

CITY OF HOPE

Resurrection City & The 1968 Poor People's Campaign



Woman between tents, Resurrection City, Washington, D.C., 1968

Robert Houston, born 1935

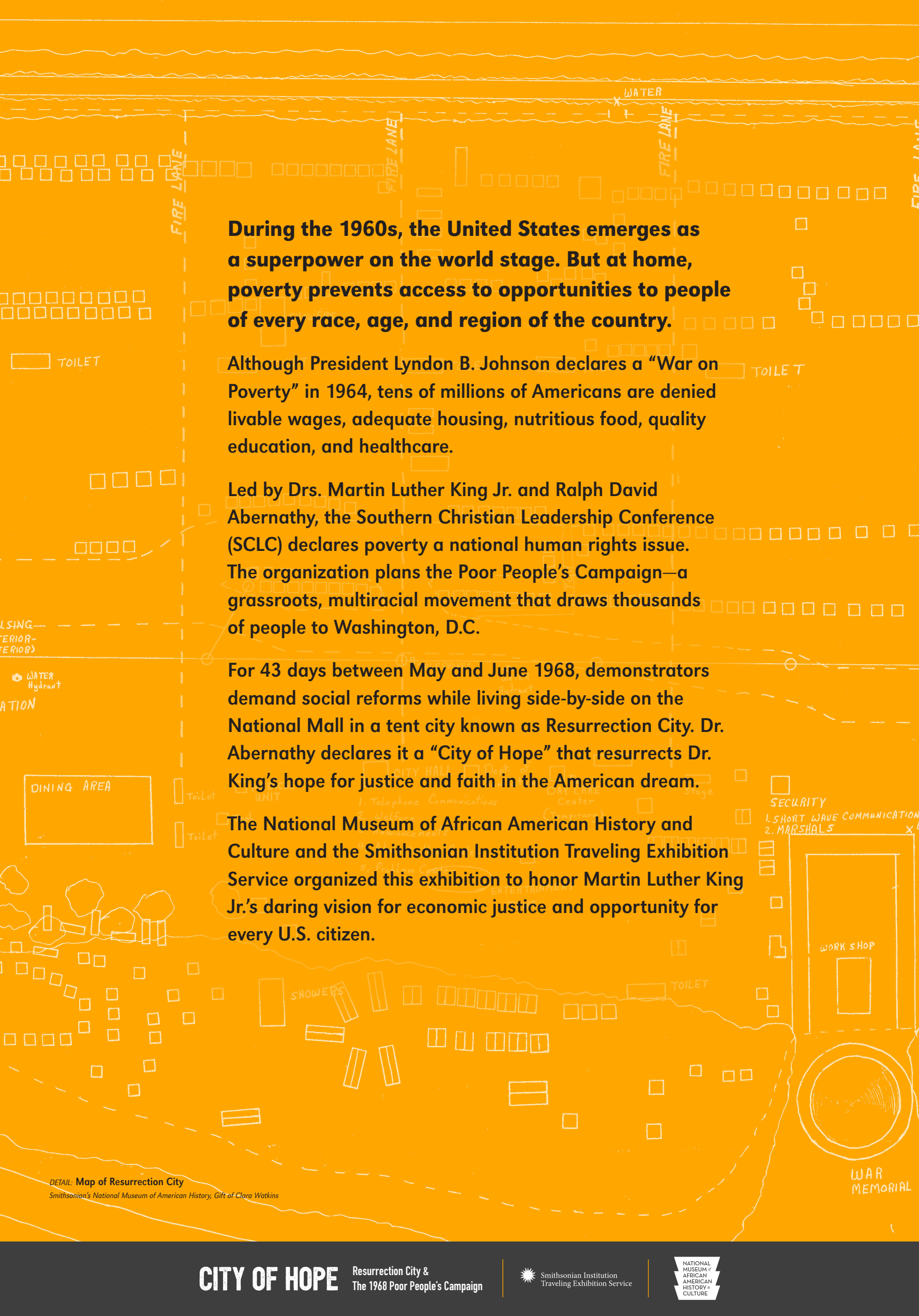
Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture,
Gift of Robert and Greta Houston, © Robert Houston



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service



Organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service in
collaboration with the National Museum of African American History and Culture



During the 1960s, the United States emerges as a superpower on the world stage. But at home, poverty prevents access to opportunities to people of every race, age, and region of the country.

Although President Lyndon B. Johnson declares a “War on Poverty” in 1964, tens of millions of Americans are denied livable wages, adequate housing, nutritious food, quality education, and healthcare.

Led by Drs. Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph David Abernathy, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) declares poverty a national human rights issue. The organization plans the Poor People’s Campaign—a grassroots, multiracial movement that draws thousands of people to Washington, D.C.

For 43 days between May and June 1968, demonstrators demand social reforms while living side-by-side on the National Mall in a tent city known as Resurrection City. Dr. Abernathy declares it a “City of Hope” that resurrects Dr. King’s hope for justice and faith in the American dream.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service organized this exhibition to honor Martin Luther King Jr.’s daring vision for economic justice and opportunity for every U.S. citizen.

DETAIL: Map of Resurrection City
Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History, Gift of Clara Watkins

POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN 1968



This will be no mere one-day march in Washington, but a trek to the nation's capital by suffering and outraged citizens who will go to stay until some definite and positive action is taken to provide jobs and income for the poor.

— Martin Luther King Jr., press conference announcing the Poor People's Campaign, December 4, 1967

Southern Christian Leadership Conference
Poor People's Campaign poster

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American
History and Culture, Gift of Susan J. Helms

MOBILIZING COMMUNITIES

RECRUITMENT

In December 1967, Dr. King leads a press conference to announce his crusade against poverty. Shortly after, the civil rights leader and the SCLC launch a "people-to-people" tour to carry their message for economic justice nationwide and recruit participants for the Poor People's Campaign. The multiracial movement attracts activists from diverse regions and communities to mark a new era in American history.



Poor People's Campaign button

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American
History and Culture, Gift of Linda and Artis Caso



We come from the ghettos of the cities and the plantations of the South, from Spanish-speaking communities of this nation, from Indian communities, from the hidden poverty in the hollows of Appalachia, from the hot fields of Florida, Texas and California. We challenge the nation to recognize our right to a decent life.

