

Two Societies (1965-1968)

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR: There is nothing more dangerous than to build a society with a large segment of people in that society who feel they have no stake in it, who feel like they have nothing to lose. People who have stake in their society protect that society, but when they don't have it, they unconsciously want to destroy it.

NARRATOR: August, 1965, black residents in Watts, a Los Angeles neighborhood, took to streets in anger. The uprising lasted six days and left 34 people dead. Watts was a challenge to the nation and to the nonviolent philosophy of Martin Luther King.

MAN: To Dr. King that we have here, I say this. Sure, we like to be nonviolent, but we up here in the Los Angeles area, will not turn the other cheek.

NARRATOR: The civil rights movement King led had won a major victory days earlier when President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act. But outside the South, little had changed. Anger was building. It was time for King and his staff to move north. Their first target, Chicago, Illinois, the second largest city in America. A fourth of Chicago's residents were black. Despite a decade of protest and some successes, many faced profound poverty and discrimination.

LINDA BRYANT-HALL: When I first heard that Dr. King was going to come to Chicago, I was elated. I said, "Oh my gosh, Chicago's going to get involved in all of this. You know, Dr. King has got a powerful following, a powerful message and he's going to bring it to Chicago to help with the movement here. He's sure needed."

ANDREW YOUNG: When we went to Chicago, we were trying to see would nonviolence work in the North, and what elements of nonviolence would work. Voter registration, marches and direct action, could we end slums and create good housing? Could we create jobs and educational opportunities?

NARRATOR: A successful campaign in Chicago might provide a model for combating problems throughout the North. Other cities had been considered, but some black leaders refused to work with King and his staff. Chicago's civil rights leaders welcomed them.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR: We have looked forward to our coming to Chicago with great and eager anticipation. And as we have said in the past, we are here to study the conditions as they relate themselves in housing, jobs and the whole school question.

NARRATOR: Chicago officials were cautious. Ed Marciniak greeted King on behalf of the city.

ED MARSINIAK: That welcome was, I think, both genuine and part of a strategy. The strategy was here was a man coming to a city he didn't know, to a city whose political institutions with which he was not familiar. He was dealing with people basically who were non-political, suspicious of the political establishment. And so the advice and counsel that he would be getting would be by and large advice that didn't come through the normal political channels.

NARRATOR: Chicago was the political dominion of Mayor Richard J. Daley, one of the most powerful men in America. Daley's influence extended into the National Democratic Party. For 11 years, Daley had run the neighborhoods and city wards of Chicago through a political machine built on patronage. Some blacks were included in the machine, but many saw Daley as the power behind the system that locked them out.

CLORY BRYANT: The Daley machine is -- Well, I guess I could do that best by trying to describe Mayor Daley. He seemed to many to be omnipotent. He took a Machiavelli approach to government, he was in control, he was strong, demanding, and ruthless.

JESSE JACKSON: Daley had blacks on his staff and black officials and some black ministers who marched with Dr. King in the South, went to school with him at Morehouse, but on Daley Plantation, they had press conferences and urged Dr. King to leave Chicago saying there's no place for you here. It really broke his heart to see some of his classmates turn on him in Chicago.

NARRATOR: The Mayor himself had supported the campaign for civil rights in the South. Now, Daley kept watch as King's organization and local civil rights groups formed the Chicago Freedom Movement. In January, 1966, they launched a nonviolent war on slums.

WOMAN: And a lot of people get offended when you say slums. But we have to realize it's not just something that you can see in a community and say that you can't see that makes that slum. So we've got to do something about these problems, and the only way we can do something about it is to be together, see. And we're going to be together, we're going to get something done here, not only East Garfield Park, not only in Lawndale, not only in Chicago, but we're going to get things done in New York, California, every state we got, we're going to have something done.

NARRATOR: Many of Chicago's black residents were trapped in decaying and segregated neighborhoods. Fifty years earlier, those neighborhoods had been the point of entry for southern blacks recruited to work in northern industries. Other ethnic groups had worked their way out of slums. Strict segregation locked blacks in. Rents were high, services were neglected.

MINNIE DUNLAP: When I moved into the building on 3400 Madison, it was predominantly white. And when blacks started moving into that building, it seemed like white people just moved out overnight, they weren't there. And the services started to go down. He stopped painting, he stopped doing any repairs and things in the building.

