

### **The Promised Land (1967-1968)**

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** We read one day, we hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But if a man doesn't have a job or an income, he has neither life nor liberty. And the possibility for the pursuit of happiness, he merely exists.

Bombs in Vietnam explode at home. They destroyed the dream and possibility for a decent America. It is estimated that we spend \$322,000 for each enemy we kill in Vietnam while we spend in the so-called war on poverty in America only about \$53 for each person classified as poor.

**NARRATOR:** By 1967, America was deeply entrenched in Vietnam. War overseas, poverty at home. For Martin Luther King, the issues were inseparable, but he saw that publicly opposing this war would involve great risks. He would risk the alliance between the movement and the government. He would risk his standing as a national leader. He would risk being called a traitor. Some in the movement had already taken those risks. They urged King to join them.

**STOKELY CARMICHAEL:** He called me in Atlanta, he said, "What you doing?" I said, "Tomorrow's Sunday." He said, "You going to be a good Christian and go to church?" I said, well, like a good heathen, I'm going to work for the people. I got all this paperwork, I've been working since 6:00 in the morning." He said, "Well, I want you to come to church." I said, "Come to church, where?" He said, "The Ebenezer." I said, "What's happening there?" He said, "I'm preaching." I said, "Well, you know, I can always come hear you preaching because even though I don't believe in your stuff, you make me tap my feet." You know, we joked. And he said, "Well, I really want you to come tomorrow." I said, "Okay, I'll come." He said, "Because tomorrow I'm going to make my statement against the war in Vietnam." And I think between us, there must have been 35 seconds of silence. And then I said to him, "I'm going to be on the front seat of your church."

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** They seem to forget that before I was a civil rights leader, I answered the call, which left the spirit of the Lord upon me and anointed me to preach the gospel. And during the early days of my ministry, I read the Apostle Paul saying, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." And I decided then that I was going to tell the truth as God revealed it to me. I don't know about you, I ain't going to study war no more.

**NARRATOR:** President Lyndon Johnson had fought for strong civil rights legislation. In 1964, his administration had declared an unprecedented war on poverty, but Vietnam had undermined that commitment and put Johnson and King on a collision course.

**MICHAEL HARRINGTON:** He knew that if he made the statement of hostility to the war, that he was breaking his ties with Lyndon Johnson, that he would no longer be welcome in the White House. Johnson didn't in this period let people do that. He decided that he had to do it.

**NARRATOR:** April 4th, 1967, New York City, Riverside Church. King had spoken out on the war before, but now in front of the national media, he broke publicly with Johnson.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** I come to this magnificent house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice. A time comes when silence is betrayal, and that time has come for us in relation to Vietnam.

**ANDREW YOUNG:** Martin gave a brilliant rationale for his position on the war in Vietnam. And as a Nobel Prize winner, we expected people to take it seriously and not to agree with it, but to disagree with certain specifics. We didn't get that. We got, instead, an emotional outburst attacking his right to have an opinion. It was almost, you know, "Nigger, you ought to stay in your place."

**BARRY GOLDWATER:** I can't believe that they're going to pay any attention to Martin Luther King, but don't brush this aside. Martin Luther King is a power in this country, and unfortunately he has of now has gotten into bed with some of these lesser likes.

**EDWARD BROOKE:** My objection to what Dr. King has done and as I said, I don't question his motives, I question his judgment, in that in tying the Vietnam War into the civil rights movement that he is doing irreparable harm to the civil rights movement. He is losing thousands and thousands of allies.

**NARRATOR:** The most powerful ally had been President Johnson.

**HARRY MCPHERSON:** Johnson was bitterly disappointed with King's opposition to the war and he was being told by Hoover that King had lots of pro-communist friends who were advising him.

**NARRATOR:** The FBI worked to discredit King and continued its surveillance of him and his associates.

**ANDREW YOUNG:** We knew that everything we were doing during this period was being monitored. We weren't always sure who.

**HARRY BELAFONTE:** We talked about that constantly, so that there were times when we spoke to one another from safe phones, given what the nature of the information was and where we would be. Find a safe phone, give me the number, I'll go to a safe phone and call you.

