminals.

Across-the-board desegregation of all public facilities in Albany, Ga., was the focus of a campaign led by Dr. King from late 1961 through the summer of 1962. The city reacted by arresting over 1,100 demonstrators during the campaign, including Dr. King and his

colleague, Reverend Abernathy. City officials stubbornly refused to confer with Black leaders and steadfastly rejected proposals for desegregation. By September 1962, public parks, pools, and libraries had been closed or sold to white business groups. The Albany campaign received national attention, but it failed to crack the southern resistance symbolized by the city. From the Albany defeat Dr. King learned that the scattergun approach of simultaneously attacking all aspects of segregation was ineffective.

On the other hand, the admission of the first Black student to the all-white University of Mississippi in the fall of 1962 marked a significant integrationist victory. James Meredith, an Air Force veteran, had been enrolled at Jackson State College when he decided to transfer to "Ole Miss." With the assistance of the NAACP, he filed suit when he was rejected. After 16 months of litigation, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that he had been turned down solely because of his race and ordered that he be accepted. Outright obstruction by State officials led the court to order that Mississippi's Gov. Ross Barnett and Lt. Gov. Paul Johnson pay fines unless they stop interfering with its ruling. On October 1, 1962, 320 Federal marshals arrived at Oxford to escort Meredith to his dormitory. This action set off a riot that left 2 persons killed and 375 injured before it was quelled by Federal troops. When the tear gas cleared, Meredith was the first Black student to enter "Ole Miss." Despite Governor Barnett's vow to continue to fight his enrollment, Meredith graduated in August 1963.

1963: A YEAR OF TRIUMPH AND DESPAIR

Dr. King led an all-out attack in the spring of 1963 on racial discrimination in Birmingham, Ala., which he described as "the most segregated city in the United States." Civil rights activists sought removal of racial restrictions in downtown snack bars, restrooms and stores, as well as nondiscriminatory hiring practices and the formation of a biracial committee to negotiate integration. Sit-ins, picket lines and parades were met by the police forces of Eugene "Bull" Connor, commissioner of public safety, with hundreds of arrests on charges of demonstrating without a permit, loitering and trespassing.

On Good Friday, April 12, 1963, Dr. King, Reverend Abernathy and Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth were arrested for leading a demonstration in defiance of an injunction obtained by Bull Connor. Dr. King was placed in solitary confinement and refused access to counsel. During his incarceration, he penned his "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," a response to a statement by eight leading local white clergymen—Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish—who had denounced him as an outside agitator and urged Blacks to withdraw their support for his crusade. In this eloquent statement, Dr. King set forth his philosophy of nonviolence and enumerated the steps that preceded the Gandhian civil disobedience in Birmingham. Specifically citing southern segregation laws, he wrote that any law that degraded people was unjust and must be resisted. Nonviolent direct action, Dr. King explained, sought to foster tension and dramatize an issue "so it can no longer be ignored."

Dr. King was released from jail on April 20, 1963. The Birmingham demonstrations continued. On May 2, 500 Blacks, most of them high school students, were arrested and jailed. The next day, a group of demonstrators was bombarded with brickbats and bottles by onlookers, while another cluster of 2,500 protestors was met by the forces of Police Commissioner Connor, with his snarling dogs and high-pressure firehoses.

Worldwide attention was being focused on the plight of Blacks whose reasonable demands were being met by the unbridled brutality of the Birmingham police. Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon said Birmingham "would disgrace a Union of South Africa or a Portuguese Angola." The outcry led to negotiations with the city, and Dr. King suspended his campaign on May 8. Two days later, an agreement was reached to desegregate lunch counters, restrooms, fitting rooms, and drinking fountains in department stores and to promote Blacks over a 60-day period. The following day, however, the bombings of a desegregated hotel and the home of Dr. King's brother, Rev. A. D. King, led to a disturbance by hundreds of Blacks that lasted until State troopers arrived to assist local police. Calm was restored. Dr. King was considered victorious because of the attention he had attracted to racial injustice. One by one, public facilities in Birmingham were opened to Blacks.

Birmingham became a rallying cry for civil rights activists in hundreds of cities in the summer of 1963. Marches were held in Selma, Ala., Albany, Ga., Cambridge, Md., Raleigh and Greensboro, N.C., Nashville and Clinton, Tenn., Shreveport, La., Jackson and Philadelphia, Miss., as well as in New York and Chicago.

This period was also one of tragedy. On June 12, 1963, the day after President Kennedy's dramatic call for comprehensive civil rights legislation, Medgar Evers, NAACP field secretary for Mississippi, was shot to death in front of his Jackson home. Evers had been instrumental in James Meredith's efforts to enter the University of Mississippi, and a month before his death had launched an antisegregation drive in Jackson. Byron de la Beckwith, a fertilizer salesman, was charged with the murder and tried twice; both trials ending in hung juries. In September 1963, attention reverted to Birmingham, Ala., when the 16th Street Baptist Church was bombed, killing four Black girls, aged 11 to 14, in their Sunday school class. The tragedy was compounded by the deaths of two Black youths, killed later that day in an outburst of violence that followed the bombing.

