

On February 1, 1968, Memphis sanitation workers Echol Cole, 36, and Robert Walker, 30, climbed inside a garbage truck amid putrefying trash and dead chickens in a driving rain and were crushed to death when the compactor malfunctioned. Twelve days later, frustrated by the city's response to the latest event in a long pattern of neglect and disrespect for its black employees, 1,300 black men from the Memphis Department of Public Works went on strike.

Sanitation workers demanded recognition of their union, better safety standards, and higher wages. Their fight—symbolized by strike placards reading “I AM A MAN”—brought Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Memphis. On April 4, 1968, during the labor dispute, Dr. King was assassinated on the balcony outside his room in the Lorraine Motel, now the site of the National Civil Rights Museum.

On the cusp of the solemn 50th anniversary of the assassination of the late, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I would like to lay out the record of the Memphis sanitation workers' strike and the events leading up to the assassination of Dr. King:

In 1968, 1,300 African-American sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, fought for collective bargaining rights and equality in the workplace.

In the struggle for workers' rights, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) integrated the labor movement and the civil rights movement in a demand for basic human rights and respect for all men and women.

Black employees doing most of the low-wage work in Memphis had almost no health care, pensions, or vacation, worked in deplorable conditions, and were shown disrespect by White supervisors.

40 percent of the workers qualified for welfare in order to supplement their low salaries and were denied the opportunity to improve their working conditions by Memphis Mayor Henry Loeb and the City Council.

On January 31, 1968, 22 Black sewer workers who reported for work were sent home when it began raining, losing a day's pay, while White workers were not sent home and received a full day's pay.

The following day, February 1, 1968, sanitation workers Echol Cole and Robert Walker sought refuge from a downpour in the hamper of a garbage truck amid putrefying garbage and were crushed to death when the compactor malfunctioned.

On February 12, 1968, Memphis sanitation and public employees went on strike after attempting last-minute negotiations with Mayor Loeb and the city on the terms of their employment, demanding that the city recognize their union, and provide a pay increase to \$2.35 an hour from an average of \$1.70, overtime pay, and promotions based on merit irrespective of race.

In response to the workers' demands, Mayor Loeb, on February 13, 1968, threatened to hire replacements unless workers returned to work.

On February 18, 1968, the President of AFSCME, Jerry Wurf, arrived in Memphis and negotiations began in the basement of St. Mary's Episcopal Church with Rabbi James A. Wax of Temple Israel representing the Memphis Ministerial Association, mediating between the city and striking workers, assisted by Local 1733 President T.O. Jones and

AFSCME Director of Legislative and Community Affairs William Lucy.

After an all-night vigil outside City Hall on February 19–20, 1968, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and union workers called for a boycott of downtown businesses.

On February 23, 1968, 1,500 strikers and supporters organized a march to the Memphis City Hall, where, 11 days after the initial strike, the City Council refused to recognize the union.

In the following days, 500 White labor union members joined members of the clergy and sanitation workers in a march downtown, 116 strikers and supporters were arrested during a peaceful demonstration, and hundreds of high school students joined in another march led or supported by members of the clergy including Rabbi Wax, the Reverend Frank McRae of St. John's United Methodist Church, Father Nicholas Vieron of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, and Dean William Dimmick of St. Mary's.

On March 4, 1968, a proposal by State Senator Frank White to create a State mediation board to resolve the stalemate was rejected by Mayor Loeb.

On March 5, 1968, the Ministerial Association announced that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., would be traveling to Memphis on behalf of striking workers.

On March 7, 1968, the City Council voted to reject union dues checkoff for sanitation workers.

Throughout March 1968, national civil rights leaders, including Roy Wilkins, Bayard Rustin, Ralph Abernathy, James Bevel, Andrew Young, and Jesse Jackson, among others, came to Memphis to rally the strikers.