**NARRATOR:** With his opposition now public, contributions to King's organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, dropped sharply.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** The promises of the great society have been shot down on the battlefields of Vietnam, making the poor, white and Negro, bear the heaviest burden both at the front and at home.

**MARIAN LOGAN:** You know, it wasn't a thing he had to do, I think it was a not a political thing. As it turned out, I think it was kind of like a death knell for him. But it was a very brave thing for him to do because he went against all the people, you know, who we considered reasonable.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** Others can do what they want to do, that's their business. If other civil rights leaders for various reasons refuse or can't take a stand or have to go along with the administration, that's their business. But I'm afraid tonight that I know that justice is indivisible, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

**NARRATOR:** As war raged in Vietnam, the government's war on poverty suffered. In 1967, one in every seven Americans lived below the poverty line. The question was how to regain the nation's attention.

**MRS. WILSON:** I felt like the lowest thing on earth when I went to welfare. I felt like they were all better than me, that they could walk all over me. Which I got down on my hands and knees to them and thanked them for coats and boots for these children at wintertime.

**NARRATOR:** King was searching for national solutions. Groups were organizing at the grassroots level. The issues were jobs, welfare, the price of food.

**WOMAN:** We're trying to get everybody to stick together, one person just don't have to fight for their self, all of us fighting for each other.

**NARRATOR:** In the South, poverty was even more widespread. Field hands earned as little as \$3 a day. Civil rights activists looked for answers. A Senate committee was invited to Mississippi by a colleague of King's, Marian Wright.

**MARIAN WRIGHT:** They're starving, they're starving and those who can get the bus fare to go north are trying to go north. But there's absolutely nothing for them to do, there's nowhere to go, and somebody must begin to respond to them.

**ROBERT KENNEDY:** We would think that all of us would be able to provide for some of our citizens living in this part of the country.

**MARIAN WRIGHT:** I tried to bring the senators down to Mississippi because I was trying to figure our ways of getting the country to see. I mean, we were having major problems with hunger, even starvation. There were people in Mississippi who had no income.

**NARRATOR:** The next day, Senator Kennedy and Marian Wright toured the Mississippi delta.

**MARIAN WRIGHT:** We would just go from house to house and go in and talk to the people. These were very rural, very poor people and walked through the house, talked to the inhabitants, go in the kitchen, look in the refrigerator, ask them what they ate the night before. And usually you would find awfully bare cupboards when you opened them.

**ROBERT KENNEDY:** What did you have for lunch?

**CHILD:** We haven't had lunch yet.

**ROBERT KENNEDY:** You haven't had lunch yet?

**CHILD:** No.

**ROBERT KENNEDY:** If you're doing reasonably well, you don't run up against this kind of poverty. And certainly people elsewhere in the country have very little personal knowledge or information about it.

**NARRATOR:** The need for solutions grew more pressing. After three summers of urban violence, many feared a national confrontation between blacks and whites. In the summer of 1967, there were riots in 180 cities. Eighty people died.

**H. RAP BROWN:** We stand on the eve of a black revolution, brothers. Masses of our people are in the streets, they're fighting tit for tat, tooth for tooth. An eye for an eye, and a life for a life. The rebellions that we seek are merely dress rehearsals for the revolution that's to come.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** The riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it that America has failed to hear? It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met, and it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice, equality and humanity.

**NARRATOR:** Events were driving King toward more radical solutions. Some proposed marching the poor to the nation's capitol to force government action on the problems of poverty. In August, Marion Wright took the idea of a poor people's march on Washington to her friend, Martin King.

**MARIAN WRIGHT:** He immediately understood that it was right, and then we chatted a bit about how it would be done. But there was never any discussion about whether that was the right thing to do.

**CORETTA SCOTT KING:** So when he came home that evening, he was real excited, you know, about this idea of a poor people's campaign starting in Marks, Mississippi, with a mule train and going all the way to Washington, DC, picking up people along the way.