WOMAN ORGANIZER: What's your name?

TENANT: My name is Mrs. Williams.

MAN ORGANIZER: We're trying to get a meeting together with the people in this building so we can deal with some of the problems around here.

TENANT: Well, just a minute, let me come down.

MAN ORGANIZER: You come on down. I work for Dr. Martin Luther King.

MINNIE DUNLAP: So I sort of made myself an organizer and started talking with the tenants that were in the building about holding their rent. So I got only about seven of them to say that they would work with me at that particular time. The others I felt that wanted to work with me but were afraid because they were on fixed incomes, particularly public assistance. And they were afraid that the landlord would get their checks cut off.

NARRATOR: Opposition to the mayor could be costly. Daley's political machine controlled city services and had influence over public housing and welfare. The mayor used that power against the Chicago Freedom Movement.

NANCY JEFFERSON: He owned that system, Richard J. Daley did. And I remember the inspectors were going from door to door to those of us that were participating with Martin Luther King. And they came to my house, but you know, people were harassed at that level, inspectors, for violations that they couldn't fix. So when you got a violation, who did you have to go to? You had to go to one of Daley's men to fix the code or else, you know, you were fined.

JOHN MCDERMOTT: When King actually came to town, Daley received him politely. And then every time Dr. King and the movement would raise an issue, Daley would institute some kind of response or a program to show that the movement wasn't needed and that the city was on top of the problem. This is particularly true if it had to do with city services. If Dr. King would go to, as he did, to the west side and help to shovel out filth in an apartment in a very dirty, rundown section of town, why the next day, the garbage trucks would arrive and the place would be all cleaned up. And it is true in the minds of the people and the press, it became hard to see Daley as some kind of enemy because he would always respond.

RICHARD J. DALEY: We'd like to know if places are run down or it's a hazard to human life. The fire department wants to know if a building is in such shape that it's a danger to life of the people that are in it. And they can be of great help in giving us this information.

ED MARCINIAK: It was clear, I think, to us at the time, was what the Chicago Freedom Movement wanted was a way to get confrontation with city hall. And our purpose was to see if we could avoid a confrontation, to diffuse any issue that might precipitate a confrontation. We were not Birmingham, we were not Selma, we were Chicago.

NARRATOR: King had chosen Chicago as the proving ground for a nonviolent campaign in the North. But six months had gone by and there were no victories in sight. On July 10th, 1966, the Freedom Movement held a rally at Soldier Field. Some were questioning the strategy of nonviolence. King argued in its defense.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR: We assemble here today to march to city hall to demand the redress of our legitimate freedom. I want every one of you here to march with us today. By the thousands, we will march there in a few minutes, make our great witness. I'm still convinced there is nothing more powerful to dramatize and expose the social evils than the transplant of marching people.

NARRATOR: In sweltering heat, 5,000 marched with King to city hall. He taped a list of demands to the door, calling for city action to end discrimination. The following day, movement leaders met with the mayor, the talks reached an impasse.

RICHARD J. DALEY: While I asked for their answer to the solution of many of these questions, and they had no solutions. They had the recitation of the problem, but I said, "Well, how do you eliminate the slum and blight over night? What would you men do that we haven't done in Chicago?"

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR: And no specific commitments were made. We requested, for instance, a police or a civilian review board and that, again, no commitment was made. In the housing area, no commitments were made. And for this reason, we will have to move right on with our program, action program, to dramatize these issues and to bring it squarely before not only the attention but the conscience of the Chicago community.

NARRATOR: A day later, the movement's plans were interrupted. The oppressive July heat had fueled growing tension in the city. When officials closed fire hydrants in a black neighborhood, tempers flared. Leaders of the Freedom Movement mobilized quickly. The future of their nonviolent campaign was at stake.

AL RABY: Dr. King and I and Andy drove around trying to persuade particularly young black people that they were, one, not helping the problem. We understood their frustration, we were trying to address it and find avenues for that energy and frustration and anger to be challenged in a constructive way. And that the most dangerous situation was that the police would overreact and they would, in fact, be physically hurt or damaged or end up in jail.

NARRATOR: The battle on the streets continued for four days, two people were killed, but Chicago was spared the devastation that had hit Watts a year earlier. Some credited King and the Freedom Movement. Mayor Daley felt otherwise.

