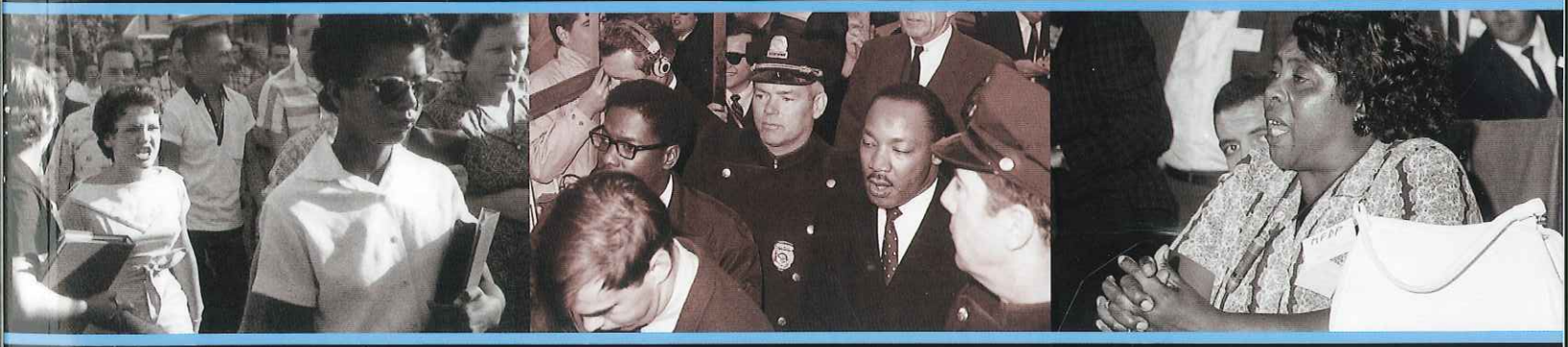
EYES ON THE PRIZE

America's Civil Rights Movement 1954-1985

A Study Guide to the Television Series



Written by Facing History and Ourselves

BLACKSIDE

A Blackside Publication

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FOREWORD

REP. JOHN LEWIS
5th Congressional District, Georgia

> *"If you will protest courageously and yet with dignity and …. love, when the history books are written in future generations, the historians will have to pause and say, 'There lies a great people, a black people, who injected new meaning and dignity into the very veins of civilization.' This is our challenge and our responsibility."*
>
> ***Martin Luther King, Jr., Dec. 31, 1955 Montgomery, Alabama.***

The documentary series you are about to view is the story of how ordinary people with extraordinary vision redeemed democracy in America. It is a testament to nonviolent passive resistance and its power to reshape the destiny of a nation and the world. And it is the chronicle of a people who challenged one nation's government to meet its moral obligation to humanity.

We, the men, women, and children of the civil rights movement, truly believed that if we adhered to the discipline and philosophy of nonviolence, we could help transform America. We wanted to realize what I like to call, the Beloved Community, an all-inclusive, truly interracial democracy based on simple justice, which respects the dignity and worth of every human being.

Central to our philosophical concept of the Beloved Community was the willingness to believe that every human being has the moral capacity to respect each other. We were determined to rise above the internal injuries exacted by discriminatory laws and the traditions of an unjust society meant to degrade us, and we looked to a higher authority. We believed in our own inalienable right to the respect due any human being, and we believed that government has more than a political responsibility, but a moral responsibility to defend the human rights of all of its citizens.

When we suffered violence and abuse, our concern was not for retaliation. We sought to redeem the humanity of our attackers from the jaws of hatred and to accept our suffering in the right spirit. While nonviolence was, for some, merely a tactic for social change, for many of us it became a way of life. We believed that if we, as an American people, as a nation, and as a world community, are to emerge from our struggles unscarred by hate, we have to learn to understand and forgive those who have been most hostile and violent toward us.

We must find a way to live together, to make peace with each other. And we were willing to put our bodies on the line, to die if necessary, to make that dream of peaceful reconciliation a reality. Because of the fortitude and conviction of thousands and millions of ordinary people imbued with a dream of liberation, this nation witnessed a nonviolent revolution under the rule of law, a revolution of values, a revolution of ideas.

Fifty years have passed since the first days of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the lynching of Emmett Till. Forty years have passed since that "Bloody Sunday" in Selma, Alabama and the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Gone are the legal barriers of segregation, but our freedom as a nation has not yet been won. We have come a great distance, but we still have much further to go before we lay down the burden of race in America. And if we are to fulfill the true destiny of this nation, then that struggle must continue. In the civil rights movement we used to say that our struggle was not for a month, a season, or a year. We knew that ours was the struggle of a lifetime and that each generation had to do its part to build the Beloved Community, a nation at peace with itself.

Consider those two words: Beloved and Community. "Beloved" means not hateful, not violent, not uncaring, not unkind. And "Community" means not separated, not polarized, not locked in struggle. The most pressing challenge in our society today is defined by the methods we use to defend the dignity of humankind. But too often we are focused on accumulating the trappings of a comfortable life.

The men, women and children you witness in this documentary put aside the comfort of their own lives to get involved with the problems of others. They knew that if they wanted a free and just society, they could not wait for someone else to create that society. They knew they had to be the change that they were seeking. They knew they had to do their part, to get out there and push and pull to move this society forward.