**NARRATOR:** The campaign would recruit among all races, bring them to Washington, commit massive civil disobedience, force the government to respond, a nonviolent army of the poor.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.:** Very frankly, this is a search for an alternative to riots. And if the nation doesn't respond to us as we labor there two or three months, however long it takes, God only knows what we will face in terms of chaos. This is a kind of last, desperate demand for the nation to respond to nonviolence.

**MICHAEL HARRINGTON:** Part of his genius was to understand that you could not have a movement simply based on promises of the future, that you had to deliver. And he had delivered on voting rights, he had delivered on public accommodations, he had delivered on the Montgomery bus boycott and on so many other things. And he understood now above all was the time to deliver.

**NARRATOR:** SCLC staff meeting, the Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta.

**YOUNG WOMAN:** Listen, I want this movement to work and I don't want -- I want to cut down --

**NARRATOR:** King's closest aides were unsure about the poor people's campaign. What could it accomplish? Could they mobilize a nationwide movement? Was King's nonviolence perceived as being too conservative?

**HOSEA WILLIAMS:** This is why I say the most radical guy living in the 20th century was Martin Luther King, Jr., it took a radical cat. Let me say my thing and then I'll listen here. The most radical cat alive in the 20th century was Martin Luther King, Jr. It took a radical cat to put 50,000 black people in Alabama on buses.

**AL SAMPSON:** The question as I understood it was not the fact that Dr. King didn't do anything, wasn't the issue. The issue was if we're going to take people on a go for broke, what are we going to be able to return back to Mississippi with in our hands? What are we going to be able to return back to Chicago with in our hands? And what Carlos, as I understood was saying, if we're not, then let's just say we're not going to do that and then he'll know, and if we are, then we are.

**ANDREW YOUNG:** Can I speak for myself, because -- No --

**CARLOS RUSSELL:** This is not nonsense, okay? This is the thing that comes to the man, and then you don't come back with the demands, you're in trouble.

**ANDREW YOUNG:** I don't think we can give anybody any guarantees. But we reached a point where we're almost are where the Jews are when Hitler took power. That are you going to sit by and wait until you're put in a concentration camp, or are you going to organize and fight? Now, I don't know whether we're going to win or lose or draw, or what we're going to bring back, but I'm not going to sit by and let the liberal wing or the progressive forces in the Negro community get chopped up. I'm going to fight, and if we -

Martin usually could bring us together, but he always let us fight it out for ourselves for a long time. And the only time he really got mad with me was when I wouldn't disagree with everybody. He sort of expected me to be the conservative one and because a movement needed wild ideas and radical notions. But it also needed to be pulled back into perspective, to do something that was actually doable and attainable. And I got tired of being the, you know, the reactionary. So I just said, "That's right, that's right, that's exactly what we ought to do." And he jumped up and got mad and he said, "Andy, if you don't express" -- He said, "If you don't, you know, end up giving the conservative view, you don't leave me any room to come down in the middle."

Now, some folks celebrate Abraham Lincoln, but we're going to celebrate Martin Luther King's day today. Don't let him out of here. (singing Happy Birthday)

**XERNONA CLAYTON:** We know how fond you are of our President Lyndon Johnson, and we know how you're supporting everything. I got this little cup for you and I want to say it, because it's nice. And let me read it, it says, "We are cooperating with Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty. Drop coins and bills in the cup."

**NARRATOR:** Martin Luther King was 39 years old. King began to recruit volunteers and raise money for the new campaign, scheduled to start in less than two months.

**WILLIAM RUTHERFORD:** We organized the poor people's campaign by putting out what is known in the movement as a call, a call to worship, a call to participate, a call for camaraderie and so on. Whoever hears your call will respond. When I call you, it means I need you and you will come.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** The other thing I want you to understand is this. That it didn't cost the nation one penny to integrate lunch counters. It didn't cost the nation one penny to guarantee the right to vote. But now we are dealing with issues that cannot be solved without the nation spending billions of dollars and undergoing a radical redistribution of economic power.