On March 28, 1968, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Reverend James Lawson of Centenary Methodist Church led a march from the sanitation workers' gathering spot at Clayborn Temple and on to Beale Street which was marred by window-breaking and disintegrated into a riot as police responded with tear gas and gunfire.

Also on March 28, 1968, 16-year-old Larry Payne was shot to death by a Memphis police officer, police arrested 280 mostly Black demonstrators, and the State legislature authorized a 7 p.m. curfew which was enforced by 4,000 members of the National Guard moving into Memphis.

In response to Payne's death, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., called Payne's mother, Lizzie, offering consolation, and vowed to visit her on his return to Memphis.

Also on March 28, 1968, and in response to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s promise to return to Memphis to lead a march based on the principles of nonviolence, the city obtained a temporary restraining order in Federal court forbidding such a march.

In response to the temporary restraining order, AFSCME General Counsel Mel Wulf asked the firm of Burch, Porter and Johnson and attorneys Lucius E. Burch, Jr., David Caywood, Charles Newman, and W.J. Michael Cody to work on lifting the injunction to allow the march to proceed.

Louis Lucas and Walter Bailey of the Ratner and Sugarmon firm were deeply involved in representing King and striking workers for the duration of the labor dispute.

On April 3, 1968, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., addressed a rally of 10,000 Black

workers and residents, members of the clergy, White liberals, and union members at Mason Temple, the Memphis headquarters of the Church of God in Christ, for what would be his last speech, forever known for the lines ‘I have been to the mountain top’, and ‘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’, linking the civil rights and labor movements and foreshadowing his fate.

On April 4, 1968, a daylong hearing on the city's injunction resulted in an order from United States District Judge Bailey Brown in the late afternoon allowing the march, with some restrictions, to go forward on April 5, 1968.

On April 4, 1968, the day after his rallying cry for compromise, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated by a sniper on the balcony outside of his Lorraine Motel room in Memphis.

On April 4, 1968, Memphis and cities across the country erupted in violent protests and rioting.

On April 5, 1968, Rabbi James A. Wax led a march from St. Mary's Episcopal Church to City Hall and confronted Mayor Henry Loeb with the Nation watching on all three networks, telling him ‘There are laws far greater than the laws of Memphis and Tennessee, and these are the laws of God’.

On April 8, 1968, an estimated 42,000 people, led by the wife of Rev. Dr. King, Jr., Coretta Scott King, and her children, peacefully marched in memory of Dr. King and in support of the union's requests.

On April 16, 1968, AFSCME announced that a 14-month contract had been agreed to and accepted, and included union dues check-off, a grievance procedure, and wage increases of 10 cents an hour in May and another 5 cents in September, ending the 3-month strike.

On April 29, 2011, the 1,300 sanitation worker strikers were inducted into the Department of Labor's Labor Hall of Honor.

Today, the integration of the civil rights and labor movements remains a work in progress and requires our continued vigilance.

In the days leading up to and surrounding April 4th 2018, 50 years after that fateful night, the world will converge on Memphis, a now-sacred place where the world lost a true beacon of justice. Nevertheless, the light from that beacon shines on, lighting a path towards true equality and compassion for one another, long after the passing of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. There, we will pay homage and respect to a man whose bold courage helped change the world, and whose legacy continues to be a force for justice and hope for all.

I urge my colleagues to pass H. Res. 720, to immortalize our honor and respect for the Memphis sanitation workers and Dr. King and the legacy they leave behind.

HONORING PAUL BEALE'S
FLORIST

HON. DWIGHT EVANS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2018

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an iconic small business, Paul Beale's Florist, a family-owned business on Ogontz

Avenue that has meant so much to our neighborhood and the City of Philadelphia for 47 years.

From a young age, founder Paul Beale always knew he would be a florist and one day own his own flower shop. Committed to his goal Mr. Beale worked his way up and was a manager at Stein's Flower shop for 15 years. In 1970, the Senate passed a bill that increased federal assistance for the financing of small businesses. In 1971, Paul's dream to own his own shop came to fruition when he took out a loan to start a shop of his very own, Paul Beale's Florist.