The climactic point of the campaign for Black equality came on August 28, 1963, when Dr. King led 250,000 followers in the march on Washington, a nonviolent demonstration of solidarity engineered by A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin to dramatize Black discontent and demand an open, desegregated society with equal justice for all citizens regardless of race. A goal of the march was passage of a comprehensive civil rights bill to insure integrated education, equal access to public accommodations, protection of voting rights and nondiscriminatory employment practices. In his address, acclaimed as the most memorable moment of the day, Dr. King recounted his dream for an integrated society:

I have a dream that one day this Nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the State of Mississippi, a State sweltering with the heat of injustice * * * will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

Dr. King pledged to continue to fight for freedom and concluded:

When we allow freedom to ring * * * from every town and every hamlet, from every State and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, Black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Great God A'Mighty, we are free at last!"

The march provided new impetus to the civil rights movement and helped solidify the recognition of Dr. King as one of the most important spokesmen for the Black cause.

Within weeks of President Kennedy's assassination on November 22, 1963, his successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson, asked the Congress to end its deadlock and submit strong civil rights legislation for his approval. Congress responded by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which contained provisions that: Guaranteed Blacks the right to vote; guaranteed access to public accommodations, such as restaurants, hotels, and amusement areas; authorized the Federal Government to sue to desegregate public facilities, including schools; mandated non-discrimination in Federal programs; and required equal employment opportunity. In addition, on February 5, 1964, poll taxes, a device that had been used to prevent Blacks from voting, were barred with the adoption of the 24th amendment.

CORE and SNCC recruited 1,100 northern college students in a drive to register on the voting rolls as many of Mississippi's 900,000 Blacks as possible in the freedom summer voter registration campaign of 1964. The campaign came to the forefront of public attention on August 4 when the bodies of three civil rights workers—James E. Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner—were found buried in a dam near Philadelphia, Miss. The three men, missing since June 21, had been shot to death. Eighteen whites, including several police officers, were arrested and charged with conspiracy to deprive the victims of their civil rights. Dismissed by Federal District Court Judge W. Harold Cox, the charges were reinstated in 1968 after the U.S. Supreme Court decided that the Federal Government could prosecute State officials, as well as private persons who conspire with them, who deprive persons of their constitutional rights.

The year 1964 also marked an important personal achievement for Dr. King. On December 10, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in

Oslo, Norway. At age 35, he was the youngest recipient of the award in history and the second Black American after Dr. Ralph J. Bunche, the 1950 award winner. Not only was the award a recognition of Dr. King's role in the nonviolent struggle for civil rights in the United States, but to many it signified official international recognition of the Black protest movement.

In 1965, civil rights advocates, led by Dr. King, focused their attention on Black voting rights. At least two-thirds of Alabama's eligible Black voters were not registered at the beginning of the year. In Selma, Ala., on January 2, 1965, Dr. King announced a voter registration drive centering on that city, an attempt to dramatize the need for a Federal voting rights law. The violence directed against demonstrators in Selma, along with harassment by State and local authorities, aroused sentiment for such legislation. In February, Jimmy Lee Jackson, a civil rights worker from Perry County, Ala., became the first martyr of the campaign, when he was killed by gunfire in a clash between demonstrators and State troopers. Dr. King organized but did not lead an initial march from Selma to the State capital, Montgomery, on March 7. The demonstrators were turned back just outside Selma by State troopers with nightsticks, tear gas, and bull whips. On March 9, 1,500 Black and white marchers, this time led by Dr. King, made a second attempt to reach Montgomery, despite a Federal court injunction. They were again met by a phalanx of State troopers just outside Selma. Rather than force a confrontation, Dr. King asked his followers to kneel in prayer and then instructed them to return to Selma. His caution cost him the support of many young militants who already mocked him with the title, "De Lawd." That evening in Selma, three white ministers were attacked and brutally beaten by white thugs. Rev. James Reeb, a Unitarian pastor from Boston, died 2 days later as a result of his injuries.

On March 13, President Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress to propose enactment of a strong voting rights bill. In one of the most memorable speeches of his Presidency, Johnson said:

At times history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom. So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was last week in Selma, Ala.

In Alabama, the twice-aborted march from Selma to Montgomery began for a third time on March 21, led by two Black Nobel Peace Prize winners, Dr. King and Dr. Bunche. On March 25, when the civil rights marchers reached Montgomery, their ranks had swelled to 50,000. In an impassioned address on the statehouse grounds, Dr. King noted that the Black protest movement was recognizing gains and no amount of white terrorism would stop it. He said:

* * * I know some of you are asking today, "How long will it take?" I come to say to you this afternoon, however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth pressed to earth will rise again.

How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever.

How long? Not long, because you will reap what you sow.

How long? Not long, because the arm of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.

While the march was considered a success, the tragedy that had plagued it from the outset continued. A civil rights transportation volunteer, Viola Liuzzo of Detroit, was shot to death as she drove a marcher home to Selma. Four Ku Klux Klan members were arrested for her murder, three of whom were eventually convicted of violating Mrs. Liuzzo's civil rights and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

The Selma campaign led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act, signed into law by President Johnson on August 6, 1965. The act provided for direct action through use of Federal examiners to register voters turned away by local officials. The Department of Justice moved swiftly to suspend voter qualification devices such as literacy tests in several Southern States, and within 3 weeks of the law's enactment, Johnson announced that over 27,000 Blacks had been registered by Federal examiners in three Southern States.

Divisions in the ranks of Black Americans became painfully apparent in 1965. Militants labeled Dr. King's nonviolence a tool of the white power structure. The February 21 assassination of Malcolm X, a former leader of the Black Muslims who had called for Black separation, underscored growing problems among Blacks. Three Black men were arrested for the Harlem shooting of Malcolm X.