As American citizens and citizens of the world community, we must be maladjusted to the problems and conditions of today. We have to find a way to make our voices heard. We have an obligation, a mission and a mandate to do our part. We have a mandate from the Spirit of History to follow in the footsteps of those brave and courageous men and women who fought to make a difference.

This study guide for *Eyes on the Prize* reminds us of our legacy and our commitment. These readings will help you examine the power you have as an individual citizen to make a difference in our society, and they will help you examine the tools of democracy that can create lasting change.

Eyes on the Prize serves as an important reminder to all who view it of the sacrifices one generation made for the cause of civil rights. It serves as a reminder to all who view it of the sacrifices we may have to make again, if we do not value the freedom we have already won. It serves as a reminder to all who view it of the sacrifices it takes to answer the call of justice.

Let this study of history inspire you to make some contribution to humanity. You have a mission and a mandate from the founders of this nation and all of those who came before who struggled and died for your freedom. Go out and win some victory for humanity, and may the Spirit of History and the spirit of the modern-day civil rights movement be your guide.

Rep. John Lewis, 5th Congressional District, Georgia

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

JUDI HAMPTON
President, Blackside

When I read through the *Eyes on the Prize* study guide, it evokes emotional memories of my experiences as a young civil rights worker in Mississippi in the mid-1960's.

I remember the fear I felt about leaving my comfortable college life in New York and going down South to become a civil rights worker. I went down to Mississippi to work on the voter registration campaign and to build a Freedom School to provide remedial help to youngsters. It was shortly after the three civil rights workers, Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner, had disappeared and tensions were high. Resentment was focused on us and there was an underlying threat of violence, but at the same time, community support was unparalleled.

I remember staying with an elderly couple who volunteered to have me in their home because they believed in the cause. The local police retaliated by sitting outside all night with their patrol car high beams glaring into the couple's house. This was, of course, terrifying for the volunteers—yet despite their fear they still wanted to shelter me.

I remember the day I felt I had truly made a contribution. A young black man with cataracts was going blind because he was afraid to go into Jackson to the "white" hospital to get his surgery. I went with him and together we met this challenge. He came by the Freedom House one day to hug me and say thanks. What a privilege for me!

I remember creating a Freedom School from a burned-out building. Members of the community came to help and together we cleaned up the site, got donations of books—and suddenly I was teaching. I loved it, and have continued to find innovative ways to educate and mentor throughout my career.

Learning, teaching, and giving back to the community have always been very important in our family. Our father, Henry Hampton, Sr., was the first black surgeon to become a Chief Hospital Administrator in St. Louis, Missouri. After the Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, my parents decided it would be in our best educational interest if my brother, Henry, my sister Veva, and I were to attend a previously all-white school. Later, in high school (which I integrated with a few other students), my classmates elected me class president, but the restaurant where the reception in my honor was to be held turned me away at the door because of my color. It was one of many experiences that strengthened our family's commitment to civil rights—and to spreading the message through education.

Although Henry Hampton was widely known and acclaimed as a brilliant filmmaker, he was also an educator at heart. Now, with this new study guide written by Facing History and Ourselves, the educational influence of *Eyes on the Prize* will be extended through many generations. This thorough and

balanced guide will teach young people the history and significance of the civil rights epoch. But beyond the historical value, the study guide and film series have another purpose: to provoke discussion about *today's* pressing human rights concerns. When Henry first made *Eyes*, his goal was to spark a national dialogue. This guide will help to rekindle it.

I would like to thank Margot Stern Strom, Adam Strom, Brooke Harvey and the staff and interns at Facing History and Ourselves for their excellent work on this study guide. Thanks also to Robert Lavelle and James Jennings for their careful reading and editorial guidance.

My deep thanks to Sandra Forman, Project Director and Legal Counsel for the *Eyes on the Prize* re-release, who took on the many challenges involved with bringing *Eyes* back before the public after a long absence. She raised funds, managed all aspects of the project, and was the driving force behind the return of *Eyes on the Prize* to public television and educational distribution.

Many thanks to the other dedicated and hard-working people on the re-release team, without whom the return of *Eyes* would not have been possible. I am also grateful to all the talented people who worked to create the *Eyes on the Prize* films and books in the 1980's and '90's.

Thanks to the Zimmermans: my sister Veva, David, Tobias and Jacob, and to the memory of our dear parents, who would expect nothing less than for us to continue to fight for what we believe in.

Since my brother's death in 1998, it has been my primary goal to preserve his legacy. In particular, I have struggled to make *Eyes on the Prize* available to a wide audience. With the rebroadcast and this superb study guide to accompany the educational distribution of *Eyes*, I feel assured that this monumental series will be a permanent resource for all generations.

Much love and gratitude to my big brother and soul mate, Henry Hampton, for giving me an opportunity to extend his great gifts to the world.

JUDI HAMPTON

PRESIDENT, BLACKSIDE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

AUGUST, 2006

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MARGOT STERN STROM

President and Executive Director, Facing History and Ourselves

A black-and-white photograph of Henry Hampton sits perched on a shelf overlooking the table where the Facing History and Ourselves writing team assembled to create these educational materials to accompany the film *Eyes on the Prize*, Henry's magnificent, truly groundbreaking documentary series on the history of the civil rights movement in the United States. I knew Henry; he was my friend and understood Facing History's mission. We both believed education must help citizens confront controversial and difficult aspects of our history if we are ever to understand the responsibility of living in a just society. He demanded the highest standards and would have been pleased with the process that Adam Strom and Brooke Harvey have led for the "*Eyes on the Prize*" team at Facing History.