— “A Declaration by the Poor People’s Campaign for 1968 Americans”

- Western Caravan (Indian Trail)
- Western Caravan (San Francisco)
- Western Caravan (Los Angeles)
- Midwestern Caravan
- Freedom Train
- Mule Train
- Southern Caravan
- Eastern Caravan

MOBILIZING COMMUNITIES

THE CARAVANS

Campaign organizers reach out into local communities to arrange bus and car caravans to bring protesters to Washington, D.C. As a coordinated effort, each caravan stages rallies in cities along its route. The media coverage, public support, and new recruits combine to energize the movement. In total, the caravans cover more than 13,000 miles of travel.



A caravan bus from Newark, New Jersey, 1968
Robert Houston, born 1935

Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture, © Robert Houston



Mule Train passing field

Roland L. Freeman, born 1936

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture,
© Roland L. Freeman

MOBILIZING COMMUNITIES

THE MULE TRAIN

Poor People's Campaign button
with drawing of mule wagon

Smithsonian's National Museum of American
History, Gift of Timothy D. W. Connelly in
memory of Gordon Montgomery Connelly



From the Deep South, a caravan of mule-drawn wagons and protesters carry the hopes of sharecroppers and poor farmers. A powerful symbol of the movement, the Mule Train leaves Marks, Mississippi, on May 13. The caravan makes its way through Mississippi before crossing into Alabama, then Georgia. The mules and protesters alike board a train in Atlanta on May 17 and arrive in Alexandria, Virginia, the next day.

Mule Train on 14th Street, Washington, D.C.

Laura Jones, born 1948

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History
and Culture, Gift of Laura Jones, © Laura Jones





ABOVE: Marian Wright, Hosea Williams, and Ralph Abernathy presenting at hearings during the Poor People's Campaign, 1968
Clara Watkins, 1924-2012

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture

RIGHT: Poor People's Campaign button

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of T. Rasul Murray

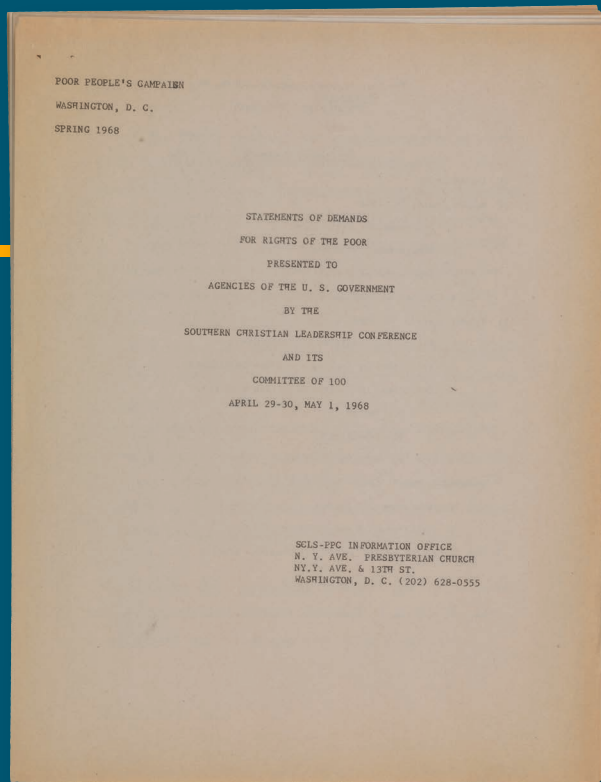
BELOW: Statement of Demands for Rights of the Poor Presented to Agencies of the U.S. Government by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Its Committee of 100, April 29-30, May 1, 1968

Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Gift of Clara Watkins



We ask you to eliminate programs that try to fit poor people to a system that has systematically excluded them from sharing in America's plenty.

— Rev. Dr. Ralph Abernathy, statement to U.S. Department of Labor, April 29, 1968



START OF THE CAMPAIGN

GOALS OF THE MOVEMENT

On April 29, just weeks after King's assassination, 100 community leaders from across the country present a poor people's "Statement of Demands" to government officials in Washington, D.C. In a strategic plan to support demonstrators, community leaders argue for fairness and equality with lawmakers who can improve American lives through policy reforms. The proposed bill of social and economic rights includes:

- collective bargaining rights for farm workers;
- land rights for Native Americans and Mexican Americans;
- an emergency food program for 256 of the nation's poorest counties;
- public-private partnerships to create one million jobs in 1968, and another million by 1972;
- and new units of affordable and livable housing for low-income families.

*I firmly believe
our last and best
hope for a future
of brotherhood
and peace lies in
the effective use
of woman power.*

— Coretta Scott King,
May 12, 1968



Coretta Scott King speaking
at memorial service for
Martin Luther King, Jr. in
Memphis, 1968

Diana Davies, born 1938
*Diana Davies Photograph Collection,
Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and
Collections, Smithsonian Institution*

National Welfare Rights
Organization button, ca. 1968

*Smithsonian's National Museum of African
American History and Culture, Gift of T.
Rasul Murray*

START OF THE CAMPAIGN

MOTHER'S DAY MARCH

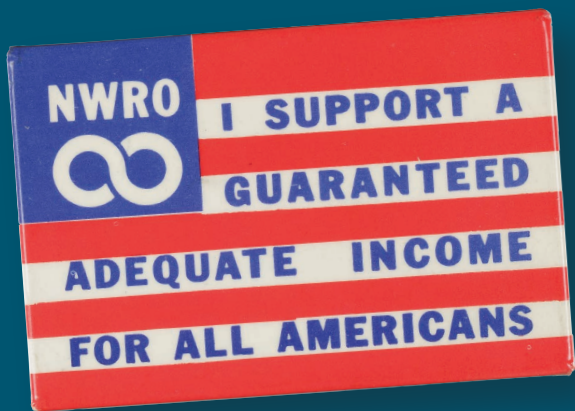
Coretta Scott King leads the Mother's Day March and Rally in Washington, D.C., on Sunday, May 12. It is the first major event to publicly launch the campaign in the nation's capital. Energizing an audience of 6,000 people at Cardozo High School, Mrs. King calls for "woman power to lead social change." She presses women of all races to come together and demonstrate as part of a "campaign of conscience."

As the event's primary organizer, the National Welfare Rights Organization brings in thousands of participants who demand programs and laws to protect the rights of mothers, families, and children.