In early 1965, Dr. King suggested that the SCLC wage a campaign in northern cities for better housing for Blacks and nondiscriminatory employment practices. He spoke several times in the North. That summer he attacked patterns of de facto segregation in Chicago, and led a number of marches in predominantly Black neighborhoods of that city. It was also in 1965 that he first indicated a nexus between Federal Government spending for the Vietnam war and cuts in Federal assistance to the poor.

The euphoria over the August 6, 1965, signing of the Voting Rights Act subsided a week later when the Watts section of Los Angeles exploded in the Nation's worst race riot since 1943. It lasted 6 days and left 35 dead, 900 injured, over 3,500 arrested and \$46 million of property damage. Dr. King received a mixed welcome in Watts, as he preached nonviolence in the wake of the tragic disturbance. He urged massive Federal assistance for the northern urban poor who suffered from economic discrimination and de facto segregation, the underlying causes of the Los Angeles violence.

The Watts riot demonstrated the depth of the urban race problems in the North. At the beginning of 1966, Dr. King launched a campaign against discrimination in Chicago, focusing his attack on substandard and segregated housing. He moved to a Chicago slum tenement in January and promised to organize tenants and lead a rent strike if landlords did not improve living conditions in the ghetto. Mayor Richard Daley met with Black leaders several times, but he took no concrete action to promote better housing or to implement nondiscriminatory employment practices. Violence against demonstrators plagued rallies and marches led by Dr. King in the spring and summer of 1966. At the end of July, he pressed his drive for better housing into Chicago's all-white neighborhoods. Demonstrators were jeered and attacked during these marches, and Dr. King himself was stoned in a parade through the Gage Park section on August 5. Although he was stunned by the vehement reaction of northern whites to civil rights activities, Dr. King

planned a march through the all-white suburb of Cicero because demands for better housing were not acknowledged by the city. He canceled the Cicero protest, however, when the city administration and Chicago business leaders agreed to meet with civil rights leaders. The city officials and Black leaders signed a summit agreement that manifested a commitment to open housing. Though Dr. King considered the agreement a victory and moderate Black leaders saw it as setting a new precedent by forcing the mayor to the conference table, restive Black militants criticized it as a middle class sellout. The agreement ultimately had little effect on the plight of Chicago Blacks, and Dr. King's campaign was defeated by the combination of Mayor Richard Daley's intransigence and the complexities of northern racism. A positive byproduct of the effort was the SCLC's Operation Bread Basket that attacked economic ills and attempted to create new jobs for Blacks.

During 1966, the Black protest movement crumbled into several factions. SNCC, led by Stokely Carmichael, and CORE, under Floyd McKissick, adopted the slogan "Black Power," symbolizing radicalization of the movement. The term dramatically came to the attention of the public during the Meredith march in June. On June 6, 1966, James Meredith had been shot and wounded shortly after he began a 220-mile "March Against Fear" from Memphis, Tenn., to Jackson, Miss. He had hoped to embolden Blacks to register and vote, as well as to demonstrate the right of Blacks to move freely in the South. On the day after the assassination attempt, the leaders of five major civil rights organizations, Dr. King of the SCLC; Roy Wilkins, NAACP; Whitney Young, Jr., National Urban League; Floyd McKissick, CORE; and Stokely Carmichael, SNCC, converged in Memphis to pick up Meredith's march. Dr. King attempted to walk the line between the militancy of SNCC and CORE and the moderate tactics of the NAACP and the Urban League. During the 3-week Meredith march, however, the differing views of King and Carmichael became increasingly apparent. The SCLC president continued to advocate nonviolence, cooperation with whites and racial integration, while Carmichael urged Blacks to resist their white "oppressors" and "seize power."

The marchers reached their destination, Jackson, on June 26. While Meredith and King addressed the marchers, it was Carmichael's plea for Blacks to build a power structure "so strong that we will bring them [whites] to their knees every time they mess with us" that attracted the most attention. In July 1966, CORE adopted "Black Power" rather than integration as its goal. The NAACP disassociated itself from the "Black Power" doctrine.

Urban riots in 1966 by angry and frustrated Blacks did not compare to the magnitude of the Watts riot a year earlier, but violence spread to more cities, 43 for the year, including Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Dayton, St. Louis, Brooklyn, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and Atlanta. By the end of the summer, 7 persons were dead, over 400 injured, 3,000 arrested; property damage was estimated at over \$5 million.

1967 was a year of widespread urban violence, sanctioned by some Black militant leaders while abhorred by moderates who saw the up-

rising as ultimately counterproductive to Black interests. It appeared to some that the phase of the Black protest movement characterized by nonviolent demonstrations led by Dr. King was coming to an end. Many civil rights leaders thought violent upheaval inevitable. In an April 16, 1967, news conference, Dr. King warned that at least 10 cities "could explode in racial violence this summer."