We are grateful for the trust and support of Judi Hampton, President of Blackside, the production company founded by Henry in 1968, and Sandra Forman, Project Director and Legal Counsel for the *Eyes on the Prize* re-release project, and are honored to have spent this collaborative year together. Facing History's partnership with Blackside will enable us to deliver workshops for teachers and the community and continue to offer timely and relevant resources online for students and teachers.

As stacks of books, videos, and computers invaded our writing table, the conversations deepened. The learning community that emerged from this project included Facing History staff who had assembled from our offices worldwide, both face-to-face and virtually. This team included Dan Eshet, a historian and writer; photo and archival researcher Jennifer Gray; Dadjie Saintus, who interned as a researcher; Aliza Landes, who interned as an editor; the editorial team of Phredd Matthews-Wall, Howard Lurie, Jennifer Jones Clark, Jimmie Jones, Tracy Garrison-Feinberg, Marty Sleeper, Marc Skvirsky, and myself. We met regularly to read aloud drafts—often many drafts—for each of the fourteen parts of this series. We searched memoirs, biographies, and histories of the movement and considered the viewpoints of the advisors Adam had consulted. The comments of historian and activist Vincent Harding, Robert Lavelle, former head of publishing at Blackside, and James Jennings, Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University, helped us interpret our perspectives and evoked memories of the events depicted in the series. Congressman John Lewis, our friend who accompanied the staff and board of Facing History and Ourselves on a trip to the South in 2001 to learn more about the civil rights movement, agreed to pen the introduction to these materials.

Together we meditated in a group setting—black and white, young and old—marveling at the beautiful principles of freedom exemplified by the moral dilemmas that faced not only the leaders, but also the ordinary men, women, and children who, dedicated to nonviolence, struggled to force a nation to reckon with brutal injustice and to transform itself. Indeed, we were all students. For the younger

among us this was "ancient" history—it happened before they were born. For others of us, we were rediscovering new meaning for the history we had come of age in. For me the work was personal.

I grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, before the civil rights movement began—at a time when separate meant never equal. For it was in Memphis that simple childhood notions of logic and fairness were shattered. It was there that water fountains for "colored only" didn't spout water which reflected the colors of the rainbow as the child might expect but instead, as one learned later, stood as symbols of the unchallenged dogmas and practices of racism—dogmas that attempted to instill indignity, shame, and humiliation in some and false pride and authority in others, and practices that reflected centuries of unchallenged myth and hate.

I grew up in Memphis at a time when black libraries housed books discarded from the white library; when there were empty seats in the front of the bus for young white girls on a shopping trip downtown, while those of darker skin color crowded the back of the bus on their way to work; when Thursdays were "colored day" at the zoo and a rear entrance led to a colored section in the movie theatre balcony—if admission was allowed at all.

I remember an officer of the law in that Memphis explaining to me that I shouldn't ride in the front seat of the family car with a colored man—a man who had worked for my family and with whom I had ridden in the front since I was very young, but was suddenly suspect now that I was an adolescent. (I felt his discomfort—part shame, part anger, part humiliation—as the policeman righteously walked away from the car.) Later I listened when the phone call came from family friends in Mississippi warning my parents to keep my brother, then a Justice Department lawyer working on voting rights legislation, out of Mississippi (They, like Judge Cox of the Circuit Court, questioned why a white Southerner and a Jew would be causing such "trouble.") Later, I read the letters sent to our home declaring that my brother's work for Negroes must be inspired by the Jewish-communist conspiracy and that he would have to be cremated, for his body, if buried, would contaminate the earth just as fluoridation had done.

All this and more I brought to our writing table. Each of the other team members brought their own experiences, and the sum of these experiences—and more—can be felt in these educational resources.

At our editing sessions we all found a renewed appreciation for the contribution—the gift—of "Eyes." Our appreciation grew as we saw how carefully and honestly Henry and Blackside had prepared their teaching tool—their documentary of history for a new generation of students of all ages who, in classroom, home, and community settings, will use their work to confront the fundamental reality that a strong democracy depends on the education of its youth to the meaning and responsibility of freedom. This is the "Prize" Henry left us. Facing History and Ourselves is dedicated to bringing important and challenging history to the teachers who will tap the next generation of moral philosophers ready to be engaged in the hard work of thinking and acting with head and heart.

That is the promise we make to Henry and to the future.

Margot Stern Strom
President and Executive Director
Facing History and Ourselves

USING THE STUDY GUIDE

This study guide serves as a classroom companion to the acclaimed *Eyes on the Prize* film series, the most comprehensive television documentary ever produced on the American civil rights movement. The series was created and executive produced by Emmy award-winning filmmaker and historian Henry Hampton, who endeavored to honor the voices and perspectives of those who shaped the civil rights movement in the United States.[1] The guide focuses on the individuals and groups that over three decades fought to dismantle the laws and customs used to discriminate against black Americans. Often at great personal risk, these civil rights activists forced America to face its entrenched culture of racial injustice and extend its promise of equal rights to all its citizens.

Each episode in the series has a corresponding chapter in the study guide. Each chapter includes a brief overview of the episode and a series of questions designed to stimulate a discussion on its basic themes. A timeline in each chapter identifies the episode's key events and dates.

