

Poverty Scholars Program Strategic Dialogue #1
Re-Igniting the Poor People's Campaign:
Finishing the Unfinished Business of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King
September 18-21, 2008

**THE HISTORY OF THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN:
THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.**
Friday, September 19th 10:00am – 12:00pm

Select Quotes from MLK

We are looking for 7 volunteers to read the quotes on the handout to the whole group. Please read them one after the other.

Reflecting on the quotes read from the handout, please comment on:

- the structural causes of poverty
- the new and global nature of poverty today
- the need for a social movement, the two types of leadership for a social movement
- the role of the poor as a new and unsettling force

Video clips and Discussion

We will watch about 10 minutes of the video selection and then have a 15 minute discussion following each video clip. Discussion questions for each video selection are listed below.

Part 1 – the Civil Rights Movement and Biography of MLK (until 12:31 on video)

- What lessons from the Montgomery Bus Boycott (use of carpooling, arrests, ways of getting national attention, etc) did you see in the video?
- How does the video portray the development of the strategy of non-violent direct action for the National Civil Rights Movement coming out of the Montgomery Bus Boycott?
- What is the signification of formation of SCLC and a trained core of leaders to the development of the Civil Rights Movement?

Part 2 – The Shift from Civil Rights to Human Rights (until 20:03 on video)

- How does MLK connect racism, the Vietnam war, and poverty or the “tripartite evils” in his Beyond Vietnam speech at the Riverside Church and his speeches in general starting in 1966/1967?
- How are MLK and the poor of this nation and world at the center of those “tripartite evils”?
- How and why does MLK allude to core value and rights?
- What is the role of Religion and the role of Media (including special attention on the backlash from the mainstream media) in the movement as shown in this video?
- What did you learn about the confrontation with Johnson and federal government, the critique for King and the new strategy that he's developing from this video?

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Part 3 – The Formation of the Poor People's Campaign (until 30:30 on video)

- How does MLK and the organizers of the Poor People's Campaign propose to bring together of different people and struggles into Poor People's Campaign?
- What do we learn from the community hearing/Truth Commission in Marks, MS at the start of the Poor People's Campaign? How does this related to our use of Poverty Truth Commissions today?
- What are some current equivalents of the Sanitation Workers struggle in Memphis, TN today? What were the goals of the Poor People's Campaign?
- What threat and to whom did MLK represent? What can learn about King's commitment from this video?

Part 4 – The Crucifixion of MLK (until 40:00 on video)

- What do you remember about MLK's last speech (especially reference to Battle Hymn of the Republic and connection with John Brown and Jesus Christ)?
- What is important about MLK's assassination?
- What happens with the Poor People's Campaign after King's death?

Summary and Quote from PPC Press Conference

Please read the MLK quote from Press Conference announcing the PPC where that talks about massive civil disobedience and King's strategic vision of the Poor People's Campaign. We will also highlight other key articles on MLK and Poor People's Campaign including: "Class Resurrection", "Speech at a Staff Retreat in Frogmore, SC", "The Drum Major Instinct", "Nonviolence and Social Change" as well as books including: Act of State by William Pepper and The Last Week by John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg

Discussion Questions:

- What is the unfinished business of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and the Poor People's Campaign?
- What never happened from his strategic vision of the Poor People's Campaign after his assassination?
- What we need to do now to Re-Ignite the Poor People's Campaign