Urban racial violence did plague over 100 cities in 1967. During the spring, minor disturbances had occurred in Omaha, Louisville, Cleveland, Chicago, San Francisco, Wichita, Nashville, and Houston. Then in June, Boston and Tampa experienced serious disorders. The most devastating riot since Watts in 1965 occurred, however, in Newark, from June 12 to 17, 1967, an outburst that resulted in 25 deaths, 1,200 persons injured, and over 1,300 arrested. The following month Detroit was the site of the worst urban race riot of the decade, one that left 43 dead, over 2,000 injured and more than 3,800 arrested. Rioting continued around the country, with outbreaks in Phoenix, Washington, D.C., and New Haven, among other cities. According to a report of the Senate Permanent Committee on Investigations released in November 1967, 75 major riots occurred in that year, compared with 21 in 1966; 83 were killed in 1967, compared with 11 in 1966 and 36 in 1965.

On July 27, 1967, President Johnson established the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, chaired by Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner, to investigate the origins of the disturbances and to make recommendations to prevent or contain such outbursts. On July 26, Dr. King, with Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, and A. Philip Randolph, issued a statement from NAACP headquarters calling on Blacks to refrain from rioting and urging them to work toward improving their situation through peaceful means.

Violence flared early in 1968 as students at South Carolina State College, on February 5, organized a protest against segregation at a local bowling alley. Following the arrests of several demonstrators on trespassing charges, a clash between students and police left eight injured. On February 8, renewed conflicts on the campus led to the shooting deaths of three Black students. The bowling alley was ultimately integrated, but only after the National Guard was called in. Still, sporadic disruptions continued.

On February 29, a jolting summary of the final report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders was made public. The Commission found that the urban riots of 1967 were not the result of any organized conspiracy, as fearful whites had charged. Rather, it concluded that the United States was "moving toward two separate societies, one Black, one white—separate and unequal." The report warned that frustration and resentment resulting from brutalizing inequality and white racism were fostering violence by Blacks. The Commission suggested that the Nation attack the root of the problems that led to violence through a massive financial commitment to programs designed to improve housing, education, and employment opportunities. This advice was significant because it came not from militants, but from moderates such as Illinois Governor and Commission Chairman Kerner, New York City Mayor and Commission Vice Chairman John V. Lindsay, NAACP executive board chairman Roy Wilkins and Senator Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts. In the con-

clusion of its report, the Commission quoted the testimony of social psychologist Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, who referred to the reports of earlier violence commissions:

I read that report * * * of the 1919 riot in Chicago, and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of 1935, the report of the investigating committee of the Harlem riot of 1943, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot.

I must in candor say to you members of this Commission: it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland, with the same moving picture reshown over and over again, the same recommendations, and the same inaction.

Black leaders generally felt vindicated by the report. On March 4, 1968, Dr. King described it as "a physician's warning of approaching death [of American society] with a prescription to life. The duty of every American is to administer the remedy without regard for the cost and without delay."

In December 1967, Dr. King had announced plans for a massive campaign of civil disobedience in Washington to pressure the Federal Government to provide jobs and income for all Americans. In mid-March, he turned his attention from this Poor People's Campaign to a strike of sanitation workers in Memphis, Tenn., and thus began his last peaceful crusade.

THE ROAD TO MEMPHIS (3)

A quest for world peace and an end to economic deprivation for all American citizens, regardless of race, were uppermost in Dr. King's mind during the last year of his life, as manifested by his staunch opposition to the Vietnam war and his Poor People's Campaign, an effort designed to dramatize the scourge of poverty in the United States. In March 1968, he interrupted his planning of the Poor People's March on Washington to travel to Memphis, Tenn., where he hoped to organize a nonviolent campaign to assist the poorly paid, mostly Black sanitation workers who were on strike for better pay, better working conditions, and recognition of their union.

By 1967, American forces in Vietnam had grown to over 500,000, and more than 6,000 Americans had died in the escalating Southeast Asian conflict.⁽⁴⁾ Opposition to U.S. involvement in Vietnam had begun to intensify. Dr. King was among those who called for disengagement and peaceful settlement.

The press pointed to Dr. King's address at New York City's Riverside Church on April 4, 1967, as the time when the SCLC president publicly disclosed his opposition to the Vietnam war, even though he had made similar statements and had been urging a negotiated settlement since early 1965.⁽⁵⁾ He attacked the foreign policy of the Johnson administration, emphasizing the connection between wasteful military spending and its harmful effect on the poor, as social programs were dropped in favor of Vietnam-related expenditures. He warned that this pattern was an indication of the "approaching spiritual death" of the Nation. Dr. King described the United States as the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world today," and said that the high proportion of fatalities among Black soldiers in Viet-

nam demonstrated "cruel manipulation of the poor" who bore the burden of the struggle. On April 15, 1967, at a rally at the United Nations, he called for a halt to U.S. bombing.

Dr. King was stunned by the vehement reaction to his call for peace, especially from his colleagues in the civil rights movement. For example, Urban League president Whitney Young and NAACP executive director Roy Wilkins strongly condemned King's pacifism. (6) Moderate Black leaders feared that the generally sympathetic Johnson administration would be antagonized by the SCLC president's ministrations, while Dr. King argued that war priorities diverted valuable resources that could be used to improve the condition of America's Blacks. At the same time, his indefatigable belief in nonviolence was increasingly challenged by younger, more militant Blacks who did not renounce the use of violence to achieve their goals. A King biographer, David L. Lewis, wrote that by early 1967, "the verdict was that Martin was finished." (7)

In late 1967, in keeping with his belief that the problem of domestic poverty was exacerbated by use of Government funds to finance the war in Vietnam, Dr. King turned his attention to the plight of the poor in America. At an SCLC meeting in Atlanta in December 1967, he presented a plan for a nonviolent demonstration by a racially integrated coalition of the poor, to take place in Washington, D.C., in April 1968. Using creative nonviolence, these ignored Americans would demand an economic bill of rights with the objectives of a guaranteed annual income, employment for the able-bodied, decent housing, and quality education. Dr. King planned that the poor would demonstrate, beginning on April 20, until the Government responded to their demands. He wrote:

We will place the problems of the poor at the seat of the Government of the wealthiest Nation in the history of mankind. If that power refuses to acknowledge its debt to the poor, it will have failed to live up to its promise to insure life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to its citizens.