The documents were selected to reflect themes and events in the episode. A brief introduction frames the documents, each of which is followed by "connections"—a list of questions that underline the broader themes within the episodes. These questions are also designed to promote personal engagement with particular aspects of the events described in the episodes and to encourage viewers to explore their own perspectives, as well as the national and international context of these developments.

The readings were selected from memoirs, oral histories, public documents, declarations, and news stories. In addition to a number of recent reflections and commentaries, many documents came directly from the interviews and other materials produced for the series.[2] Others were selected from earlier *Eyes on the Prize* study guides edited by Steve Cohen.

Most episodes cover two stories. In an effort to update the stories, we elected in some cases to include materials produced after the series was originally aired. In a few cases, we highlighted aspects we deemed especially important for contemporary viewers. Sample lesson plans using the film and the guide are available on the Facing History and Ourselves website: www.facinghistory.org.

The introduction to the study guide was written by Congressman John Lewis, who, like the individuals discussed in the series, aspired to compel America to fulfill its promises of equality and justice for all its citizens. By shattering stereotypes, opening public dialogue, and striving to empower black citizens politically and economically, Lewis and other activists in the civil rights movement transformed the attitudes of both black and white Americans and inspired other

groups around the world to explore their ethnic, religious, and cultural heritage.

Over 50 years ago, civil rights movement leaders articulated a vision for social change in America. Embedded in their vision was the belief that voting is the primary engine for nonviolent change in a democracy. We hope that the series and the new study guide will inspire a new generation of students to explore this idea, to become informed citizens, and to aspire to fulfill the movement's commitment to a diverse and tolerant democracy.

In addition to this study guide and to *The Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (published by Bantam Books), educators will find the first series' companion book quite useful. That book, *Eyes on the Prize*: *America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965*, by Juan Williams with the *Eyes on the Prize* Production Team (published by Penguin Books) is now in its twenty-third printing and has been a resource to countless secondary and post-secondary students.

[1] Blackside, Inc., founded by the late Henry Hampton in 1968, is a production company devoted to raising awareness about America's social issues and history through documentary films and other educational materials.

[2] Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991); Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990).

EPISODE 10:
THE PROMISED LAND *(1967–1968)*

Episode 10 reviews the final months of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life and the immediate aftermath of his assassination. This period marked an intensification of the nonviolent struggle in two areas: the struggle against poverty and the efforts to end the Vietnam War. For King, these two issues became inseparable.

By 1967, the United States was deeply entrenched in the Vietnam War. Invoking the fear of communist expansion and the threat it posed to democracy, President Lyndon B. Johnson increased the number of US troops in Vietnam. In response, some civil rights leaders charged that President Johnson's domestic "war on poverty" was falling victim to US war efforts abroad.

Episode 10 opens with King's internal dilemma about finding a proper way to publicly denounce America's involvement in Vietnam. In a speech delivered on April 4, 1967, at Riverside Church in New York, King told the gathered clergy that it was "time to break the silence" on Vietnam. Drawing connections between the resources spent on the war and the rampant poverty in America, King warned that the objectives of the movement were undermined by the use of force abroad. Many of King's allies criticized his stance; they argued that it would split the movement and weaken its support base. President Johnson, who had previously supported civil rights, saw King's public stance on Vietnam as a personal betrayal.

The second segment of the episode covers the "Poor People's Campaign," the first national economic campaign led by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Building on their experiences in Chicago and other cities, the SCLC embarked on a drive designed to highlight the consequences of entrenched poverty. The organization planned a multiracial campaign which would adapt nonviolence to the struggle for economic equality in America. For King, the Poor People's Campaign was a bridge between civil rights and economics. The campaign was to end in a massive demonstration of solidarity in Washington, DC.

While organizing the campaign, King had received a call from his friend Reverend James Lawson (the man who had organized the trainings in nonviolence in Nashville during the sit-ins; see Episode 3). Lawson invited King to Memphis, Tennessee, in support of a black sanitation workers' strike. King, believing the strike would highlight the link between race and poverty, accepted the invitation. On March 18, 1968, King delivered a speech to a crowd of seventeen thousand; ten days later he led pro-

1965	
Jan. 8	In his State of the Union address, newly elected President Lyndon B. Johnson declares a "War on Poverty" campaign
Aug. 4	The US Congress passes the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution." The resolution opened the way to large-scale involvement of US forces in Vietnam
1966	
Aug.	President Johnson authorizes the deployment of more troops to Vietnam, bringing the total to 429,000
1967	
Apr. 4	At Riverside Church in New York City, King publicly denounces the war in Vietnam
Jul. 12-17	In Newark, New Jersey, blacks riot over poverty and inequality
Dec. 4	The SCLC proposes a poor people's march to Washington, DC
1968	
Feb. 12	A union of black sanitation workers initiates a 64-day labor strike in Memphis, Tennessee, to protest poor wages and living conditions
Apr. 4	King is assassinated at his hotel in Memphis
Apr. 5	Riots break out in numerous cities throughout the country
May 14	The Poor People's Campaign arrives in Washington, DC
Jun. 5	Senator Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated in Los Angeles, California

testors in a march through the city. For the first time, however, one of King's marches descended into violence. Disturbed, he flew back home, but vowed to return and lead a nonviolent march in Memphis.