Welfare Rights, 1968

Laura Jones, born 1948

*Smithsonian's National Museum of African
American History and Culture, © Laura Jones*

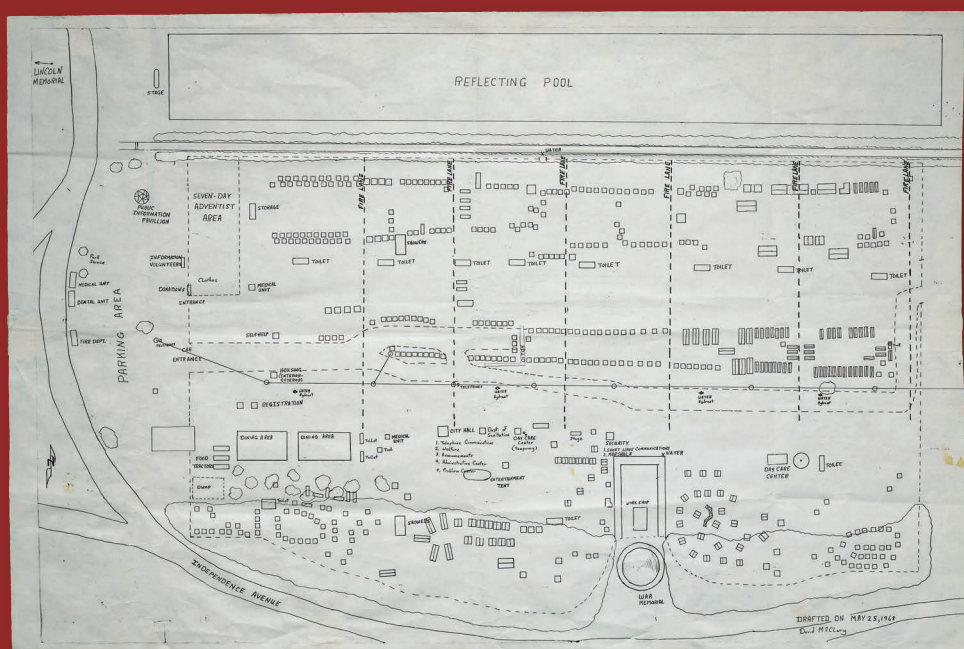


BUILDING A CITY OF HOPE

DESIGNING RESURRECTION CITY

A volunteer committee of architects and campaign organizers negotiate land on the National Mall for “Resurrection City,” the tent city that will house 3,000 protesters. The architects—professionals, professors, and students—design structures for essential services like sanitation, communications, medical care, and childcare. Their vision includes a dining tent, cultural center, and a city hall on “Main Street” where groups will gather. As an added element of community, architects design smaller “neighborhoods” in residential areas of the tent city. Side-by-side, protesters and volunteers build, paint, and decorate Resurrection City.

Ralph Abernathy, the campaign’s chief organizer, declares the site a “City of Hope,” as he hammers in a nail at the opening ceremony on May 13. The first 8-by-20-foot tents become national symbols of the movement.



ABOVE: Map of Resurrection City

Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Gift of Clara Watkins

LEFT: Aerial View of Resurrection City, 1968

The tent city stretches for 16 acres along the National Mall between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument.

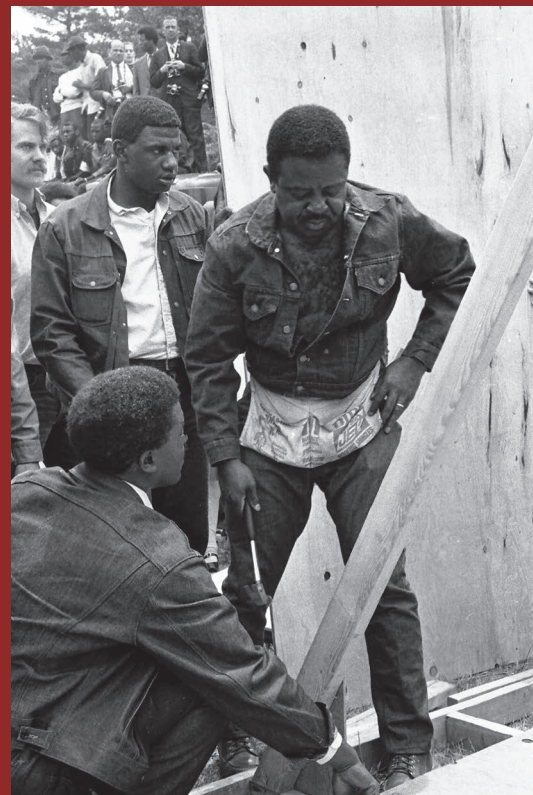
Ken Jadin, born 1942

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of P. Kenneth Jadin

RIGHT: Men building a tent, Resurrection City, Washington, D.C., 1968

Robert Houston, born 1935

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, © Robert Houston



Ralph Abernathy building a tent at Resurrection City, 1968

Bill Wingell, born 1938

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, © Bill Wingell



RIGHT: Man, woman, and a child with a bottle, 1968

Robert Houston, born 1935

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture,
© Robert Houston

BELOW: "La Tierra Es Nuestra Herencia"

("The Land Is Our Heritage") picket sign, 1968

Smithsonian's National Museum of American History



America is at a crossroads of history, and it is critically important for us as a nation and a society to choose a new path and move upon it with resolution and courage.

— Martin Luther King Jr., press conference announcing the Poor People's Campaign, December 4, 1967

BUILDING A CITY OF HOPE

A NATION OF HOPE

As a multiethnic movement, the Poor People's Campaign marks an important chapter in American history. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s inspires human rights campaigns in the decades that follow. Actions for women's rights, children's rights, Latinx and Native American rights, healthcare, and economic security for the elderly look to the Civil Rights Movement for motivation and strategies.