**NARRATOR:** Back in Atlanta, in his pastors study, King and his aids prepared for a long-term campaign.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** But I felt throughout the campaign, we ought to -- It ought to be a continuing, massive lobby-in. Now, not just one day, every time people come in that town, they are to go straight to Capitol Hill, to the departments of government, Justice Department, Department of Commerce, Health, Wealth and Education. They just going day in and day out.

**HOSEA WILLIAMS:** You go and ask Johnson for what we really want, you got as much chance of getting it as flying from the top of this house.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** I think we got to pit the president against the Congress. I don't think we ought to make this an anti-Lyndon Johnson battle. I really think that we ought to leave Lyndon alone and go on and throw attention on the Congress and have Lyndon in the position where he'll almost be forced to support us.

**NARRATOR:** At that moment, Johnson's attention was elsewhere. He was running for reelection and the war in Vietnam was taking a decisive turn. The enemy's Tet offensive destroyed U.S. illusions that the end of the war was in sight.

Johnson's popularity plummeted. Johnson almost lost the New Hampshire Presidential primary to anti-war candidate, Eugene McCarthy. Four days later, Robert Kennedy entered the race.

George Wallace, who had built his political career by defending racial segregation in the south, was gaining support up north for his own third party candidacy. In the national political turmoil, few were paying attention to a labor conflict in Tennessee. Memphis, Tennessee, a bitter strike of black garbage workers echoed the issues of the poor people's campaign, the same issues King planned to bring to Washington.

**TAYLOR ROGERS:** And I have seven kids in school, trying to educate my kids, trying to buy a home. It was just -- It was really rough. But I know that something had to happen, that we couldn't continue on making \$1.04 an hour.

**NARRATOR:** The city refused to recognize the local sanitation workers union. In late January, the union accused the city of racial bias. Days later, two black workers were accidentally killed on the job. Their families were not entitled to compensation. The workers decided they had had enough.

**TAYLOR ROGERS:** So we decided we were going to be men, stand up and be men, and that's what we did. Thirteen hundred men decided that they were tired and wasn't going to take it anymore.

**HENRY LOEB:** I say to you, and I was with you for four years and you know me, that when I tell you something you can believe it. We are working -

**JERRED BLANCHARD:** Mayor Loeb's attitude towards the strikers was that of a father whose children had gone astray. He simply didn't understand that instead of a garbage strike he had a racial problem and he never did understand that.

**NARRATOR:** The mayor refused to negotiate with the union. Eleven days into the strike, the city's black leaders marched with the workers.

**JAMES SMITH:** The march went fine for two or three blocks. But as we approached Madison Street, I think, the policemen began to come in and to move us over further and further to the curb.

**NARRATOR:** Tempers flared, police moved in with nightsticks and mace.

**JAMES SMITH:** And that was the turning point. If they would fire upon us, they would fire upon anybody. Nobody was safe in Memphis.

**NARRATOR:** The strike entered its second month. Strike leader James Lawson asked his friend, Martin Luther King, to come to Memphis.

**ANDREW YOUNG:** The staff was really disturbed that Martin would even consider going to Memphis. We were trying to organize poor whites, Hispanics, southern blacks, northern blacks. I mean, there was just a tremendous organizing job, and I didn't know how you could take on anything else. And he said, "Well, Jim Lawson has been around for so long and here are garbage workers on strike. He just wants me to come in and make a speech and then lead a march in the morning, and I'll be right back."

**JERRED BLANCHARD:** The attitude of the white community was one of dread, there's no other way to describe it. Please bear in mind that all of us who could read knew about Watts and Newark and Detroit and all of the troubles that we had in our big city ghettos, and we knew about the march in Selma, Alabama and Mrs. Montgomery and -- Or Rosa Parks in Montgomery, excuse me. All these things we knew, and somehow or other, the name of Martin Luther King, Jr., was associated with deep trouble. And Memphis dreaded his approach.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** All labor has dignity. But you are doing another thing, you are reminding not only Memphis but you are reminding the nation that it is a crime for people to live in this rich nation and receive starvation wages.