Two weeks later, King was back. On April 3, the night before the planned march, King delivered his prophetic "Mountaintop" speech at the Mason Temple in Memphis. The next day, during a meeting with Andrew Young, Rev. Jesse Jackson, and other SCLC leaders at the Lorraine Motel, King stepped out onto his balcony. Seconds later he was hit by a sniper's bullet; he died an hour later at a nearby hospital. The country was in shock: America had lost its most public voice of moral conscience. Disbelief quickly became fury, and on April 5, riots broke out in more than sixty cities across the US. For several days fires raged, leaving behind a desolate urban landscape of burnt cars, broken storefronts, and scorched buildings.

The final segment of the episode chronicles the SCLC's efforts to recover after King's death. Struggling to regroup, the SCLC made the final arrangements for the Poor People's Campaign. Five weeks after King's assassination, thousands of protestors—the majority of them black—arrived in Washington, DC. There, in makeshift sheds and tents and drenching rain, they built Resurrection City on the Mall, the site of the March on Washington five years earlier (see Episode 4). In early June, the movement suffered yet another blow when Senator Robert F. Kennedy—considered a close ally of the freedom movement—was assassinated shortly after winning the California Democratic presidential primary elections. On June 24, 1968, with Kennedy and King gone, a saddened and confused nation watched police and public authorities raze Resurrection City.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Are poverty and economic inequality civil rights issues?
2. What relationship did King see between the war overseas and poverty at home?
3. What dilemmas did King encounter when he spoke out against the Vietnam War? How did he wrestle to reconcile his moral objection to the war with his responsibility as a leader?
4. What strategies did the SCLC employ in its campaign against poverty? Why did the Poor People's Campaign face so much resistance?
5. How can a movement continue after the death of its charismatic leader?

Document 1: A TIME TO BREAK THE SILENCE

The 1960s marked an intensification of US engagement in Vietnam. Between 1962 and 1967, the number of US troops in Vietnam swelled to nearly half a million, increasingly diverting domestic economic resources overseas. Many felt that the war's escalating costs undermined President Johnson's "War on Poverty." For King, the issues of Vietnam and poverty were inseparable and had to be addressed. He faced a dilemma, however, since speaking out against the war would alienate close allies of the movement, including President Johnson, who viewed any criticism of his Vietnam policy as a personal betrayal. While earlier King had called for support of a peace process in Vietnam, in 1967, he decided it was time to speak about the moral costs of the war.

On April 4, at an event organized by a group called Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam, King delivered a powerful speech denouncing the war. King opened by quoting from a statement issued by the group's executive committee:

> "A time comes when silence is betrayal." That time has come for us [too] in relation to Vietnam. The truth of these words is beyond doubt but the mission to which they call us is

a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover when the issues at hand seem as perplexed as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty; but we must move on.

April 1967. King is surrounded by policemen and protestors who objected to his statements against the Vietnam War. In April 1967, King decided to speak about the moral costs of the war. He declared that "a time comes when silence is betrayal."

Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movement well and pray that our own inner being may be sensitive to its guidance, for we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.

Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: Why are you speaking about war, Dr. King? Why are you joining the voices of dissent? Peace and civil rights don't mix, they say. Aren't you hurting the cause of your people, they ask? And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live. […]

Since I am a preacher by trade, I suppose it is not surprising that I have several reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others,

have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor—both black and white—through the poverty program [Johnson's War on Poverty]. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the build-up in Vietnam and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demoniacal destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when 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 to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. […]

My third reason moves to an even deeper level of awareness, for it grows out of my experience in the ghettos of the North over the last three years—especially the last three summers. As I have walked among the desperate, rejected and angry young men I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my convictions that social change comes most meaningfully through non-violent action. But they asked—and rightly so—what about Vietnam? They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that 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. […]

For those who ask the question, "Aren't you a civil rights leader?" and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In 1957 when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: "To save the soul of America." We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself unless the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear.[1]

CONNECTIONS

1. How did King describe his dilemma about speaking out against the war? What did he mean when he said he must "move on"? What did he mean by the "mandates of conscience and the reading of history"?
2. How did King respond when asked, "Why are you speaking about the war, Dr. King?" On what principles and perceptions did he base his opposition to the war?
3. Why did many people think it was unpatriotic to speak out against the Vietnam War? Is it unpatriotic to oppose a war, or other government policies, that one thinks are unjust? Why or why not?
4. America was engaged in two wars in 1967: the war in Vietnam and the war on poverty in the United States. King estimated that America spent $322,000 for each enemy soldier killed in Vietnam but only $53 on each US citizen classified as poor. What was King suggesting about the nation's priorities? Are poverty and economic injustice religious issues? Are they civil rights issues?

Document 2: KING'S MOUNTAINTOP SPEECH

In March 1968, King arrived in Memphis, Tennessee, to aid the civil rights struggle of black sanitation workers. The workers, spurred by the accidental deaths of two co-workers, began a strike in February. They sought to improve their wages and get the city to recognize the sanitation workers' union. James Lawson, King's longtime friend and a leading practitioner of nonviolence, was chairman of the strike committee and asked King to join the struggle to boost morale among the workers and heighten the visibility of their strike. King agreed and led a demonstration in Memphis on March 28. That protest, uncharacteristically, turned violent. Disappointed, King made plans for another march in the upcoming weeks. When Memphis city officials acquired a court injunction against the marches, however, King returned to the city to encourage the workers to continue their protest. On April 3, the evening before his assassination, King delivered a passionate and prophetic speech to a crowd at the Mason Temple Church:

March 1968, Memphis, Tennessee. Surrounded by troopers and tanks, sanitation workers declared themselves "men" and demonstrated against low wages and unfair working conditions. King, who came to Memphis to aid the workers' strike, was assassinated on April 4, 1968.