Man with young woman and child, 1968

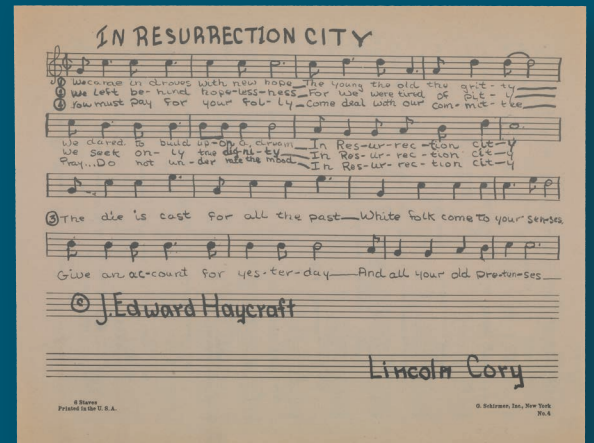
Robert Houston, born 1935

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, © Robert Houston





Frederick Douglass Kirkpatrick and Jimmy Collier playing guitar and performing with Ralph Rinzler, Guy Carawan, and others at the Many Races Soul Center tent, 1968
Diana Davies, born 1938
Diana Davies Photograph Collection, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian Institution



Sheet music distributed at Resurrection City, 1968
Composed by J. Edward Haycraft
Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Gift of Clara Watkins

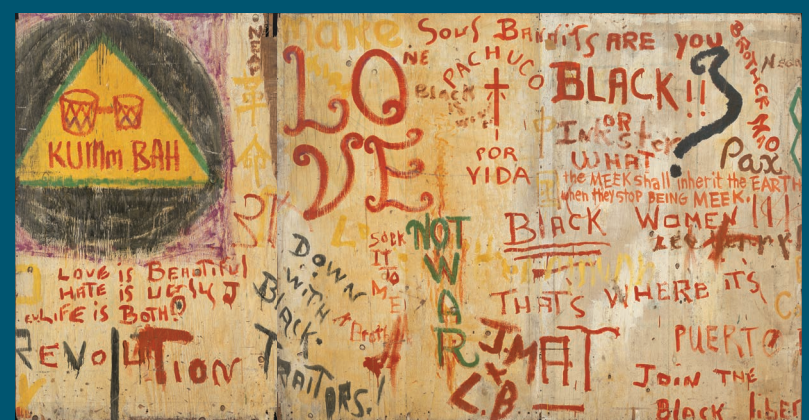
RESURRECTION CITY

PROTEST CULTURE: MUSIC AND ART

The Many Races Soul Center, a central space for music, meetings, and education, hums with activity. Resurrection City's music and multicultural programs bring the tent-dwelling neighbors even closer together. They sing freedom songs that help to create a sense of unity and hope for the movement. At "testimony meetings," protesters from different parts of the country share their personal stories.

With slogans and symbols that declare the space their own, demonstrators transform the plywood panels of the "Soul Center" into a vibrant mural known as Hunger's Wall. These kinds of spaces in Resurrection City—which were planned by its architects—help demonstrators build solidarity.

“
The people built the Many Races Soul Center and painted their souls on Hunger's Wall.
— The Poor People's Campaign: A Photographic Journal, Atlanta, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 1968



TOP RIGHT: *Resurrection City: Untitled*
Jill Freedman, born 1939
Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, © Jill Freedman

BOTTOM RIGHT: "Hunger's Wall," plywood panels from mural at Resurrection City
Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Vincent DeForest

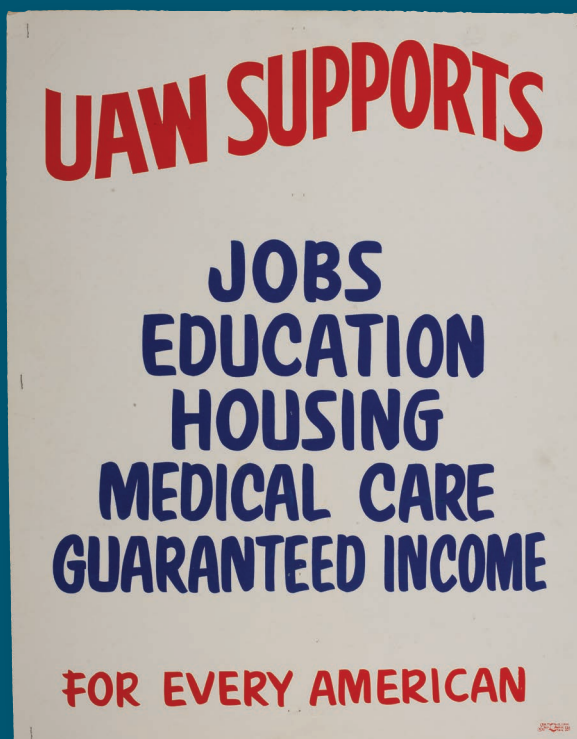
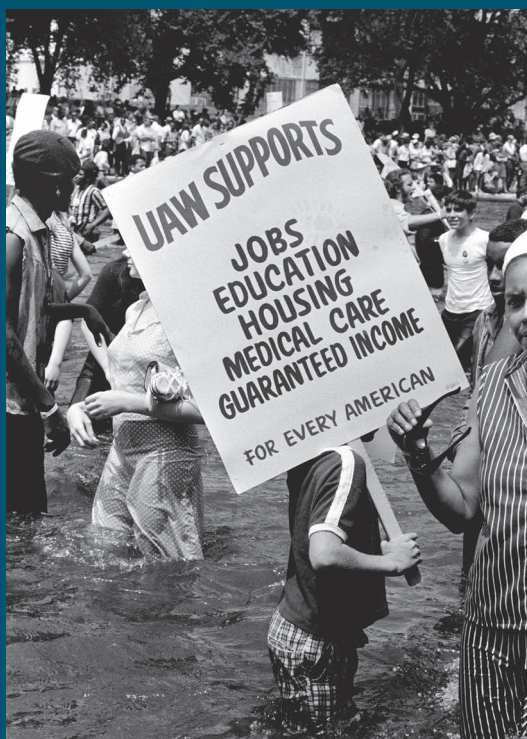
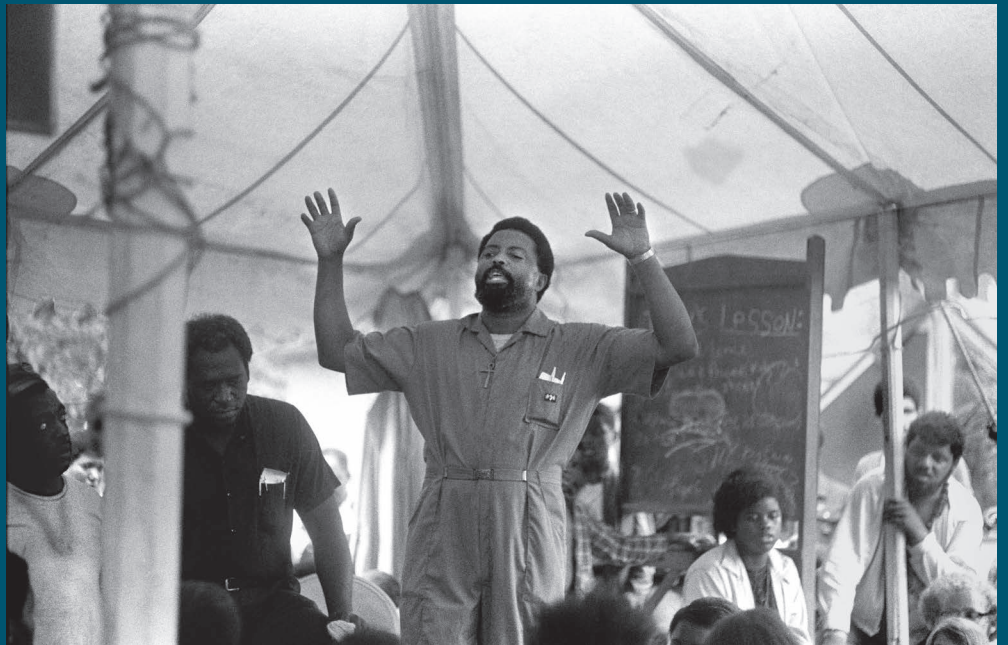
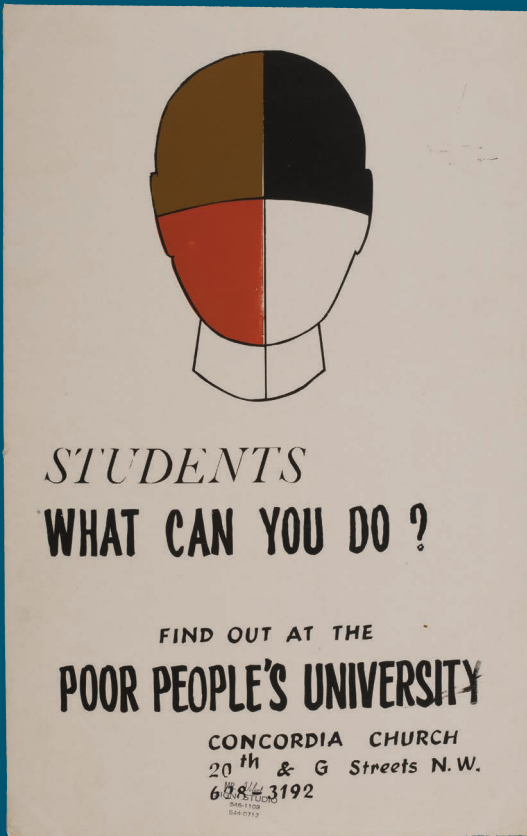
RESURRECTION CITY