**NARRATOR:** King's poor people's campaign was scheduled to start in less than a month, but he promised to return to Memphis. The next morning, in Mississippi, he resumed his recruiting.

**JAMES FIGGS:** We were very excited about this poor people campaign that he spoke about. First time that the concentration had been on poor peoples and their living conditions, and we wanted to be a part of that. That's what we had been working toward. We felt through voter registration that political power would bring economic power. Then we were able to turn people out to hear him that had never been to a mass meeting before.

**MRS. BARNES:** There's just so many of us running that don't have -- Children don't have shoes, clothes, to go around. They's naked and hungry. Most times you have to cook your children pinto beans morning dinner and supper. They don't know what it is to get a good meal. We go to work in Miss Ann's house for \$2 a day. If you don't want to do that, she tell us, "Well, you got to move."

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** I want some of you all to go to Washington with us, even if you have to bring your whole family, we are going to have in Washington facilities and we're going to have food and we are going to demand that the government do something about these conditions. Rick, tell those ... (inaudible) to rush off.

**NARRATOR:** Despite King's personal popularity, SCLC had trouble recruiting people. As he traveled north, King met more indifference.

**OLD MAN:** March on down to Washington.

**YOUNG MAN:** The south is a different place than New York.

**ANDREW YOUNG:** Well, that's true.

**YOUNG MAN:** You can't tell a young kid today that lives in Harlem that nonviolence, you can't get through to them about nonviolence today. You have to have some type of approach with them, and I say that Dr. King's approach is a little outdated for Harlem, for Bedford Stuyvesant, any part of New York.

**NARRATOR:** King's nonviolent approach would be directly challenged when he returned to Memphis. On the morning of March 28th, a tense and restless crowd waited two hours before King arrived. The strike was in its 7th week. Some younger supporters had grown impatient with the strike leaders.

**BILL LUCY:** While we were marching, I was about in the first one-third of the march as I could tell at that point. And we began to hear windows breaking, we began to hear, you know, loud -- I mean, he's in there among the marchers. And then we began to see individuals who were stepping out of the march and throwing things.

**TAYLOR ROGERS:** And all the glass started breaking and the noise and the police cars were running, the sirens and everybody was all confused and just running over each other.

**NARRATOR:** Fearing for King's safety, his aids commandeered a passing car and drove him to a nearby hotel. It was the first time King had led marchers who had turned to violence. Secluded for the night, he braced himself for criticism. If he couldn't control a single march in Memphis, how could he control a mass movement of poor people in the nation's capital? The FBI, monitoring King in Memphis, used its press contacts to create doubt about the upcoming campaign in Washington. The strike continued. SCLC staffers worked to insure nonviolence at the next march. A distraught King and his closest aide, Ralph Abernathy, left for Atlanta.

**CORETTA SCOTT KING:** That evening, we went to the Abernathys' for dinner and we spent the evening at their home. And Martin, of course, liked to eat and Mrs. Abernathy had some of his favorite food, and even homemade ice cream.

**JUANITA ABERNATHY:** And we did not talk about Memphis. The news came on, and whenever there was a flash on TV about it, he got very quiet and he was really, really sort of depressed. And I think he was more depressed that night, I believe, than I'd ever seen him because the violence really got to him.

**NARRATOR:** Visibly exhausted, King continued his campaign for the poor. Sunday, March 31st, he spoke at the National Cathedral in Washington.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** This is America's opportunity to help bridge the gulf between the haves and the have-nots. And the question is whether America will do it. There's nothing new about poverty. What is new is we now have the techniques and the resources to get rid of poverty. The real question is whether we have the will.

**NARRATOR:** On April 3rd, King returned to Memphis to prove that nonviolence could work. SCLC planned to challenge a court injunction blocking the next march. King hoped to avoid speaking at that night's rally and to rest instead at the Lorraine Motel.

**RALPH ABERNATHY:** There was a tornado warning in Memphis that evening, and it was raining, raining and wind was blowing everywhere. I believe a little tornado came to Memphis also. And he knew that there would not be a big crowd and he said to me in the meeting with the staff, "Ralph, I want you to go and speak this evening at the mass meeting."