> We mean business now, and we are determined to gain our rightful place in God's world. And that's all this whole thing is about. […] We aren't engaged in any negative protest and in any negative arguments with anybody. We are saying that we are determined to be men. We are determined to be people. We are saying that we are God's children. And that we don't have to live like we are forced to live.
>
> Now, what does all of this mean in this great period of history? It means that we've got to stay together. We've got to stay together and maintain unity. You know, whenever Pharaoh wanted to prolong the period of slavery in Egypt, he had a favorite, favorite formula for

doing it. What was that? He kept the slaves fighting among themselves. But whenever the slaves get together, something happens in Pharaoh's court, and he cannot hold the slaves in slavery. When the slaves get together, that's the beginning of getting out of slavery. Now let us maintain unity.

Secondly, let us keep the issues where they are. The issue is injustice. The issue is the refusal of Memphis to be fair and honest in its dealings with its public servants, who happen to be sanitation workers. Now, we've got to keep attention on that. That's always the problem with a little violence. You know what happened the other day, and the press dealt only with the window-breaking. I read the articles. They very seldom got around to mentioning the fact that one thousand, three hundred sanitation workers were on strike, and that Memphis is not being fair to them […].

I call upon you to be with us Monday. Now about injunctions: We have an injunction [against the demonstration] and we're going into court tomorrow morning to fight this illegal, unconstitutional injunction. All we say to America is, "Be true to what you said on paper." If I lived in China or even Russia, or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges, because they hadn't committed themselves to that over there. But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of the press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right. And so just as I say, we aren't going to let any injunction turn us around. We are going on.

We need all of you. And you know what's beautiful to me, is to see all of these ministers of the Gospel. It's a marvelous picture. Who is it that is supposed to articulate the longings and aspirations of the people more than the preacher? Somehow the preacher must be an Amos, and say, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Somehow, the preacher must say with Jesus, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to deal with the problems of the poor." […]

It's alright to talk about "long white robes over yonder," in all of its symbolism. But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. It's alright to talk about "streets flowing with milk and honey," but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's alright to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God's preacher must talk about the [new] New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee. This is what we have to do. […]

Let us develop a kind of dangerous unselfishness. [In the story known as *The Good Samaritan*, Jesus] talked about a certain man, who fell among thieves. […] [A] Levite and a priest passed by on the other side. They didn't stop to help him. And finally a man of

another race came by. He got down from his beast, decided not to be compassionate by proxy. But with him, administered first aid, and helped the man in need. Jesus ended up saying, this was the good man, this was the great man, because he had the capacity to project the "I" into the "thou," and to be concerned about his brother. Now you know, we use our imagination a great deal to try to determine why the priest and the Levite didn't stop. […] I'm going to tell you what my imagination tells me. It's possible that these men were afraid. You see, the Jericho road is a dangerous road. […] Or it's possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking. And he was acting like he had been robbed and hurt, in order to seize them over there, lure them there for quick and easy seizure. And so the first question that the Levite asked was, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But then the Good Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"

That's the question before you tonight. Not, "If I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to all of the hours that I usually spend in my office every day and every week as a pastor?" The question is not, "If I stop to help this man in need, what will happen to me?" "If I do not stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to them?" That's the question. […]

Well. I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would 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. 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. And 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.[2]

CONNECTIONS

1. What did King mean by "a dangerous unselfishness"? What did King try to teach his audience about empathy through the story of the Good Samaritan? What does he mean by the great man's ability to project the "I" into the "thou"? What does it take to help people see a situation from someone else's perspective?
2. How did King justify his decision to violate the federal injunction against the planned demonstrations? What democratic traditions did he cite in defense of civil disobedience?
3. What was King's charge to the religious community in the struggle for social justice? According to King, when is it the role of the clergy to side with the poor?
4. What did "the promised land" stand for in his speech? What do you think King meant when he said he had seen "the promised land"?

Document 3: ROBERT KENNEDY AND THE ASSASSINATION OF REVERED DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Throughout 1967, New York Senator Robert Kennedy (brother of slain President John F. Kennedy) became increasingly outspoken about the problems facing the poor in the United States. After a fact-finding trip to the South where he witnessed firsthand the living conditions of blacks and whites in the Mississippi Delta, Senator Kennedy suggested that King bring an army of poor people to Washington in order to pressure the Johnson administration to address their plight.