PROTEST CULTURE: EDUCATION AND ACTIVISM

We will build powerful nonviolent demonstrations on the issues of jobs, income, welfare, health, housing, education, human rights ...

— Southern Christian Leadership Conference, "The Poor People's Campaign," 1968

To learn about cultural diversity and methods for peaceful resistance, demonstrators attend workshops organized by the Poor People's University at Resurrection City and in locations throughout the Washington, D.C., area. Classes cover poetry, literature, history, poverty and economic development, race and politics, and community organizing. In "Gandhi: His Life and Message to Humanity," a Georgetown University history professor lectures on peaceful protest. Workshops range from the practical to the thought-provoking: "How to Talk to a Congressman and Get Results," "Rural and Urban Planning," "Racism in the English Language," "Ethics of Guaranteed Annual Income," and the "Dynamics of Social Change."



TOP LEFT: Poor People's University placard, 1968

Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Gift of Clara Watkins

TOP RIGHT: Teach-in, 1968

Laura Jones, born 1948

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Laura Jones, © Laura Jones

BOTTOM LEFT: A protester carries a UAW placard while in the Reflecting Pool on Solidarity Day, 1968

Laura Jones, born 1948

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Laura Jones, © Laura Jones

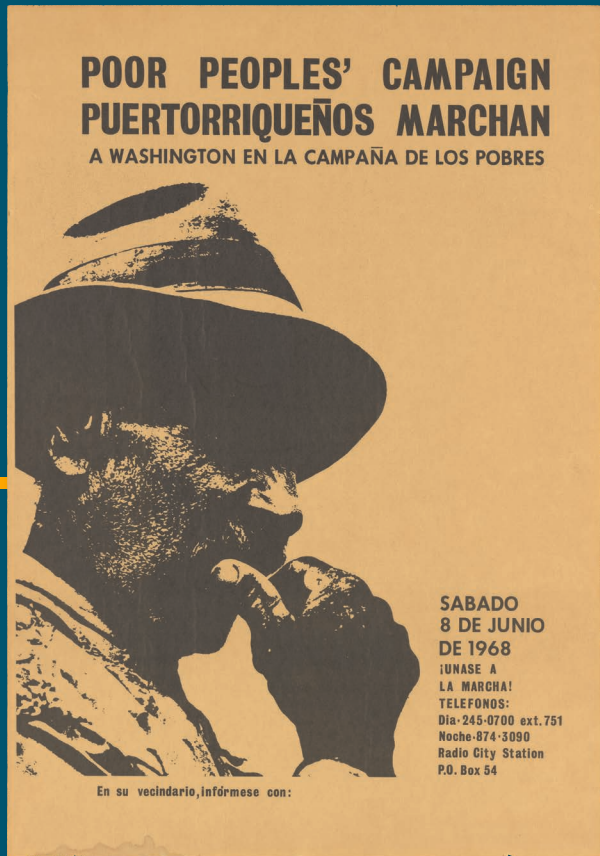
BOTTOM RIGHT: United Auto Workers (UAW) placard, 1968

Smithsonian's National Museum of American History

Puerto Rican Day Poster, 1968

Organizers originally planned the Puerto Rican Day celebration for June 8, the date shown on this poster, but the event was rescheduled for June 15.

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture



We have come to Washington to be here in support of our Negro brothers, of our Mexican brothers, of our Indian brothers, of our Appalachian white brothers. We are here because as men we are brothers to all men and all men are brothers to us. Que viva Puerto Rico!

— Joseph Monserrat, Puerto Rican Day, Resurrection City, June 15, 1968

RESURRECTION CITY

PUERTO RICAN DAY

On June 15, the Poor People's Campaign holds a special program in honor of Puerto Rican Day. Nearly 5,000 people gather in Washington, D.C., for a day of speeches, special events, and performances. An annual celebration of Boricua (Puerto Rican) pride, heritage, and solidarity, Puerto Rican Day began in New York City in 1958, and expanded to cities across the country.