ED MARCINIAK: The mayor did feel that there was no need for outsiders to stir up the troops in Chicago, and therefore I think his natural inclination was to say, "Well, we have never had these things before, now they're happening. What's the explanation? It must be these events and these people and the way they're doing things that was responsible for the rioting that took place."

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.: We are trying to conduct a nonviolent movement here in Chicago, and we are going on with that program. But we need support, and there's no point in the power structure and anybody else saying that because we are peacefully going around trying to change conditions that we are the cause of the riots. That's dishonest, it is untrue, it is unfair to say it to the public. Because we have stood up for nonviolence with all of our hearts. And those who will make this peaceful revolution impossible will make a violent revolution inevitable. And we've got to get this over, I need help. I need some victories. I need some concessions to take back.

NARRATOR: Within days, leaders of the Freedom Movement shifted focus. They took their protest out of the slums that contained blacks and into the white neighborhoods that excluded them.

BERNARD LAFAYETTE: There were patterns of segregation and discrimination, clear patterns. For an example, there were no signs that said, "Blacks cannot live here." But it was white only and it was obvious, the white only. And there were reasons why it was white. It's not because blacks chose not to live in those communities, it's because they were systematically denied, primarily by the real estate agent.

NARRATOR: Protesters charged realtors, banks and insurance companies with block busting. White neighborhood were targeted, homeowners were pressured to sell low and flee, and homes were resold to blacks at a premium. Within months, areas were changed from all white to all black and city and financial services decreased.

ROSEMARY PORTER: The white people didn't make money, the black people didn't make money, the real estates made money and they do it because of that. They can move the blacks into middle class, white neighborhoods, they can move the whites out of middle class neighborhoods into the suburbs. They make the money, we don't make anything. But they propagate the idea that because blacks move in to white neighborhoods, your house values are going to go down.

NARRATOR: Freedom Movement volunteers crossed the line that divided black and white Chicago. They began marching into all-white neighborhoods.

JOHN MCDERMOTT: This neighborhood was convinced that we were there to take away their most precious possession, their homes and the beauty of their neighborhood. And as we walked deeper and deeper into the neighborhood, you had a great sense of isolation. Would I ever get out of here? And the expressions of anger and hate, the swastikas which were held up, just unbelievable. And it showed the problem. That's all the point was, to show the problem. To show the fear, to show the rejection, to show the hate, to show the problems we were trying to solve.

JESSE JACKSON: It was said that you could not expose segregation in the North because it was subtle. This actually was everything except subtle. It was dynamic, it was real, blatant, ugly, violent. I was just hit three times.

REPORTER: Were any of your other people hit?

JESSE JACKSON: I don't know.

REPORTER: How many of your people were arrested?

JESSE JACKSON: I don't know.

NARRATOR: Three days of marching exposed white resistance and heightened black skepticism about the use of nonviolence.

MINNIE DUNLAP: I was sick that time. When I watched it on TV, I got angry, I got scared, I got upset. And when I watched that kind of hostility and that kind of prejudiceness, they like to not understand, so I just couldn't see why they would do that. And in looking at that I said, "Gee, I'm not as nonviolent as I think I am, especially when Dr. King wanted us to be nonviolent." Because if I had been there and they had threw those ... (inaudible) and had spit on me, I think I would have just hit back.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.: We sent Negroes in large numbers to the real estate offices in Gage Park. Every time Negroes went in, the real estate agent said, "Oh, I'm sorry, we don't have anything listed." Now, you can find something somewhere, but it was always back in the ghetto, but they didn't have anything. And then soon after that, we sent some of our fine white staff members in to those same real estate offices, and the minute the white persons got in, they opened the books, "Oh yes, we have several things. Now what exactly do you want?"

NARRATOR: On August 5th, the marchers returned to the southwest side. Mayor Daley had sent 1,200 police officers. They estimated the mob at 5,000.

ANDY YOUNG: Now, in the South we faced mobs, but in the South, it would be a couple of hundred, or even 50 or 75. The violence in the South always came from a rabble element. But these were women and children and husbands and wives coming out of their homes, becoming a mob. And in some ways, it was far more frightening. There was just a rain of rocks and cherry bombs. So you didn't know what it was.