Later that year, Senator Kennedy announced he would run for president. For many in the movement, including former Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee John Lewis, Senator Kennedy's candidacy offered hope for a renewed commitment to social justice. Lewis, working with the Kennedy campaign, helped organize an event for the senator in Indianapolis, Indiana. Just as an audience of nearly one thousand gathered, Lewis learned of King's assassination in Memphis. The staff agreed that Senator Kennedy would break the news of the tragedy to the predominantly black crowd. Lewis remembered Senator Kennedy reaching out to his audience:

> He had no notes. He spoke simply and honestly, completely extemporaneously, straight from his heart. And the crowd hung on his every word. It didn't matter that he was white or rich, or a Kennedy. At that moment he was just a human being, just like all of us, and he spoke that way.[3]

Kennedy began:

> I have bad news for you, for all of our fellow citizens, and people who love peace all over the world, and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and killed tonight.
>
> Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice for his fellow human beings, and he died because of that effort.
>
> In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it is perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are black—considering the evidence there evidently is that there were white people who were responsible—you can be filled with bitterness, with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in great polarization—black people amongst black, white people amongst white, filled with hatred toward one another.
>
> Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and to comprehend, and to replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand with compassion and love.
>
> For those of you who are black and are tempted to be filled with hatred and distrust at the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I can only say that I feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man. But we have to make an effort in the United States, we have to make an effort to understand, to go beyond these rather difficult times.

My favorite poet was Aeschylus. He wrote: "In our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God."

What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness; but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or they be black.

So I shall ask you tonight to return home, to say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King, that's true, but more importantly to say a prayer for our own country, which all of us love—a prayer for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke.

We can do well in this country. We will have difficult times; we've had difficult times in the past; we will have difficult times in the future. It is not the end of violence; it is not the end of lawlessness; it is not the end of disorder.

But the vast majority of white people and the vast majority of black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings who abide in our land.

Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world.

Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people.[4]

The grieving crowd affectionately applauded Senator Kennedy, but neither he nor other leaders could soothe the rage that spread across the nation. Within hours of King's assassination, riots broke out in more than sixty cities. In a press conference held the next morning, Stokely Carmichael declared that "when white America killed Dr. King, she declared war on us […] Black people have to survive, and the only way they will survive is by getting guns."[5] America now risked a war with its own citizens.

Two months later, Sirhan Sirhan assassinated Senator Robert Kennedy after a campaign speech in Los Angeles, California.

CONNECTIONS

1. After King's assassination Senator Robert Kennedy stated, "it is perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in." What did Kennedy see as the solution to the moral and political crisis in the wake of King's assassination?
2. In his remarks, Senator Kennedy chose to quote the Greek poet Aeschylus, who wrote "Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God." What message did he hope the crowd would take from these words? What wisdom did Kennedy hope would come from the pain and despair over King's death?
3. The evening before King's funeral, Kennedy held a meeting with SCLC leaders and several other civil rights activists. He explained, "I know we must bury Dr. King tomorrow. I don't want to talk politics,

but I do want to ask, what can I do? What *should* I do?"[6] What do you think the SCLC should have advised him to do?

4. What are the difficulties that movements face with the death of a charismatic leader?

Document 4: THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

In 1968, before his death, King and the SCLC traveled across the nation to promote the Poor People's Campaign in Washington, DC. King hoped that the campaign would begin the second phase of the civil rights movement. This new phase "must not be just black people," he declared, "it must be all poor people. We must include American Indians, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and even poor whites."[7] Andrew Young, then a top assistant at the SCLC, explained the goal of the campaign:

> The Poor People's Campaign was to be a more massive, long-range campaign of civil disobedience than we had ever previously undertaken. […] The demonstrators would live in Washington in temporary housing we would construct and begin the petitioning of government agencies and Congress for what was, in effect, an economic Bill of Rights. During the Great Depression, Bonus Marchers, Veterans of World War I, had come to Washington and camped out, demanding a promised "bonus." In many ways, the Poor People's Campaign was part of a constitutionally protected tradition of Americans petitioning the government for the redress of grievances.[8]

The pamphlet below was developed to attract support for the campaign:

> **WHO ARE THE POOR?**
>
> The poorest Americans are 35 million persons who do not have enough money for a decent life. The government says they fall below the "poverty line," earning less than $3130 a year for a family of four, or $1540 for an individual.
>
> **WHY ARE PEOPLE POOR?**
>
> Poor people are kept in poverty because they are kept from power. We must create "Poor People's Power."
>
> **WHAT HAPPENS TO POOR PEOPLE?**
>
> Poor people do not get decent jobs, decent incomes, decent housing, decent schools, decent health care, decent government, decent police. Poor people do not even get respect as human beings.
>
> **WHAT DO POOR PEOPLE DO?**
>
> Most poor American adults work hard every day but are not paid enough for a decent life for their families. Unemployment is a severe problem, especially among men, and the unemployment rate in many places, especially most big cities, is so high that there is Great Depression. Seven million people are on welfare (mostly children, old people, the sick, and mothers unable to work). Less than 1 percent of these people are able to work—if they get proper training.

RICH PEOPLE AND POOR PEOPLE

There is a great contrast in the lives of rich and poor people in America. For example, a U.S. Congressman is paid nearly $600 a week, but a Southern sharecropper's family sometimes earns less than $600 a year. A maid in a big Northern city may earn $50 a week, while her rich boss may get $50 an hour.

CAN AMERICA END POVERTY?

Yes. Many nations that are poorer than rich America provide decent incomes and services for all poor people. America spends 10 times as much money on military power as it does on welfare. The government subsidizes big companies and farms, and gives tax favors to rich people, but punishes the poor. America spends more money in one month to kill in Vietnam than it spends in a year for the so-called "war on poverty." […]

POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

The poor people of America will demand decent jobs and income in massive demonstrations in our nation's capital, Washington, D.C., this spring.