Woman and man with a guitar during Puerto Rican Day at Resurrection City, 1968

Jill Freedman, born 1939

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, © Jill Freedman



CITY OF HOPE

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Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF
AFRICAN
AMERICAN
HISTORY &
CULTURE



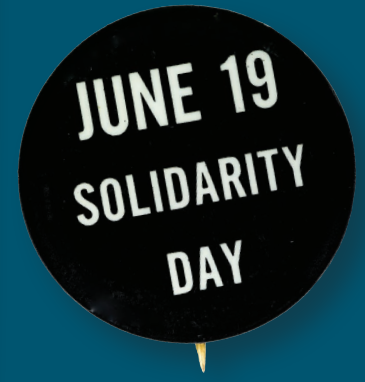
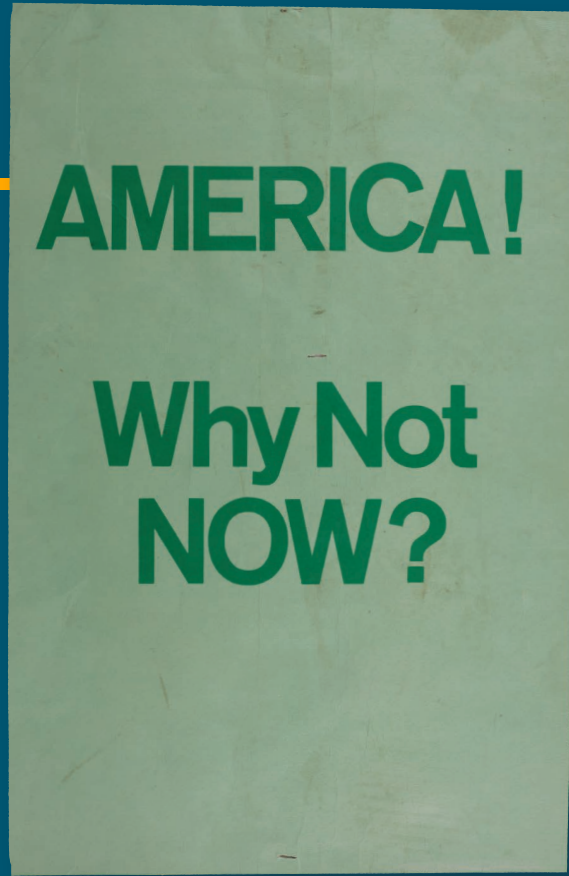
Crowd on Solidarity Day, 1968
Diana Davies, born 1938

*Diana Davies Photograph Collection, Ralph Rinzler
Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian Institution*

RESURRECTION CITY

SOLIDARITY DAY

Solidarity Day, the Poor People's Campaign's capstone event, draws more than 50,000 supporters to the National Mall for a massive rally and demonstration on June 19. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial where Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, campaign leaders speak about the promises of the American dream—justice, equality, and economic opportunities.



ABOVE Solidarity Day button, 1968
*Smithsonian's National Museum of American
History, Gift of Clara Watkins*

LEFT "America! Why Not Now?" placard, 1968
*Smithsonian's National Museum of American History,
Gift of Clara Watkins*

“
It was in our wallowing together in the mud of Resurrection City that we were allowed to hear, to feel and to see each other for the first time in our American experience.

— Rev. Jesse Jackson, “Resurrection City,” *Ebony*, October 1968

RESURRECTION CITY

RAIN, FLOODS, AND MUD

The Poor People’s Campaign faces many challenges: challenges in bringing thousands of protesters to Washington, D.C., challenges in creating and building Resurrection City, and challenges with the weather. By the time Resurrection City closes, nearly 7.5 inches of rain have turned the vibrant tent city into ponds and fields of mud. Even as conditions cause many protesters to leave, others stay to continue the movement.



ABOVE: Flooding at Resurrection City, 1968

Robert Houston, born 1935

Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture, © Robert Houston

BELOW: Woman, child, and clergyman walking through mud, 1968

Robert Houston, born 1935

Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture, © Robert Houston





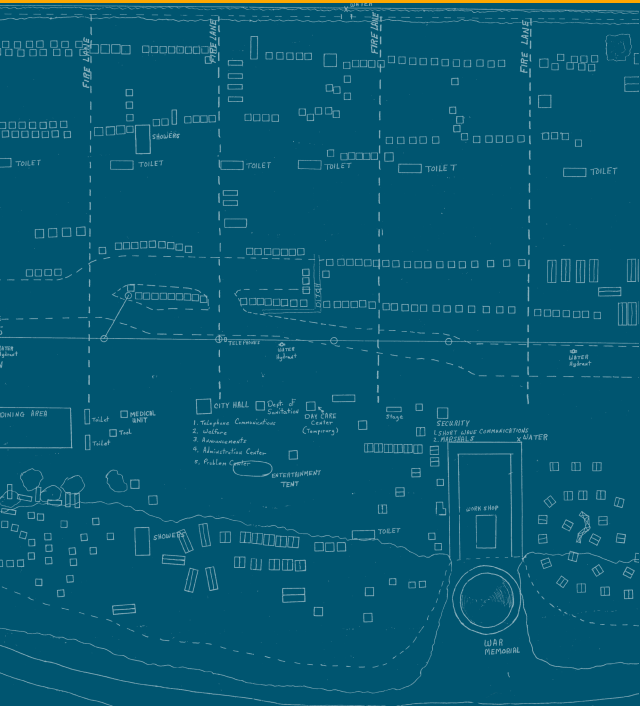
Arrest of Ralph Abernathy, Washington, D.C., 1968
 Laura Jones, born 1948

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture,
 Gift of Laura Jones, © Laura Jones