Paul and his wife, Altemese, worked tirelessly to keep their business up and running. The Beales' hard work has paid off over the years, as Paul Beale's Flowers has become a true fixture on Ogontz Avenue in West Oak Lane. The small business has also become a fixture of the Beale family. Paul's daughter, Paulette Beale Harris, is now the store manager, and four generations of the Beale family work in the shop. Mr. Beale is a true role model in our City as he is a strong believer that what he earns from his shop should be invested back into the neighborhood he is proud to call home.

The 2nd Congressional District of Pennsylvania extends gratitude to Paul Beale's Flowers for its dedicated service to the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

RECOGNIZING THE 80th BIRTHDAY
OF MR. HUBERT HOWARD COKER

HON. TRENT KELLY

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2018

Mr. KELLY of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the 80th birthday of

Mr. Hubert Howard Coker. Mr. Coker is an outstanding citizen who demonstrates a deep devotion to God, our nation, and to his family. Mr. Coker is known for his commitment to helping his fellow man through his many roles in life, including public service.

Mr. Coker was born on March 30, 1938, to Homer and Luna Coker. He was the eighth of ten children born on the family farm in the Ryan's Well community in Itawamba County. During his early years, he demonstrated the meaning of hard work by dividing his time in the fields with school work. At the age of 15, Mr. Coker traveled to Florida, where he took a job harvesting trees from swamps to help support his family. Mr. Coker eventually returned to Itawamba County and continued his education at Itawamba Agricultural High School. In 1957, Mr. Coker married Lula Faye Newell. In 1958, Mr. Coker earned his General Equivalency Diploma (GED). He attended Northwest Alabama Junior College in Phil Campbell, Alabama, where he studied electronics.

In 1959, Mr. Coker and his family moved to Wisconsin, where he began working for the American Motors Corporation (AMC). After a brief stay, Mr. Coker and his family moved back to Itawamba County, there he began working at the True Temper Corporation in Amory, Mississippi. He would later become an employee at Mueller Brass Industries, Inc., where he embarked on a long-term mission to make sure his fellow workers received better pay and opportunities for advancement. Mr. Coker assisted in the forming of the United Steel Workers Union at Mueller Brass Industries, Inc. He later served as president of the union. Mr. Coker also established other unions throughout the south to improve wages and working conditions. From 1982–1992, Mr. Coker served as the administrator of the Industrial Union Department. He also served as

a national organizer for the International Woodworkers of America (IWA).

Mr. Coker has long been a champion of civil rights. In 1968, he took part in the Poor People's March on Washington, D.C., where participants called for a federal solution to widespread unemployment and poverty in America. Mr. Coker continued to push for civil rights reforms as a member of the NAACP and the A. Philip Randolph Institute.

Mr. Coker's desire to help others inspired him to run for public office. In 1976, he was elected to serve as an Itawamba County Justice Court Judge. He was also elected to serve as chairman of the Itawamba County Democratic Executive Committee from 1980–1984. Mr. Coker served on the Mississippi Democratic State Executive Committee from 1984–1990. One of Mr. Coker's proudest achievements was being chosen as a Mississippi delegate to the 1984 Democratic National Convention (DNC) in California, supporting presidential candidate, Walter Mondale, and the first female nominee for vice president, Geraldine Ferraro.

Mr. Coker and his wife, Carol Gray Coker, live in Fulton. They have two daughters, Patricia Digby and Angela Johnson; one son, Kenneth H. Coker; seven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. Mr. Coker enjoys spending time with his family, cattle farming, investing in the stock market, and staying abreast of the latest news.

Mr. Coker's love of God and America, backed by humble roots and hard work, demonstrates a spirit of true patriotism, honor, and pride in being an American. I am honored to wish him a happy 80th birthday and all the best on this special day.