BERNARD LAFAYETTE: Then Martin Luther King was struck on the head... And I remember the reaction they had. They all, you know, surged forward and the march was stopped. They said, "Halt, wait," you know, and I remember Jesse Jackson running in, because he was right near Martin Luther King and they held his head down because we knew he would be the target of any kind of, you know, personal attack. And we tried to regroup ourselves. And I remember the tension that people had. And we felt completely surrounded.

NARRATOR: The marchers remained nonviolent, but many were angry.

NANCY JEFFERSON: Dr. King was only trying to say to America, trying to say to Gage Park, "We are human beings, I am a citizen of this city. I'm a black American, I have a right to move wherever I want to move if I have the money to move. What's wrong with that?" You know, and I think that's what it was all about, was that I dare one part of this society to say that you can't move wherever you want to move. I think that was the anger that was in us.

JESSE JACKSON: The possibility that we might get arrested --

NARRATOR: Acting on his own, Jesse Jackson announced the march into Cicero, a white suburb known for racial hostility. His challenge caught both city officials and movement leaders off guard.

JESSE JACKSON: Is there any one individual, or any one leader, any one group of leaders, worth the perpetuation of the historical deprivations of Negro people? That's the question we have to deal with. And I have counted up the costs: my life, Bevel's life, even Dr. King's life, over and against a generation and the continuation of a kind of sin that's going to internally disrupt this country and possibly this world. I counted the cost. I'm going to Cicero."

CLORY BRYANT: You don't know what Cicero meant to people in Chicago. You don't go into the viaduct, honey, because if you do, you may not get back. Cicero was on the other side of the viaduct. And you didn't walk through Cicero alone. You didn't let your car break down in Cicero and get out to change a tire.

NARRATOR: Fifteen thousand blacks worked in Cicero, none lived there.

WOMAN: There's a lot of good ones say they work there, but still we don't want to mix with them, to live with them.

REPORTER: Why? You work with them, you --

WOMAN: But I don't want to live with them.

REPORTER: Why?

WOMAN: Because I moved out of a neighborhood that was colored, I had to move. Everybody that lives with the colored has to move.

REPORTER: Why?

WOMAN: Because you're not safe walking the streets at night. You cannot leave the house.

WHITE MAN: Negroes have a right to move in under the Constitution. The only thing is what kind of a Negro?

LINDA BRYANT HALL: The Cicero community has been a very hostile community to blacks for years, ever since I could remember. And I looked forward to the time that I could march down those streets in defiance of all those people there.

BOB LUCAS: There was a lot of fear in the white community and some parts of the black community that there was going to be some sort of a big racial explosion. There were a lot of demand on the part of the citizens, particularly the white citizens, on Mayor Daley to stop the marches, there were some demand on the part of the black leadership to Martin Luther King to stop the marches. So you see, everybody wanted a way out, both sides wanted a way out.

NARRATOR: Religious leaders led the call for a city-wide summit that would stop the marches. King agreed to negotiate, but he vowed to continue marching until a settlement was reached.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR: I don't mind saying to Chicago or to anybody, I'm tired of marching. Tired of marching for something that should have been mine at birth. I don't mind saying to you tonight... I don't mind saying to you tonight that I'm tired of the tensions surrounding our days. I don't mind saying to you tonight that I'm tired of living every day under the threat of death. I have no martyr complex. I want to live as long as anybody in this building tonight, and sometimes I begin to doubt whether I'm going to make it through. I must confess I'm tired.

NARRATOR: King and his staff had hoped that their campaign in Chicago would serve as a model for others in the North, but their work in Chicago had failed to win support from former allies, including the federal government and northern liberals. It was time to move on.

ANDREW YOUNG: The SCLC went to Chicago to see if nonviolence would work in the North. And so we were doing a number of things. The marches were only one, but Chicago was so much bigger than any city that we'd worked in in the South. We knew we couldn't do them all at the same time and that we couldn't sustain an aggressive movement as long as -- Much longer. So we were trying to find a way to wind it up.

ALBERT RABY: We reached the point in which we thought that we had achieved not everything we wanted, but everything we could achieve. And there was those who disagreed with that. But we had the burden of decision, we made the best one we could, as honestly as we could, with all the suspicions that were shared by those of us who were criticizing us.