RESURRECTION CITY

EVACUATING RESURRECTION CITY

REFLECTING POOL



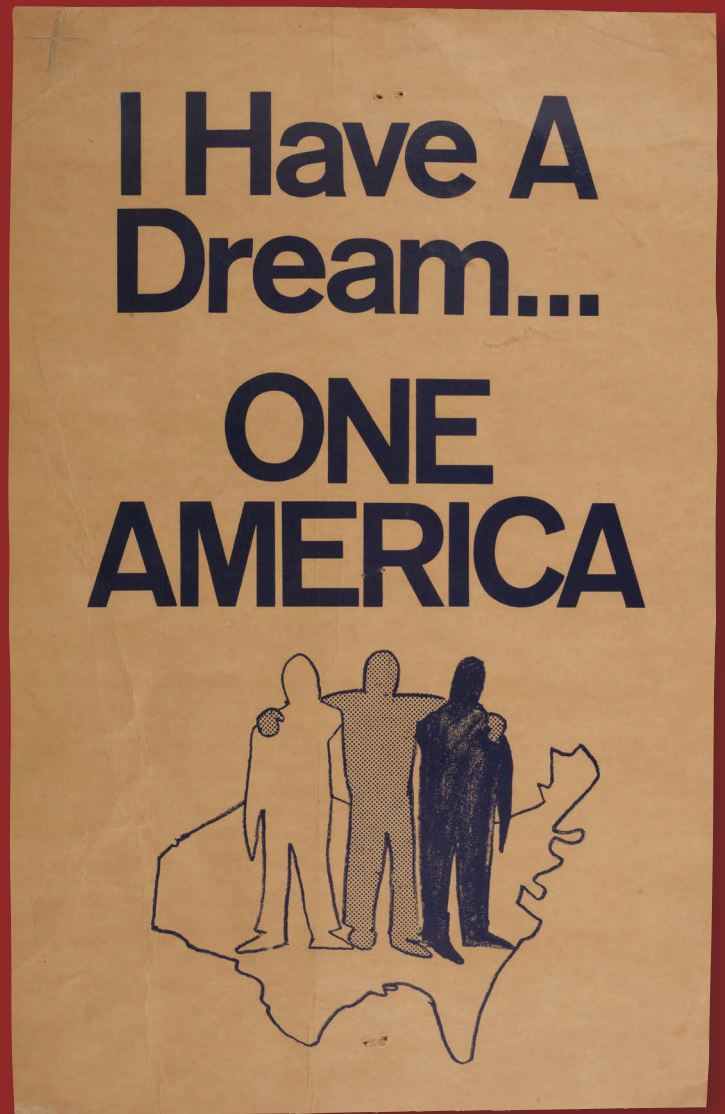
On Sunday, June 23, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's permit to occupy the National Mall expires. Campaign leaders had met with federal agencies and the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department to negotiate a peaceful evacuation of Resurrection City.

On Monday, June 24, police officers enter the site and order residents to leave. Within 90 minutes, the tent city where thousands of people had lived and protested for six weeks is shut down.

Officers arrest more than 360 protesters who continue demonstrating in Resurrection City and at federal buildings—including Ralph Abernathy. He is arrested while leading a protest at the U.S. Capitol. On the bus waiting to be taken to the Fifth Precinct, Dr. Abernathy remarks, "The only thing missing is my perennial jail mate, Martin Luther King."



Black and White Hands placard from Poor People's Campaign, 1968
 Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Gift of Clara Watkins



"I Have A Dream" placard, 1968
 Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Gift of Clara Watkins

FROM CIVIL TO HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT AND LEGACY

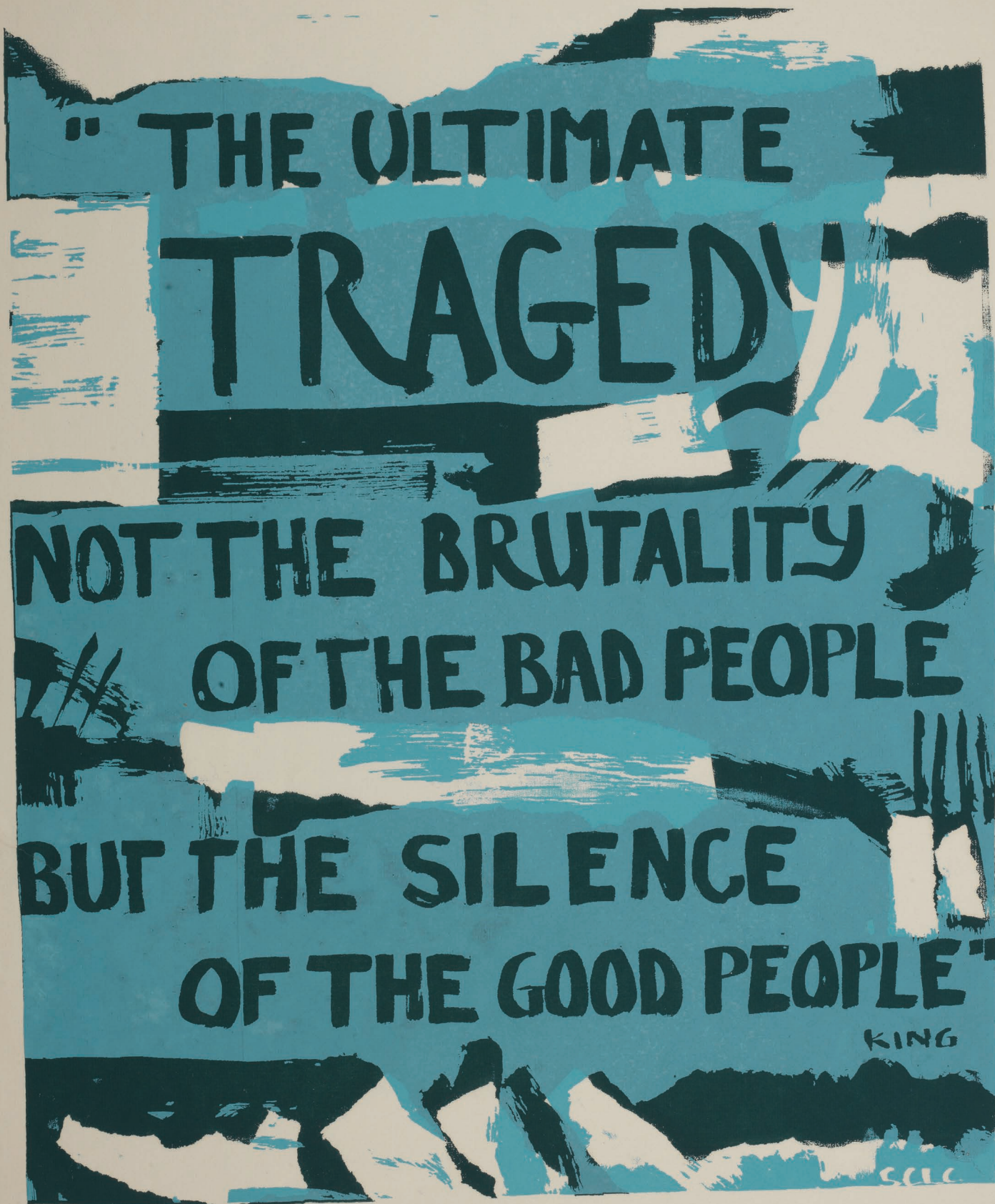
The Poor People's Campaign marks a key moment in U.S. history. In bringing thousands of people together to demand economic opportunities and security for all Americans, the campaign sets the stage for future social justice movements.