**CORETTA SCOTT KING:** And he didn't want to go to that meeting that night. He said he had sent Brother Abernathy over and he said because "I just didn't feel like going, but it's thundering and lightning here, we have a thunderstorm taking place," he said. "But you know, Ralph has just called and said that I needed to come over and said the people were waiting for me and they really didn't want anybody else to speak but me." So he said, "I guess I'll go on over there, I'll call you later." He said, "I'll call you tomorrow night."

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** All we say to America is be true to what you said on paper. If I lived in China or even Russia or even any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand some of these illegal injunctions. Maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges because they haven'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 press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for rights.

And so just as I say we aren't going to let any dogs or water hoses turn us around, we aren't going to let any injunction turn us around. Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountain top. 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 has 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.

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

**ANDREW YOUNG:** The next day, I was in the federal court. We got the injunction thrown out and we got our permission to march. And I guess about 4:30 or 5:00, I came back to the Lorraine Motel and I found Martin and A. D. and Ralph and everybody gathered there. And they'd been eating and had lunch and were talking and clowning. And when I came in, Martin just grabbed me and threw me down on the bed and started beating me with a pillow. I mean, he was like a big kid. And he was fussing because I hadn't reported to him and I tried to tell him I was on the witness stand here in the federal court and he was, you know, just standing on the bed swinging the pillow at me and I'm trying to duck with him saying, "You have to let me know what's going on." And finally, I snatched a pillow and started swinging back and everybody -- It was sort of like the -- You know, after you make a touchdown and everybody piles on everybody. It was just -- I mean, people just started throwing pillows and piling on top of everybody and laughing and going on.

And then he stopped and said, "Let's go -" You know, we do a dinner at six. And it was at that time about 6:00. And he went on up to his room to put on a shirt and tie. And Martin came out and asked, "You think I need a coat?" And we said, "Yeah, it's pretty cool and you've had a cold, you better go back and get a coat." And he said, "I don't know whether I need a coat." You know, the next thing we know, a shot -- Well, I thought it was a car backfiring or a firecracker.

**RALPH ABERNATHY:** And I jumped, naturally, and I turned and saw only his feet and I ran to him and took his head into my hand and began to pat his cheek and said, "Martin, this is Ralph, this is Ralph, this is Ralph. It will be all right. Everything is going to be all right. Everything is going to be all right, Martin."

**NARRATOR:** An hour after he was shot, Martin Luther King, Jr., died. That night, America's cities exploded.

**ANGRY WOMAN:** It's too late now. We're ready to start, and we're gonna finish it up!

**SAD WOMAN:** I don't think Americans should mourn Martin Luther King, I think they should mourn themselves.

**MARIAN LOGAN:** We didn't know where we were going, everything was in a state of flux. And our leader was gone and we felt a great void and a terrible, sick emptiness. And I think we all felt we just had to do something that we hoped would be meaningful.

**NARRATOR:** SCLC was in shock, but committed itself to carry out King's campaign. From Mississippi, from New Mexico, from New York, thousands set out for Washington. Five weeks after King's death, his poor people's campaign reached the nation's capitol. Five years after the March on Washington, his movement built a city on the same ground.

**RALPH ABERNATHY:** I declare this be the site of our new city, Resurrection City, USA.

**BILL RUTHERFORD:** The purpose and the goal of the poor people's campaign was to focus the attention of the nation and the world on poverty. The tactic being used was to gather the poorest of the poor in the nation's capitol in the heart of the wealthiest country in the world to camp them, these homeless, hungry people, in the heart of the city and its fabulous mall situated between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Memorial.

**JAMES FIGGS:** When we got to Resurrection City, and quite frankly we were scared as hell. Being in Washington, DC and being out on the U.S. government turf, you couldn't help but think that if something happened, Dr. King is not here.

**BLACK WOMAN:** I'm doing much better than I was doing in Mississippi and I'm going to stay here if it's His will until I receive what I came for.