In the face of criticism of his antiwar views by moderate Blacks and rejection of his tireless devotion to nonviolence by militants, Dr. King also hoped to use the Poor People's Campaign to broaden his base of support and buoy the SCLC. In the opinion of Dr. King's closest associate, Reverend Abernathy, SCLC vice-president-at-large in 1968, and Dr. King's successor as president of the organization, SCLC influence had declined since the Selma, Ala., voter registration campaign in 1965. Stymied in its efforts to deal with the urban racism of the North, the SCLC had seen a decline in financial contributions after the 1966 Chicago drive for better housing and nondiscriminatory employment practices. Abernathy described the SCLC's failure to implement new policies in Chicago as "the SCLC's Waterloo."

Public sentiment for a negotiated settlement in Vietnam intensified in early 1968, following the bloody Tet offensive during which the National Front attacked almost every American base in Vietnam and destroyed the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. Dr. King continued his criticism of the Johnson administration's escalation of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. In a March 16, 1968, address to delegates at the California Democratic Council's statewide convention in

Anaheim, he urged that Johnson's nomination be blocked by the Democratic Party that year, charging that the President's obsession with the war in Vietnam was undercutting the civil rights movement.⁽⁸⁾ According to one writer, this was Dr. King's first public call for President Johnson's defeat.⁽⁹⁾ Although he did not endorse either of the Democratic peace candidates, Senator Eugene B. McCarthy or Senator Robert F. Kennedy, he did praise the civil rights record of each aspirant.

During the weekend of March 16 to 17, 1968, Dr. King told Rev. James Lawson of Memphis, Tenn., that he would be willing to make an exploratory trip to Memphis to speak on behalf of striking sanitation workers. He was expected to appear there on Monday night, March 18, 1968. Reverend Lawson had first contacted Dr. King in late February 1968 in the hope that the SCLC president could assist the garbage workers in pressing their demands, as well as avert further violence between the strikers and the police.

At the heart of the Memphis strike was the issue of racial discrimination.⁽¹⁰⁾ As the result of heavy rains in Memphis on January 31, 1968, Black crews of sanitation workers had been sent home without pay, while white city employees had been allowed to work and received a full day's wage. On the following day, two Black sanitation workers took shelter from the rain in the back of a compressor garbage truck. The truck malfunctioned, and the two were crushed to death. These events were the catalyst for a strike of Memphis sanitation workers, 90 percent of whom were Black; they were protesting the problems faced by the workers: low wages, unsafe working conditions, lack of benefits such as medical protection and racial discrimination on the job. On February 12, 1968, all but 200 of the 1,300 Memphis workers walked off their jobs. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) supported the strike and demanded a pay raise, recognition of AFSCME as sole bargaining agent, seniority rights, health and hospital insurance, safety controls, a meaningful grievance procedure and other benefits.

Newly elected Memphis Mayor Henry Loeb III rejected the demands, labeling the strike illegal and refusing to negotiate until the workers returned to their jobs. Using the slogan "I am a man," Blacks believed that union representation was tantamount to their recognition as human beings. The racial issue became a central theme and the NAACP intervened in the strike.

When the Memphis City Council refused to hear their demands for union recognition on February 23, 1968, the striking workers had responded with their first march. They were ruthlessly dispersed by police indiscriminately using mace and nightsticks. Several marchers were injured. On the following day, the city obtained an injunction against further marches.

Deeply affected by the violence, Black ministers in Memphis, including Lawson, Rev. Samuel B. Kyles, and Rev. H. Ralph Jackson, formed a strike support organization, Community on the Move for Equality (COME) and called for a boycott of downtown stores. Beginning on February 26, COME organized a large number of Black Memphians to support the daily marches that continued for the duration of the strike, and COME leader Lawson invited Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to Memphis.

In the midst of organizing his Poor People's Campaign, Dr. King was reluctant to travel to Memphis when first approached by Lawson in late February. Rev. Andrew Young, in 1968 the executive vice-president of SCLC, told the committee that the SCLC staff initially opposed a King trip to Memphis. Dr. King eventually agreed, however, to make an initial trip in an attempt to discourage further violence, rearranging his schedule and flying to Memphis on March 18, 1968. He saw the poorly paid, badly organized, mostly Black garbage workers as epitomizing the problems of the poor in the United States.

On the evening of March 18, Dr. King gave a well-received address to a throng of 17,000 strikers and their supporters. Encouraged by his reception, he announced he would head a citywide demonstration and sympathy strike of other workers on Friday, March 22. As the result of a recordbreaking snowstorm, the march was rescheduled for Thursday, March 28. In the meantime, efforts to settle the strike failed as Mayor Loeb tenaciously continued to reject union demands.