NARRATOR: August 26th, 1966, both sides signed a ten point agreement. The city promised to enforce its open housing laws and desegregate public housing. Banks and realtors agreed to comply. Critics doubted the agreement would be enforced, but King saw it as a first step. He agreed to stop the marches, including the march into Cicero.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.: The Chicago Freedom Movement has pledged its resources to assist in the implementation of these programs and hereby agrees to halt neighborhood marches and demonstrations in Chicago on the issue of open housing. So long as these --

NARRATOR: King's announcement immediately split the Chicago movement.

LINDA BRYANT-HALL: When he called off the march, we were surprised. We were shocked. This is a march we looked forward to. The other marches were nice, but the one in Cicero had special meaning for us. We don't care about summits taking place without us. We don't care about covenants. We want contracts in black and white with some hard answers for us, with some signatures and some people we can hold responsible to and some time frames. But none of this was there.

NARRATOR: Local groups announced their own march into Cicero. It would take place without Jesse Jackson or Dr. King.

CHESTER ROBINSON: We are not marching into Cicero to appeal to the white conscience, but to demonstrate to everybody that rank and file people now are a new breed, a new kind of cat without fear. We do not come head in hand, scratching our heads, shuffling our feet to beg for a few concessions. At this march, we are serving notice. Beginning today, every Negro can see, act and live out the assumption that he can walk anywhere, that he is a human like anybody and is to be treated like anybody else.

ROBERT LUCAS: The day that the march took place, Dr. King called me at home and he said to me, "You know, Bob, we would like to save Cicero to use it later on for something, and that I wish you wouldn't go." And I told Dr. King, I said, "Well, Doc, my conscience dictates to me that I must lead the march into Cicero."

CLORY BRYANT: We got there and it was such few, we became a little frightened. And we kept standing around, and finally it was 12:00, I believe it was 12:00, and all of a sudden, guys started getting out of cars and people started coming out of doorways and they said, Okay, Lucas, step off time."

NARRATOR: About 250 marchers began walking into Cicero. Over 3,000 law enforcement agents were on hand.

CLORY BRYANT: Well, it was not a King march. You know, we just went out there on faith... We just went... Little people and that was the difference. It was a ground swell of grass root people. And when they threw bricks, they got them back. We caught them and we threw them back. So it was give and take in Cicero for ah oh a mile or so. And I'll never forget it.

NARRATOR: As the marchers left Cicero, little had been resolved. The southern civil rights victories had not been repeated in the North. The problems, and the anger, remained. The tension building between black and white America would explode with the greatest force in Detroit, Michigan. In 1967, Detroit was booming. Federally funded urban renewal brought highways and skyscrapers. The auto industry brought employment. But success looked different to Detroit's black community. Urban renewal built expressways through black neighborhoods. It took jobs and resources to white suburbs. It left black residents behind.

HELEN KELLY: The expressway divided the community when you could walk across the street and talk to your neighbor, it's no longer there. You got to go cross the bridge, and if you go across that bridge, you ain't going to find that same neighbor because that space, the street is gone. All those houses in that neighborhood is gone.

RON SCOTT: You constantly saw white guys on the assembly line performing in white shirts, who would leave and who would drive to a better neighborhood, who would drive a better car, and so forth. And there wasn't the opportunity there. There wasn't the opportunity.

NARRATOR: Opportunity came with power. In Detroit, that meant white power. It was symbolized by a police force that was 95 percent white. Generations of black residents had contended with police, especially four man squads known as the big four.

GRANT FRILEY: When the big four pulled up, you jumped. I mean, when they said move off the corner, you moved off the corner. And where do young black men have, but a corner? They don't have swimming pools, they don't have estates, they have corners in the cities. And they stand around, they harmonize, they clown, they have fun. But when the big four would say give me that corner, you gave them that corner, or else.

HERB BOYD: And it wasn't unusual to see the cops coming into neighborhoods and just arbitrarily grabbing people, you know, without any kind of provocation and slam us up against the walls, ask us for identification, where you going, what you been doing, any kind of suspicious whatsoever would be cause for them to just go ahead and accost you.

NARRATOR: Police community tension was near combustion by the summer of 1967. The spark came on July 23rd. Police conducted a routine raid on a blind pig, an illegal after hours club.

JOHN NICHOLS: At this particular time, there was more there than the crew expected, required shuttling several times from the station to the scene, taking prisoners back and forth. And the crowd become restive and what was kind of a mood of hilarity grew into some derisive talk to the police and ultimately was stoning the cars.