**NARRATOR:** In the first week, the poor people dramatized their demands through direct action.

**JESSE JACKSON:** We had to march for some food, so we decided to march to the Agriculture Department because we were putting focus on feeding and nutrition. So we went and grouped food and Agriculture Department.

He got more than he can eat, sitting up there grinning while people are starving. Now, this is America that Mr. Freeman knows, but this is not the America Mrs. Brooks knows. Or four million other people.

**DANIEL SCHORR:** He took them down to the cafeteria, they picked up trays. And when they'd all gone through the line, Jackson took them back up on -- And he announced to everybody, "Okay," he said, "This government owes us a lot and they've just began to pay a little bit of it with this lunch."

**JESSE JACKSON:** To remain disciplined and not disturb this operation.

**NARRATOR:** Having made his point, SCLC later paid the bill.

**JESSE JACKSON:** I am somebody. I may be uneducated, but I am somebody. I may be unemployed, but I am somebody. I may not have a job --

**NARRATOR:** Running a city consumed SCLC, no time to plan, no clear agenda, no new government program. And then it began to rain.

**ANDREW YOUNG:** Oh, it rained and rained and rained like, you know, all night Georgia rain. And the place where we had built it ended up being like a six inch mud puddle. I mean, I was constantly in the mud.

**NARRATOR:** Press coverage of the mud and discontent overshadowed the issue of poverty in America. Three thousand miles away, Robert Kennedy, one of the poor people's strongest allies, campaigned for the Democratic presidential nomination with strong support from black and Hispanic voters.

**ROBERT KENNEDY:** I don't think any of us can be satisfied in the United States until that war is brought to an honorable end and American soldiers are brought back here to the United States of America.

**NARRATOR:** On the night of June 4th, Kennedy won a major victory in the California primary.

**ROBERT KENNEDY:** My thanks to all of you and now on to Chicago and let's win there.

**NARRATOR:** Moments later, Kennedy was shot. Four days after Kennedy's death, the train carrying his body made its way to Washington.

**ANDREW YOUNG:** Bobby Kennedy's assassination just brought everything to a halt. And I think we began to grieve about Martin in the context of Bobby Kennedy's assassination. Because Bobby Kennedy had been with us in Atlanta at Martin's funeral, and many of us began to see in him a hope for the future. We kind of transferred a little of our loyalty, a little of our trust and a little of our hope to him, and now he was gone, too.

**NARRATOR:** In recognition of the poor people's campaign, the funeral procession was scheduled to stop at Resurrection City.

**MARIAN LOGAN:** It started to rain, very light rainfall. At the foot of the Lincoln Memorial, there was a group of schoolchildren because they had on middy blouses and skirts, I remember, and they were singing "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Oh boy. And I looked and I saw the hearse coming along right in front of the foot of the Lincoln Memorial. People from Resurrection City started singing "Battle." I looked up and saw the pin spot on Lincoln's head and I thought that was the moon. And it stopped raining. As they marched over the bridge into Arlington, it was one of the most dramatic, profoundly moving moments I've ever known in my life. I'll never forget it.

**NARRATOR:** People began to leave. The few left in Resurrection City tried to keep the campaign alive. Some in Congress called to close the city down.

**BILL RUTHERFORD:** The last days of Resurrection City were like being in the camp of a defeated army. I think the spirit went out of people, there were people there who had no place to go, people who had come to Washington, come to Resurrection City with a great deal of hope, and who had none left. It was literally at the end of the major battle, the battle of the poor, and they'd lost.

**NARRATOR:** Just 81 days after King was killed, Resurrection City was shut down.

**MARIAN WRIGHT:** 1968 was an extraordinarily difficult year. We lost Martin, we lost Bobby, and for those of us who were determined to carry on the legacy of Martin, it was a time to regroup and rethink and get up and figure out new strategies, to build new paths towards the future, to deal with the issues of poverty and deal with the issues of race that were going to be ongoing, but clearly much more difficult.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR:** One day, we will have to stand before the God of history and we will talk in terms of things we've done. It seems as if I can hear the God of history saying, "That was not enough. For I was hungry, and you fed me not."