At about 11 a.m. on March 28, 2 hours after the march had originally been scheduled to begin, Dr. King arrived at the Clayborn Temple in Memphis to lead the demonstrators. By this time, the impatient and tense crowd of about 6,000 persons had heard rumors that police had used clubs and mace to prevent a group of high school students from joining the demonstration.

The march, led by Dr. King and Reverend Abernathy, began shortly after 11. As it proceeded along Beale Street toward Main, several Black youths broke store windows with signpost clubs. Police, clad in gas masks and riot gear, blocked Main Street. Abernathy and Dr. King were somewhere in the middle of the procession, not at its head, when they heard the shattering of glass. Some teenagers at the rear of the march began breaking windows and looting stores. When violence appeared imminent, Dr. King asked Reverend Lawson to cancel the march. SCLC aides commandeered a private automobile, and Dr. King was hustled away to safety at the Holiday Inn-Rivermont Hotel.

As Lawson pleaded with the marchers to return to Clayborn Temple, police moved toward Main and Beale where youths met them with picket signs and rocks. Tear gas was fired into the mob of young Blacks and stragglers who were unable to make their way back to the starting point. Police dispersed the crowd with nightsticks, mace and finally guns. In the ensuing melee, 60 persons were injured, and Larry Payne, a 16-year-old Black youth, was killed by police gunfire. Much of the violence was attributed to the Invaders, a group of young Black militants. A curfew was ordered following the riot, and Tennessee Gov. Buford Ellington called out 3,500 National Guard troops.

Dr. King was upset and deeply depressed by the bloody march. Never before had demonstrators led by Dr. King perpetrated violence, according to Abernathy. The press excoriated Dr. King for inciting the tragic confrontation, even though he was quick to state that his staff had not planned the march and it had been poorly monitored. The Memphis debacle was labeled a failure of nonviolence direct action.

Three members of the militant Invaders visited Dr. King on the morning following the violence, Friday, March 29. They acknowledged their role in inciting the disturbance but explained that they merely wanted a meaningful role in the strike. Dr. King said he would do what he could, but stated emphatically that he could not support a group that condoned violence. At a press conference later that morn-

ing, he announced that he would return to Memphis the following week to demonstrate that he could lead a peaceful march. (11) He and Abernathy then left Memphis for Atlanta at 3 p.m. Both Jesse Jackson and Andrew Young, members of the SCLC executive board in 1968, told the committee that they believed Dr. King would not have returned to Memphis if the March 28 demonstration had been nonviolent. Following the Memphis incident, critics, including civil rights leaders such as Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, were doubtful that Dr. King could control a demonstration and asked that he cancel the Poor People's Campaign to avoid another bloody eruption.

On Saturday, March 30, 1968, in Atlanta, Dr. King along with the SCLC executive staff, including Abernathy, Young, Jackson, James Bevel, Walter Fauntroy, and Hosea Williams, decided it was crucial to resolve the Memphis dispute before marching on to Washington with the Poor People's Campaign. Abernathy said Dr. King, was "very delighted" by this plan, which would allow him to prove the efficacy of nonviolence. The next day, Dr. King preached at Washington's National Cathedral, urging human rights in the United States and withdrawal from Vietnam. He mentioned the Poor People's march and promised an orderly, nonviolent demonstration. That evening, President Johnson announced his decision not to seek reelection in 1968.

On Monday, April 1, an entourage of SCLC executive staff members arrived in Memphis to lay the groundwork for a peaceful demonstration in support of the striking garbage workers, preparation that regrettably had been ignored before the last march. Memphis was the focus of national attention the next day as hundreds of Blacks attended the funeral of riot victim Larry Payne.

Dr. King, with Abernathy and administrative assistant Bernard Scott Lee, arrived in Memphis on Wednesday, April 3. That morning their flight had been delayed in Atlanta for more than an hour by an extensive search for a bomb following a threat against Dr. King. Solomon Jones, a local mortuary employee who served as Dr. King's chauffeur during his Memphis visits, took Dr. King and Abernathy from the airport to the Lorraine Motel. Dr. King's April 3 return visit to Memphis had received heavy publicity. It was common knowledge that he would be staying at the Lorraine, and at least one radio station announced that he was booked in room number 306, according to Kyles.

On the morning of April 3, U.S. District Court Judge Bailey Brown issued a temporary restraining order against the SCLC-sponsored demonstration that was originally scheduled to occur on Friday, April 5. Dr. King was determined to lead the march despite the injunction, and the planned protest became a major attraction for Blacks and union leaders.

Tornado warnings were broadcast in Memphis during the afternoon of April 3, and heavy rain fell on the city that night. Despite the inclement weather, 2,000 persons gathered that evening at the Mason Temple Church and awaited Dr. King, who was scheduled to speak there. King had asked Reverend Abernathy to talk in his place, but when Abernathy saw the enthusiastic crowd waiting to hear the SCLC president, he telephoned Dr. King and urged him to give the address. King agreed to go to Mason Temple, where he gave one of the most stirring speeches of his career, the last public address of his life.

After alluding to the bomb scare that morning and other threats against him, Dr. King explained his return visit to Memphis despite such intimidation. Ambassador Young later remarked to the committee that the address was "almost morbid," and Abernathy noted that his friend appeared particularly nervous and anxious.

Dr. King concluded the speech with a reference to his own death:

* * * Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter to me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. I won't mind.

Like anybody, I'd like to live a long life. Longevity has its place but I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will and He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land.