MAN: That's why the Negroes are all rioting up town, you know what that means? All these folks, every time you see one of them, he going to stop a brother. You know, he never stop no whites, that's why we out here rioting and we going to keep on rioting until they stop all this.

NARRATOR: It was Sunday morning, few police were in the area. Reinforcements were called in as the growing crowd began looting and burning.

HERB BOYD: The feeling in the streets at that time, kind of a sense of euphoria, a sense of freedom and rebellion. Everybody felt like unified, that you know, the revolution was right around the corner. Because we had been talking about those things in the community anyway. So everybody felt that this was the catalyst, this was the charge, this was the igniter.

HELEN KELLY: When my daughter got to church, she called back and said, "Mama, it's Judgement Day." I say, "What you mean?" She say, "Everything is burning." I say, "Why?" She say, "They say it's a riot going on." And I almost had a fit behind that.

NARRATOR: Moderate black leaders offered to help police. Dr. Arthur Johnson drove into the area with Congressman John Conyers.

ARTHUR JOHNSON: The crowd, the whole scene was such that I could not drive my car further. John Conyers finally got out of the car, stood on the hood of it and attempted to speak to the people about leaving the street and returning to their homes. And finally, I got out of my car and whispered in John's ear, "I would like to get my car out of here if I can."

RICHARD STRICHARTZ: The city was burning, and all the work that we had done was being destroyed. The distress was more than distress, it was agony and tears came to my eyes, and it was -- We thought we had the answers, and the fact is nobody had the answers.

RON SCOTT: Inside of most black people, there was a time bomb. There was a pot that was about to overflow, and there was rage that was about to come out. And the rebellion just provided an opportunity for that. I mean, why else would people get upset about the cops raiding a blind pig? They'd done that numerous times before. But people just got tired. People just got tired of it. And it just exploded.

GUARDSMAN: Return to your homes to protect your own property. It's the best thing you can do, protect your own property. Protect your own property.

NARRATOR: Twelve hours after the initial police raid, Governor George Romney called in the Michigan National Guard. Seven thousand guardsmen began arriving as night fell. Most were young, white and heavily armed. They had little or no training in riot control. One hundred city blocks were in turmoil.

ELEANOR JOSAITIS: It looked like a war torn zone. That's all you could think of, was my God, this is 20 miles from where I live and it's -- They dropped a bomb. That was what you saw on television and what you heard in the community was, "Why are they doing this? Why are they doing this?"

REV. ALBERT CLEAGE: This is a racial incident, it represents a racial rebellion that goes from coast to coast. In the city of Detroit, it represents one simple thing: black people want control of black communities.

NARRATOR: Despite a nine p.m. curfew, thousands of people were on the streets.

EDWARD VAUGHN: A hardware store was being looted by a lot of people, apparently people who lived in that community. And a carload of brothers rolled up and they asked everyone, had they gotten enough and did they need anything else? And people finally said no after they had gotten what they wanted, and so these brothers said, fine. And so they got everybody out of the store and they fire bombed it and they left. They didn't take anything themselves.

HERB BOYD: The cry in the air was "Let's burn this place down, let's torch it. This sucker was always ripping us off anyway. You know, they never hired many black people," so it's kind of anger and frustration was in the wind.

NARRATOR: Protected by police and guardsmen, fire fighters faced an onslaught of rocks and debris. Reports of gunfire increased through the night. Police suspected snipers.

WOMAN: I could smell smoke. Those people's houses across the street are on fire. I don't see nobody -- Everybody on that block's got along fine. I don't know nobody in that block, the children even now, they play nice together. I don't see why this has to happen.

JOHN NICHOLS: There were fires going on, there was a great deal of excitement, street lights were being shot out by the police. There was a great deal of noise, great deal of confusion. Nobody knew where their parent organizations were. The entire situation was one of semi controlled chaos. Everybody was uptight, very uptight.

GRANT FRILEY: I was afraid of being shot by a National Guardsman, I was afraid of being shot by police officers, and I was afraid of being shot by looters and rioters. I was afraid of being shot, period.

NARRATOR: In an atmosphere fed by rumors and fear, everyone was at risk.