The Poor People's Campaign, starting in April, is being organized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) with the support and participation of many local groups and individuals.

WHO WILL BE IN THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN?

At the start, several thousand poor people will go to Washington. We will be young and old, jobless fathers, welfare mothers, farmers and laborers. We are Negroes, American Indians, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, [and] poor white people.

WHERE DO THESE POOR PEOPLE LIVE?

All across the nation, SCLC is recruiting poor people in 10 big cities and five Southern states. Poor People in all other communities and cities are also invited to join the Campaign.

DO YOU HAVE TO BE POOR TO BE IN THIS CAMPAIGN?

No. Most persons at the start of the Campaign in Washington will be poor, but other people from all walks of life must be prepared to take their place in the lines of this campaign.

WHY ARE WE GOING TO WASHINGTON?

Washington is the center of government power, and the national government has the money and resources to end poverty and fight racism. But that government has failed to do this. Therefore the Poor People's Campaign will demand government reforms.

WHAT WILL THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN DO IN WASHINGTON?

We will build powerful nonviolent demonstrations on the issues of jobs, income, welfare, health, housing, education, human rights. These massive demonstrations will be aimed at government centers of power, and they will be expanded if necessary. We must make the

government face up to the fact of poverty and racism. In order to carry out our demonstrations, we will not reveal to the government in advance exactly what we plan to do and where we will demonstrate.

WHAT WILL WE DEMAND?

We will present to the government a list of definite demands involving jobs, income, and a decent life for all poor people so that they will control their own destiny. This will cost billions of dollars, but the richest nation of all time can afford to spend this money if America is to avoid social disaster.

WHAT IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOTHING?

We will stay until the government responds, building up the pressure for action by calling for thousands upon thousands of people, rich and poor, to come to Washington or stand up and be counted in demonstrations in their home communities.[9]

Reverend Ralph Abernathy succeeded King after his assassination on April 4, 1968, and led over two thousand participants in the Poor People's Campaign to Washington. There, the marchers built a shantytown they called "Resurrection City" and demonstrated in the capital from March through June. On June 19, 1968—called "Solidarity Day"—some fifty thousand people rallied in the Capitol to protest the consequences of economic inequality in America.

Over time, however, conditions at Resurrection City worsened as many days of rain rendered the city muddy and unsanitary. After violence and near-riots broke out, the Poor People's Campaign finally ended. The police entered the camp, made numerous arrests, sent many home, and razed the city to the ground. Andrew Young discussed the failures and accomplishments of Resurrection City:

Years later, when I read my daughter Andrea's college thesis on the Poor People's Campaign […] I remembered again the extraordinary extent to which we were opposed by members of Congress, the administration, and the media. As they saw it, the conditions of poverty and oppression in America weren't the enemy—we had become the enemy. We did not realize the extent of the panic we were engendering in the capital. Had we understood the level of concern, we might have acted to either soothe the fear or at least take advantage of it. We wanted to challenge the president and the Congress enough to make them take seriously the problems of poverty and act to help poor people. We believed that as segregation was immoral in a democracy, poverty was immoral in a nation as wealthy as the United States of America.

What had begun as a movement for racial equality had evolved until Martin could no longer ignore the role that war and poverty played in the oppression of people of color in America and around the world. Racism, war, and poverty were intertwined. Only when we removed the first layer of segregation did we see clearly the cancer of poverty eating away at the hope and strength of black people in America. Segregation nourished that cancer, but the elimination of segregation could not eradicate it. But, by attacking poverty, Martin

was calling into question fundamental patterns of American life. There was scarcely any power center that was unaffected by his challenge.[10]

CONNECTIONS

1. How did the Poor People's Campaign seek to address poverty in the United States? In what ways was the campaign similar to other campaigns that the SCLC had organized? What do you see as the key differences? How would you address the issues of poverty today?
2. What did the SCLC see as the greatest challenge to achieving "poor people's power"? Compare the SCLC's program against poverty with the Black Panther Party's programs in Oakland, California (see Episode 9).
3. How did the SCLC explain its assertion that wide economic gaps infringed upon the rights of poor Americans? What parallels does Andrew Young draw between segregation and poverty?
4. Young believes that people who opposed the Poor People's Campaign did not see poverty and oppression as the enemy; instead they saw the protestors as the problem. Why do you think this was the case?

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[1] Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Time to Break Silence," Edited by James Washington, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1986), 231–33.
[2] Martin Luther King, Jr., "I See the Promised Land," ibid., 280–86.
[3] John Lewis with Michael D'Orso. *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), 406.
[4] Robert F. Kennedy, "On the Death of Martin Luther King," Robert F. Kennedy Memorial, http://www.rfkmemorial.org/lifevision/assassinationofmartinlutherkingjr/ (accessed on June 16, 2006).
[5] Lewis, *Walking With the Wind*, 408.
[6] Ibid, 410.
[7] King Encyclopedia, "The Poor People's Campaign", http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/about_king/encyclopedia/poorpeoples.html (accessed on August 15, 2006).
[8] Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 443.
[9] "Poor People's Campaign Pamphlet," The University of Southern Mississippi McCain Library and Archives, http://anna.lib.usm.edu/~spcol/crda/adams/vga044b.html (accessed on June 13, 2006).
[10] Young, *An Easy Burden*, 446–47.