So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

After the talk, Dr. King and Young had dinner at the home of Judge Ben Hooks, a Memphis Black leader. Later that evening, Dr. King's brother, Rev. A. D. King, arrived in Memphis from his home in Louisville, Ky. He registered at the Lorraine Motel at 1 a.m. on April 4. Dr. King, who had not expected his brother in Memphis, visited with him until almost 4 a.m.

THE LAST MOMENTS: MEMPHIS, TENN., APRIL 4, 1968

Dr. King spent the last day of his life, Thursday, April 4, 1968, at the Lorraine Motel. Walter Lane Bailey, owner of the Lorraine, later recalled that the usually businesslike SCLC president was particularly jovial that day, "teasing and cutting up."

At an SCLC staff meeting that morning, the march, planned for the next day, was postponed until the following Monday, April 8. In addition, that morning, SCLC general counsel Chauncey Eskridge appeared before Judge Bailey Brown in Federal court and argued that the city's injunction against the proposed demonstration should be lifted. In the meantime, four members of the Invaders presented a series of demands to Dr. King, including one for several thousand dollars. He refused to entertain their demands. After the men left, he told a group of executive board members that he would not tolerate advocates of violence on his staff and was angry that two Invaders had been assigned to work with the SCLC.

At about 1 p.m., Dr. King and Reverend Abernathy had a lunch of fried catfish at the motel, then Abernathy went to his room to take a nap, while Dr. King visited his brother in his room.

At about 4 p.m. on the afternoon of April 4, Abernathy was awakened from his nap by the telephone in his motel room. He answered, and Dr. King asked him to come to his brother's room, No. 201, so they could talk.

When Abernathy reached A. D.'s room, Dr. King told him that he and A. D. had called Atlanta and had spoken with their mother, who was pleased that her sons could get together in Memphis. He also said that they were all invited to the Kyles home for dinner. At King's direction, Abernathy called Mrs. Kyles to find out what she would be

serving, and she said she would have a good dinner of prime rib roast and soul food such as chitterlings, greens, pig's feet and blackeyed peas.

At about 5 p.m., according to Abernathy, he and Dr. King returned to room 306 to shave and dress for dinner. He recalled Dr. King's use of an acrid, sulfurous depilatory to remove his heavy beard, part of his daily shaving ritual. As they were preparing to leave, Abernathy mentioned that he would not be able to attend the poor people's march in Washington in April because he had planned a revival at his West Hunter Street Baptist Church in Atlanta for that same day. Dr. King told Abernathy he would not consider going to Washington without him and attempted to make arrangements for someone else to handle the Atlanta revival. He called Rev. Nutrell Long in New Orleans but was unable to reach him.

Dr. King then told Abernathy to go to the West Hunter Street Church and tell his congregation that,

* * * you have a greater revival, you have a revival where you are going to revive the soul of this Nation; where you are going to cause America to feed the hungry, to have concern for those who are downtrodden, and disinherited; you have a revival where you are going to cause America to stop denying necessities to the masses * * *.

Abernathy agreed to go to Washington with Dr. King.

At about 5:30 p.m., Kyles went to room 306 and urged Dr. King and Abernathy to hurry so they would get to dinner on time. "OK, Doc, it's time to go," he urged. Kyles had arrived at the Lorraine at about 4 p.m. and had run into the Bread Basket Band, an SCLC singing group. He had been singing some hymns and movement anthems with them until shortly after 5 p.m. Dr. King assured Kyles that he had telephoned the preacher's home and that Mrs. Kyles had said dinner was not until 6. "We are not going to mess up her program," Dr. King insisted.

When he finished dressing, Dr. King asked Kyles if his tie matched his suit. He was in a good mood, according to Kyles, who told the committee that Dr. King teased him about dinner, saying he once had been to a preacher's house for ham and Kool-Aid, and the ham was cold. "I don't want to go to your house for cold food."

As Dr. King adjusted his tie, he and Kyles walked onto the balcony outside room 306. The room overlooked a courtyard parking lot and swimming pool. The two men faced west, toward the backs of several rundown buildings on Mulberry Street. Dr. King greeted some of the people in the courtyard below, and Kyles said hello to SCLC attorney Eskridge who had been in Federal court most of the day. Eskridge was challenging the injunction against the SCLC's proposed Monday march, and the court had decided to permit a demonstration, though it restricted the number of marchers and the route. After court had adjourned at 3 p.m., Eskridge went with Young to the Lorraine where they saw Dr. King in A. D.'s room and informed him of the ruling. At that time, Dr. King invited Eskridge to join him for dinner at the home of Reverend Kyles. Thus, Eskridge was standing in the Lorraine's courtyard parking lot shortly before 6 p.m., awaiting Dr. King's departure for dinner. Dr. King, leaning against the iron railing of the balcony, called to Eskridge and asked that he tell Jesse Jackson,

a member of the SCLC's Chicago chapter, to come to dinner with him. Eskridge found Jackson, who was also in the courtyard, and invited him to dinner, suggesting that he change into something other than the turtleneck he was wearing.

Rev. James Orange of the SCLC advance team and James Bevel were also in the courtyard. Both had been assigned by the SCLC staff to work in Memphis with the Invaders in an effort to get the young militants to cool down. Orange had just arrived at the Lorraine with Marrell McCullough, a Memphis Police Department undercover officer. Orange and Bevel wrestled playfully in the courtyard. Dr. King spotted them and shouted to Bevel: "Don't let him hurt you."