ALBERT WILSON: Going into the five and ten cent store, you didn't know what danger you were in, and I hear this officer say, police officer say, "All you black mother fuckers come out from the back there." Well, I immediately get up and come to the door, as you know, head for the door, the archway of the door, to do what he says. When I'm told, I hear a voice, one of my neighbors, I knew it was her voice. And she told me, "Don't go out there, come back, come back." And at that time, I went to turn to go back and get there next to her behind this bolting of carpeting, and I just remember seeing a flash of light at that time and going back there to lay down on a bolt and to wake up, I guess, a couple of days later and to hear a doctor tell my mother that the bullet had injured my spine and I probably wouldn't walk again.

NARRATOR: By Monday morning, hundreds had been injured. Six people were dead, four had been shot, two others died in fires.

ARTHUR JOHNSON: The growing sense of concern in the community was that the situation was out of hand. That no one knew where it was going, when it would end, or even how to end it.

GOV. GEORGE ROMNEY: As Governor of the State of Michigan, I do hereby officially recommend the immediate deployment of federal troops into Michigan to assist state and local authorities to reestablish --

NARRATOR: During the night, Governor Romney had called U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark to recommend that President Johnson send federal troops.

GOV. GEORGE ROMNEY: And he indicated that we would get federal assistance, that the troops would be made available. Then he called us back several hours later to indicate that he'd have to have a written statement indicating that the riot was completely beyond our ability to control. Well, the difficulty of that was is that it would have nullified all of the insurance policies over the whole area. And furthermore, we didn't know with certainty we couldn't control it. We felt we might not be able to, so I indicated that to him.

ROGER WILKINS: Finally, they reached a compromise and Johnson decided that a number of us would go to Detroit. And he started telling us and occasionally he could be on the phone to Ft. Bragg to the general in charge of the 2nd Airborne. And one thing he kept saying, "I don't want bullets in those guns. I don't want our troops to have bullets in those guns." And he went on and on and he just got himself all worked up. And he said, "I don't want anybody to say that my troops shot a pregnant ni --" And he looked at me, and his face went red and then he finished his sentence without finishing that word. And as -- He then sent us out to go and pack and then go to Andrews Air Force Base.

NARRATOR: Forty-seven hundred paratroopers from the 101st and 82nd Airborne divisions began arriving Monday afternoon. Soldiers from these same units had been sent to protect black school children in Little Rock in 1957, and James Meredith at Old Miss in 1962. At the President's order, they would not be deployed in Detroit unless absolutely necessary. Johnson's envoys assessed the situation.

CYRUS VANCE: The mass national guard had been very spotty. There was much too much indiscriminate shooting. They had shot out the street lights, which is the worst thing you can do in a situation like that because that makes it even more likely that the law enforcement people are going to be shot at. It creates a fear in the community, it creates fear, really, in the enforcement officials as well. So that it was not going well when we arrived.

NARRATOR: Looting and burning had continued into the second day. Firefighters from over 35 communities were on the streets. Police arrested 3,900 people by Monday night. There was no end in sight.

GRANT FRILEY: I was totally wiped out. It got to a point where I had to watch out for my temper. It got to a point where those persons who were yelling and screaming about down with the whitey and all of that, I was looking into his eyes and wanting to knock the hell out of him because he didn't know what the hell he was talking about.

HOWARD HOLLAND: I got a chance to sneak a phone call home one night just to let my parents know I was all right, because it had been three or four days since I had let them know what was going on. And my mother expressed a thought, and I guess it stuck in my mind ever since. Said, "Here I have one son in Vietnam in a combat zone, and now I'm worried about you in our own hometown. You know, downtown Detroit."

NARRATOR: At 11:20 Monday night, President Johnson sent the federal troops into Detroit. They were ordered to carry unloaded weapons. At least 19 people had died since the raid on the blind pig.

REPORTER: Sergeant, you've just recently returned from Vietnam. Could you tell us how it feels to have to come from one zone of combat in a foreign land to one in your own land?

SERGEANT: Not a good feeling, not one I'm kind of proud of, but it's a job, it's a duty that has to be done.

SECOND PARATROOPER: And it's something different.

REPORTER: Did you ever expect this kind of call when you joined the service?

SECOND PARATROOPER: I expected calls, but it kind of surprised me when I got there that morning. They said, "Fall out with all this gear, you're going." And I said, "Where?"

HERB BOYD: Clearly, the presence of a large number of National Guardsmen and federal troops, along with a bolstered police department, they had that armed presence out there, so the looting was all over. The curfew had been put into effect.