Within months after Resurrection City's evacuation:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture launches food programs in the nation's 1,000 neediest counties and a supplementary food program for mothers and children.
- Congress appropriates \$243 million to expand and revamp school lunch programs.
- Congress extends existing labor programs.
- The Senate approves an additional \$5 million for Head Start and \$13 million for summer jobs.
- The Department of Health, Education and Welfare sets a fall 1969 deadline to eliminate all segregated school systems.
- Congress approves \$139 million for the Bureau of Indian Affairs' education and welfare services.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development approves rent subsidies and home ownership assistance for low-income families.

Resurrection City cannot be seen as a mudhole in Washington, but it is rather an idea unleashed in history... The idea has taken root and is growing across the country.

— Rev. Jesse Jackson, "Resurrection City,"
Ebony, October 1968



"The Ultimate Tragedy: Not the brutality of the bad people but the silence of the good people" placard, 1968

Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Gift of Clara Watkins

CITY OF HOPE

Resurrection City & The 1968 Poor People's Campaign

Educational Resources

City of Hope can inspire visitors to explore a wide variety of subjects, including history, geography, social connections and the cultural arts. Several of the resources listed are films. Please note that if you are considering including one or more films as part of your programming to accompany *City of Hope*, that most, if not all, of these materials are protected by copyright. Permissions from the copyright holder, producer, and/or studio may be required for public presentation of the material. It is the sole responsibility of the exhibitor to obtain all necessary rights. Here are some suggested online resources to get you started.

[National Museum of African American History and Culture](#)

- [Education Resources](#)
- [“Our Last and Best Hope”: Revisiting Women’s Role in the Poor People’s Campaign](#)
Article by Angelica Aboulhosn
- [Singing Themselves into Existence: A Look at the Music of the Poor People’s Campaign](#)
Article by Angelica Aboulhosn
- [Grounds for Solidarity](#)
Article by Aaron Bryant, Mireya Loza, and Kendra Greendeer
- [Smithsonian Learning Lab](#) Collections for Educators and Students
 - [Becoming the Historian: Historical Context](#)
 - [Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Later Years \(1965-1968\)](#)
 - [1968: The Year That Changed America](#)
 - [Grounds for Solidarity](#)

Smithsonian Magazine

[Smithsonian Magazine](#) has written several articles about the specific objects highlighted in *City of Hope*. You may also search for additional articles.

- [Fifty Years Later, Remembering Resurrection City and the Poor People’s Campaign of 1968](#)
May 2018, article by Anna Diamond
- [Deeply Grieving MLK’s Death, Activists Shaped a Campaign of Hurt and Hope](#)
January 12, 2018, article by Allison Keyes
- [A Mural on View in the African American History Museum Recalls the Rise of Resurrection City](#)



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

- September 21, 2016, article by Allison Keyes
- [When Robert Kennedy Delivered the News of Martin Luther King's Assassination](#)
April 2, 2018, article by Alice George

FRONTLINE on PBS

[FRONTLINE](#) is the investigative journalism outlet for PBS that questions, explains and changes our world. Links to films, podcasts, and articles are listed below on the topics of poverty, politics, and housing in the U.S.

- [Poverty, Politics and Profit](#)
May 9, 2017, film produced by Rick Young, Laura Sullivan, Emma Schwartz, and Fritz Kramer
- [In America's Affordable Housing Crisis, More Demand but Less Supply](#)
May 9, 2017, article by Patrice Taddonio
- [The Housing Fix](#)
October 12, 2017, podcast produced by Meg Anderson and Sophie McKibben, reported by Laura Sullivan
- [Left Behind America](#)
September 11, 2018, film produced by Shimon Dotan
- [Poor Kids](#)
November 22, 2017, film produced by Jezza Neumann and Lauren Mucciolo
- [Q&A: How Rust Belt Cities Can Save Themselves](#)
September 11, 2018, article by Priyanka Boghani
- [By the Numbers: Childhood Poverty in the U.S.](#)
November 20, 2012, article by Jason M. Breslow

C-SPAN

C-SPAN is a public service created by the American Cable Television Industry and has several film clips about 1968 Poor People's Campaign and the opening of the *City of Hope* exhibition by the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

- [Black Americans, Education, and Poverty](#)
- [1968 Poor People's Campaign Organizers](#)
- [Civil Unrest and Economic Conditions Before 1968](#)
- [1968 Poor People's Campaign](#)

Teaching Tolerance - A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center

Founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance is an organization dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for the nation's children. Teaching Tolerance provides free educational materials to teachers and other school practitioners in the U.S. and Canada.

- [Teaching Tolerance](#)



The National Archives

The National Archives lists resources from national, state, regional, and local sites and those focused on military, photography, and culture. It also lists resources organized chronologically.

- [The National Archives](#)



CITY OF HOPE

Resurrection City & The 1968 Poor People's Campaign

Credits



STOCKTON
UNIVERSITY

AFRICANA STUDIES

The Africana Studies program provides the opportunity for students to study, analyze and systematically evaluate the various disciplines from an Africana perspective.

The program continues to attract students from all ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds as they recognize ways that Africana Studies provides them with a forum to examine the intellectual life, the historical experience, and the cultural understanding of one of this country's largest racial minority groups.



Noyes
Museum of Art
STOCKTON UNIVERSITY

STOCKTON | KRAMER HALL
UNIVERSITY

The Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University offers several locations in Southern New Jersey, providing access and support to the arts and artists of the region and beyond. A source of inspiration and enjoyment for enthusiasts of the arts, from residents of the community, students and faculty of the university, to visitors to the shore and Pine Barrens, the Noyes Museum serves the entire South Jersey area. For more information, visit noyesmuseum.org.

CITY OF HOPE

Resurrection City & The 1968 Poor People's Campaign

Credits

City of Hope: Resurrection City and the 1968 Poor People's Campaign is organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Services and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 65 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play. For exhibition description and tour schedules, visit sites.si.edu.



The National Museum of African American History and Culture is the only national museum devoted exclusively to the documentation of African American life, history, and culture. It was established by an Act of Congress in 2003, following decades of efforts to promote and highlight the contributions of African Americans. To date, the Museum has collected more than 36,000 artifacts and nearly 100,000 individuals have become members. The Museum opened to the public on September 24, 2016, as the 19th and newest museum of the Smithsonian Institution.

