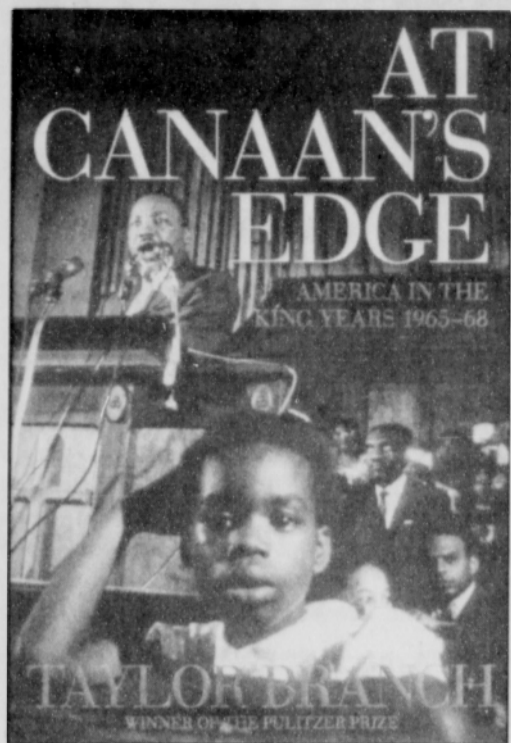


Author Concludes Series on King



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (above) on a recruiting drive in March 1968, moved by the extreme hardship of displaced sharecroppers, pledges to begin a poor people's pilgrimage to Washington, D.C. from Marks, Miss.

Story of race, violence and democracy

Pulitzer Prize-winning and best-selling author Taylor Branch concludes his magnificent history of the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King's heroic role at the center of it in *At Canaan's Edge, America in the King Years, 1965-68*.

As Branch's dramatic account demonstrates, King attained a stature akin to that of Lincoln, a commanding, prophetic, and sanctified figure who not only changed the legal and political structure of the nation and led a victorious struggle for African-American equality, but lifted the patriotic spirit of the entire United States toward our defining national purpose — freedom.

The book can be read independently of its two preceding volumes, but continues the Shakespearean epic begun in *Parting the Waters*, and *Pillar of Fire*, both New York Times bestsellers.

The earlier books followed King from his rise to greatness through the Montgomery bus boycott sparked by Rosa Parks in 1955, the March on Washington and the "I have a Dream" speech of 1963, the Mississippi Freedom Summer and the murder of civil rights workers, and being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

At Canaan's Edge chronicles King's efforts to hold his movement together in the face of internal factions that disagreed about strategy, tactics, and whether they could achieve their goals solely through non-violence; intermittent hostility from the Johnson administration; unrelenting harassment by the FBI; bitter controversy generated by King's stance against the Vietnam War; and his failed attempt to take the freedom movement north.

Finally we reach Memphis, King's campaign for economic justice and the sanitation worker's strike, and the assassination in the apocalyptic year of 1968 that made him a martyr for the ages.

As the narrative begins in early 1965, King has willed himself from the pinnacle of acclaim straight to "the valley" of a new drive to seek voting rights for black people in Selma, Ala. He has been beaten and arrested again through two months of arduous demonstrations — highlighted by children marched to jail, with a young black man shot to death in a vigil — but has attracted little notice.

After the stunning success of the Civil Rights Act 1964, which prohibited racial discrimination in public facilities, government, and employment, the freedom movement has evoked lethal opposition at the color line of political power — the vote — from a nation that long ago enshrined this most fundamental right in the Fifteenth Amendment but essentially forgot it.

Throughout large swaths of the South and beyond, African-Americans have been denied participation in democracy through a savage, century-long campaign of intimidation, beatings, killings, lynchings and bureaucratic foot-dragging

In their first attempt to cross

dered, but the quest to march beyond Pettus Bridge will release waves of political energy.

The movement will transform politics to win the vote through the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Selma will engage the world's conscience, strain the embattled civil rights coalition, and embroil

citizens. Literally and figuratively, they still change the face of the country we inherit."

Branch traces the ensuing voting rights drives in Alabama and Mississippi, the murder of James Meredith, King's tempestuous relationship with President Lyndon Johnson, and his agonizing rupture with Stokely Carmichael over black power. Torment over distant Vietnam will destroy a historic collaboration between King and Johnson at the signal divide of the 1960s, whether to pursue democracy by force of arms.

Actors on all sides will confront persistent blind spots of violence and race. Besides Andrew Young, Ralph Abernathy, John Lewis, Jesse Jackson, James Forman, and others in the civil rights movement, they include FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, Gov. George Wallace of Alabama, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, the Ku Klux Klan, sheriffs, students, journalists, and religious leaders, a rich tapestry of heroes and villains.

Branch charts King's beleaguered endeavor in 1966 to bring the struggle for equality into the slums and streets of Chicago, and his contentious decision in 1967 to go public with his long held opposition to the war in Vietnam. In 1968, King's determination to restore hope for the economically disadvantaged through his "Poor People's Campaign" prompts his support for the lowly garbage workers of Memphis, thereby setting the stage for his death at the age of 39, the day after his fabled "Promised Land" speech.

"And I've seen the promised land," King intoned. "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." To Canaan's edge.



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with Andrew Young, Joan Baez, Hosea Williams in September 1966 escorting students past adult mobs that terrorized black children outside the schools of Grenada, Miss.

Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge, marchers stand on the brink of violent suppression by tear gas and troopers on horseback, after which thousands of ordinary Americans will answer King's overnight call for a non-violent pilgrimage to Selma. Three of them will be mur-

dered, but the quest to march beyond Pettus Bridge will release waves of political energy.

Branch writes, "At their best, like the Founders, allies of the nonviolent movement will turn rulers and subjects into fellow



A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say, "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry in South America and say, "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just.

— Martin Luther King Jr.

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