NARRATOR: In total, there were 17,000 law enforcement people in Detroit. The disorder was three days old. Much of the looting and burning had ended. But exhausted and still heavily armed, National Guardsmen and state and local police continued their patrols.

ROGER WILKINS: One night, a black coworker and I were driving up Grand River, which is a major artery in Detroit. And we're about to turn left onto Joy Road when all of a sudden we realized that this convoy of state police cars had made a U-turn and were pulling us over. So I came out of the car with my hands up, and what I saw was -- I was circled by people with long guns and pistols and they were all pointing at me and they were all nervous people and they were all white. And I'm a black guy and I'm a high government official, but I was a nigger, a nigger in white America and I thought at that moment I was going to be dead. Thirty-five years old and dead at the corner of Joy Road and Grand River.

NARRATOR: Within days, police arrested 7,200 people. Most were young, black men.

JOHN CONYERS: The police stations were all overrun and the jails were filled, so they just created detention centers. So people were calling up, reporting what the police were doing or did, or reporting missing people. People wanting to file complaints, fear, anger, it was -- Could this be happening in America?

NARRATOR: At least two people died when National Guardsmen, fearing snipers, sprayed buildings with gun fire.

WOMAN: It sounded like we were in Vietnam or something, all this excitement and boy, I was panicked and I told my husband about it and then he says, "Get on that floor," and I got on the floor. And then we went in this woman's apartment and then the voice, the cops says to come outside, put your hands on your head.

RON SCOTT: And I opened the door and there are about four or five National Guardsmen, all young, all white, looking around with rifles and bayonets. And this one guy, he said, "We heard some shooting here." And everybody who had been shot up to this point that we heard about, they all said that they had a gun. And that they were shooting at the police, that became the line. This guy was a sniper, he was shooting at the police. And I knew that if I was shot, if my family was shot, that they could have closed the door in this apartment and nobody would have ever known what happened.

NARRATOR: As the nightmare in Detroit began to end, the press uncovered a story about three young black men killed during a police raid at the Algiers Motel. Murder charges were brought against a white police officer. Two other officers and a black security guard were also implicated. There were no convictions.

Five days after the raid on the blind pig, Detroit had reached a tentative peace. Forty-three people were dead, 33 were black. Insurance estimates of property loss neared \$50 million. The uprising in Detroit marked the fifth year of civil unrest in America, the nation and its President struggled for answers.

PRES. LYNDON B. JOHNSON: The civil peace has been shattered in a number of cities. The American people are deeply disturbed. No society can tolerate massive violence any more than a body can tolerate massive disease. And we in America shall not tolerate it. But just saying that does not solve the problem. We need to know the answer, I think, to three basic questions about these riots. What happened? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again and again?

NARRATOR: The President appointed an advisory commission to investigate. On March 1st, 1968, the Kerner Commission published a report that said America was becoming two societies, black and white, separate and unequal. It urged the nation to tear down racial barriers to opportunity and education, employment, housing, government, and the media. It stated, "The need is not so much for government to design new programs as it is for the nation to generate new will."

ROGER WILKINS: It was a mandate, had the President chosen to take it and say, "By God, we didn't know how serious the problem was. There is racism in this society and it is deep. And since I have said that I am going to be the President who finishes

what Lincoln started," he could have used that as a springboard for more social action. Instead, he refused even to have the commission come over and present it to him.

NARRATOR: President Johnson was faced with the cost of an escalating war in Vietnam and growing political conservatism at home.

ELEANOR JOSAITIS: There began to be a feeling that '68 was going to be a very hot summer. So the talk in the neighborhood was we have to stock our basement with food, that's the first thing we have to do. We must go over to Dearborn and take pistol practice lessons. When do we want to sign up for the vigilante? When do you want to go and stand at the overpass on Telegraph Road and wait for all the black folks to come out from the city and riot in our community? And there was so much fear that that was going to take place, that it was going to come and we better be prepared for it.

AL CLEAGE: Black people are not worried about white people in the suburbs. What we're trying to do is to control our own community, build our own black community and make it beautiful. Self determination as a concept for black people is a part of the rebellion. It's a black revolution sweeping America and self determination is the expression. That's what we want, that's what we're rebelling for. Oppression doesn't destroy people. The acceptance of oppression destroys any people.