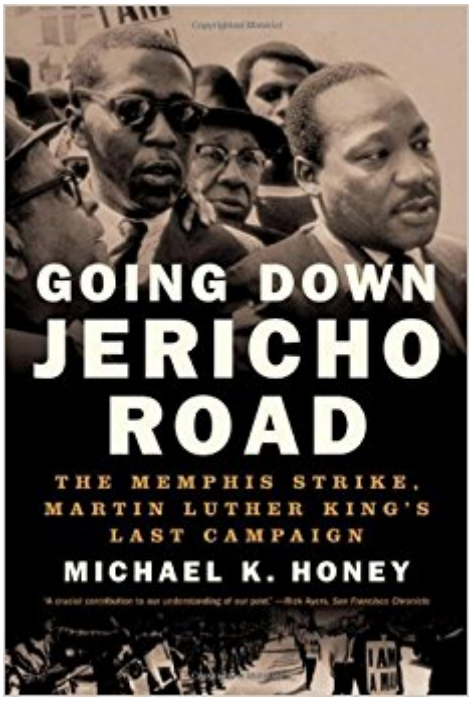
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# Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign




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## Synopsis

The definitive history of the epic struggle for economic justice that became Martin Luther King Jr.’s last crusade. Memphis in 1968 was ruled by a paternalistic "plantation mentality" embodied in its good-old-boy mayor, Henry Loeb. Wretched conditions, abusive white supervisors, poor education, and low wages locked most black workers into poverty. Then two sanitation workers were chewed up like garbage in the back of a faulty truck, igniting a public employee strike that brought to a boil long-simmering issues of racial injustice. With novelistic drama and rich scholarly detail, Michael Honey brings to life the magnetic characters who clashed on the Memphis battlefield: stalwart black workers; fiery black ministers; volatile, young, black-power advocates; idealistic organizers and tough-talking unionists; the first black members of the Memphis city council; the white upper crust who sought to prevent change or conflagration; and, finally, the magisterial Martin Luther King Jr., undertaking a Poor People’s Campaign at the crossroads of his life, vilified as a subversive, hounded by the FBI, and seeing in the working poor of Memphis his hopes for a better America. 16 pages of illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Although many people know Martin Luther King Jr. died in Memphis, few know what he was doing there, observes labor historian Honey in this moving and meticulous account of the sanitation workers’ strike in Memphis between January and April 1968. Marrying labor history to civil rights history, the University of Washington professor fluently recounts the negotiations that

ensued after black sanitation workers revolted over being sent home without pay on rainy days, although white workers were paid. While showing how their work stoppage became a strike, then a local movement, before coalescing in the Poor People's Campaign, Honey also reveals King's shift in emphasis "from desegregation and voting rights to the war and the plight of the working class." He also vividly captures many dramatic moments, including marches and sermons as well as King's assassination and its violent aftermath. While familiar villains, famous civil rights activists and King himself often take center stage, the rank-and file workers, whose lives are revealed here, remain the story's heroes and martyrs. Honey's passionate commitment to labor is undisguised, making this effort a worthy and original contribution to the literature. (Jan.) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Labor scholar Honey examines the intersection between issues of race and economics in the U.S. in the 1960s from the perspective of the Memphis garbage workers' strike, Martin Luther King Jr.'s last campaign. In rich detail, Honey lays out the background for the strike: the appalling working conditions and feudalistic "plantation mentality" of the white business and government sector, led by racist mayor Henry Loeb. Honey also profiles the garbage workers of Memphis, everyday men who toiled for little money, mostly former rural workers come to the city to earn more money. He details the complexities behind local politics and economics, the forced alliances between civil rights movement and local groups, the tensions between the two political parties as the issue of civil rights shifted loyalties, and the power of local white citizens' groups. Honey explores King's expansive view of how racism was woven into the economic fabric of the nation and his frustration at the difficulty of devising strategies that would lead to economic justice as well as civil rights. Vanessa BushCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

this book is eye opening for those that constantly think the Civil Right's movement was "over blown" .. or hey..it's over.. let's move on..this is a startling look at the TN garbage strike and just how deplorable conditions were.. and how blind whites were as they felt "victimized" by "Black's getting uppity and wanting unions..." .. however this was facilitated and supported by a press and political regime that only released some information.. not only allowing whites to remain ignorant but encouraging their blindness to the issue at hand..the appalling ignorance and racism makes for hard reading ..as for MLK.. this book.. really doesn't show a lot of HIM.. in this .. yes he was there.. but he

was not the center of this controversy, and although he helped and brought attention to it.. and eventually .. was murdered .. this story is less about MLK.. and more about the fight to get some type of fairness in TN for Black workers.what this book talks about is a lot of the unfairness, the propoganda by whites/white press and just how manipulative a situation can become as the spin on the story .. pits racial tension

This is an amazingly readable, detailed, account of the Sanitation Worker's strike in Memphis in 1968. I was a college student in Memphis in 1968 and participated in the March 28th movement march and the memorial march following MLK's assassination. However, Michael Honey's account provided background and detail's of which I was embarrassingly totally unaware. It will soon be fifty years since the events described here occurred; however, the underlying situation that existed, not only in Memphis but nationally, are still alive today. The promised land which Dr. King saw from the mountaintop the night before his death is still on the horizon. We may have moved closer to it, but we still are marching. If you want to understand from where we have come, Michael Honey's book will provide an in depth view of one key moment in the journey.

I am moved beyond words by this book. As someone who has been active in strikes and the labor movement, I have been enthralled by the story of the Memphis Santitation Workers' Strike, and the detail which Michael Honey gives this history draws me in to its narrative more than even the film documentaries I have seen on the subject. Many times i have had to put the book down to absorb the emotions and images it evokes, described by someone who I am sure must have had firsthand knowledge of the events, the personalities involved, and the monumental history of a time that reverberated and shook the foundations of American society with the death of the Civil Rights Movement's greatest charismatic leader. To anyone who has little knowledge of this watershed moment in our history, which probably means most of us, I can't recommend this book highly enough. It's a forgotten, or overlooked history, restored to us in sharp detail. Thank you, Prof. Honey.

This vibrant account of MLK's last weeks before the assassination - and of the conditions of black workers in Memphis that drew him to the city - overcomes the cliches that have inevitably encrusted our view of the civil rights struggle. It reminds us what the fight was about and shows us how the actors behaved on all sides. The south in the 1960s was still a bastion of nakedly racist white power, exploiting black laborers unmercifully to keep the white middle class comfortable, with the

media, cops, FBI and courts all stomping on the underdog. The book is a great case study of unionizing, of protest organizing and, for that matter, of strike-breaking and of undermining a progressive movement. It is enriched by a ton of detail culled from archival accounts, including FBI files.One message that comes out from this detailed look is King's generosity and morality: his dedication to lift up blacks and others who were much less well off than he and his educated class. Regardless of threats from white supremacists, dirty tricks by Hoover's FBI, disunity among black movement leaders and trade unions, and his own doubts about what approaches to the Poor People's Campaign could be effective, King stuck with the sanitation workers. The rare altruism described in this book is an inspiration. It's a shame for our entire society that he had no true successors - and that the obstacles to progress towards a decent and just society are so darned hard to surmount.Anyone looking to understand the late stages of the civil rights movement, the history of Memphis, the South in the 1960s, or the turmoil that Martin Luther King had to deal with will appreciate this book. It helps that it is intelligently and sensitively written from as balanced and objective a perspective as possible.

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