Dr. King's chauffeur, Solomon Jones, was standing next to the funeral home limousine, which he had parked in front of room 207, below room 306. Jones had been parked in front of the Lorraine since 8:30 a.m. that morning, and he later recalled that this was the first time Dr. King had stepped out that day. Dr. King told Jones to get the car ready for their trip to Kyles' home, and Jones urged him to bring a top coat because it was chilly that evening. "Solomon, you really know how to take good care of me," Dr. King responded.

Dr. King's administrative assistant, Bernard Lee, along with Andrew Young and Hosea Williams, were also talking in the Lorraine parking lot, waiting for Dr. King to leave for dinner. Young recalled that Jones said, "I think you need a coat" to Dr. King. Ben Branch, leader of the Bread Basket Band, was also there, with Jesse Jackson. Dr. King called down to Branch, "Ben, make sure you play 'Precious Lord, Take My Hand' at the meeting tonight. Sing it real pretty."

"OK, Doc, I will," Branch promised.

Meanwhile, in room 306, Abernathy recalled that at some point shortly before 6 p.m., he and Dr. King put on their coats and were about to leave the motel. Abernathy hesitated and said, "Wait just a moment. Let me put on some aftershave lotion."

According to Abernathy, Dr. King replied, "OK, I'll just stand right here on the balcony."

Kyles recalled that Dr. King asked Abernathy to get his topcoat and then called to Jackson, "Jesse, I want you to go to dinner with us this evening," but urged him not to bring the entire Bread Basket Band. Kyles chided Dr. King, "Doc, Jesse had arranged that even before you had." Kyles then stood on the balcony with Dr. King for a moment, finally saying, "Come on. It's time to go." Kyles turned and walked away to go down to his car. After a few steps, Kyles called to lawyer Eskridge in the courtyard below. "Chauncey, are you going with me? I'm going to get the car."

At 6:01 p.m., as Dr. King stood behind the iron balcony railing in front of room 306, the report of a high-powered rifle cracked the air. A slug tore into the right side of his face, violently throwing him backward.

At the mirror in room 306, Abernathy poured some cologne into his hands. As he lifted the lotion to his face, he heard what sounded like a "firecracker." He jumped, looked out the door to the balcony and saw that Dr. King had fallen backward. Only his feet were visible, one foot protruding through the ironwork of the balcony railing. According to Abernathy, the bullet was so powerful it twisted Dr. King's body so that he fell diagonally backward. As Abernathy rushed out

to aid his dying friend, he heard the cries and groans of people in the courtyard below.

Just below the balcony, Jones recalled that Young and Bevel shoved him to the ground just after the firecracker sound. He looked up and saw Abernathy come out of the room and then realized that the prone Dr. King had been shot. Lee, who had been talking with Young and Bevel, took cover behind a car and then noticed Dr. King's feet protruding through the balcony railing.

Memphis undercover policeman McCullough recalled that immediately before he heard the shot, he saw Dr. King alone on the balcony outside room 306, facing a row of dilapidated buildings on Mulberry Street. As he turned away from Dr. King and began to walk toward his car, McCullough, an Army veteran, heard an explosive sound, which he assumed was a gunshot. He looked back and saw Dr. King grasp his throat and fall backward. According to McCullough's account, he bolted up the balcony steps as others in the courtyard hit the ground. When he got to Dr. King's prone figure, the massive face wound was bleeding profusely and a sulfurous odor like gunpowder, perhaps Dr. King's depilatory, permeated the air. McCullough took a towel from a housekeeping tray and tried to stem the flow of blood.

Eskridge had heard a "zing" and looked up toward the balcony. He saw that Dr. King was down, and as Abernathy walked out onto the balcony, Eskridge heard him cry out "Oh my God, Martin's been shot." A woman screamed.

Abernathy recalled that when he walked out on the balcony, he had to step over his mortally wounded friend.

* * * the bullet had entered his right cheek and I patted his left cheek, consoled him, and got his attention by saying, "This is Ralph, this is Ralph, don't be afraid."

Kyles, who had started to walk toward his car, ran back to room 306. Young leaped up the stairs from the courtyard to Dr. King, whom he found lying face up, rapidly losing blood from the wound. Young checked Dr. King's pulse and, as Abernathy recalled, said, "Ralph, it's all over."

"Don't say that, don't say that," Abernathy responded.

Kyles ran into room 306. Abernathy urged him to call an ambulance. Kyles tried to make the call, but was unable to get through to the motel switchboard.

Lee, Jackson, and Williams had followed Young up the steps from the courtyard to room 306. Dr. King's still head lay in a pool of blood. Abernathy, kneeling over his friend, tried desperately to save Dr. King's life. Several of the men on that balcony pointed in the direction of the shot. Frozen in a picture taken by photographer James Louw, they were aiming their index fingers across Mulberry Street and northwest of room 306.

An ambulance arrived at the Lorraine about 5 minutes after Dr. King had been shot, according to Abernathy. By this time, police officers "cluttered the courtyard." Abernathy accompanied the unconscious Dr. King to the emergency room of St. Joseph Hospital. The 39-year-old civil rights leader, described by Abernathy as "the most peaceful warrior of the 20th Century," was pronounced dead at 7:05 p.m., April 4, 1968.

