

MEMPHIS SANITATION STRIKE TIMELINE, 1968*



(*excerpts from <http://www.afscme.org/union/history/mlk/1968-afscme-memphis-sanitation-workers-strike-chronology>)



TUESDAY, FEB. 1

Two sanitation workers, Echol Cole and Robert Walker, are killed in an accident on a city truck.

MONDAY, FEB. 12

Memphis sanitation and public employees strike after last-minute attempts to resolve grievances fail. Newspapers claim 200 workers of 1,300 remain on the job but only 38 of 180 trucks move. Mayor Loeb says strike is illegal but says "this office stands ready... to talk to anyone about his legitimate questions at any time."



WEDNESDAY, FEB. 14

The Mayor delivers a back-to-work ultimatum for 7 a.m. Feb. 15. Police escort the few garbage trucks in operation. Negotiations between the city and the union break off. Newspapers say more than 10,000 tons of garbage is piled up.

FRIDAY, FEB. 23

Following a week of strikers picketing, the Council refuses to recognize the union. Police attack strikers during a march on Main Street, using mace.



SATURDAY, FEB. 24

Black leaders and ministers form citywide organization to support the strike and the boycott. City obtains court injunction to keep union from staging demonstrations or picketing.

Have Sanitation Workers A Future?

Yes, If You Will Help To Build It!

How? That's Simple—

WE NEED YOU!

1. Do not shop downtown, or with the downtown branch stores anywhere in the city or any enterprise named Loeb.
2. Stop your subscriptions to the daily newspapers. Get news about the Movement from the radio or television or by joining the mass meetings. Be sure to pay your newspaper carrier his commission.
3. Do not buy new things for Easter. Let our Lent be one of sacrifices. What better way to remember Jesus' work for us and the world?
4. Support the workers with letters and telegrams to the Mayor and the City Council.
5. Join us in the daily marches downtown.
6. Call others each day and remind them of the movement.
7. Attend the nightly mass meetings Monday through Friday.
8. Do not place your garbage at the curb. Handle it the best way you can without helping the city and the Mayor's effort to break the strike.
9. Whenever you associate with white people, let them know what the issues are and why you support this cause.
10. Support the relief efforts for the workers and their families with gifts of money and food. Checks can be made out to "C.O.M.E." and food taken to Clayborn Temple A.M.E. Church, 280 Hemando.

Community On the Move for Equality
WORK CARD



SUNDAY, FEB. 25

Ministers call on their congregations to boycott and march.

MONDAY, FEB. 26

Daily marches begin.

TUESDAY, MARCH 5

Ministers announce the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will come to Memphis, as 116 strikers and supporters are arrested for sitting in at city hall.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

Seven union leaders given 10-day sentences and fines for contempt of court. Strikers stage a mock funeral at city hall, lamenting the death of freedom in Memphis.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

At Mayor's suggestion, National Guard begins holding riot drills.

MONDAY, MARCH 11

Students skip high school to participate in march, led by black ministers. Two students arrested.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

and

Community On the Move for Equality



INVITE YOU

To March for Justice and Jobs

FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 1968

9:00 A.M.

From Clayborn Temple A.M.E. Church
280 Hernando

We ask you to stay away from work or school and walk with more than 10,000 people who want Memphis once and for all to learn that it must be a city for all people. A man is a man. God requires that a man be treated like a man.

Memphis must do so in work, play, education, housing, by the police and in all other ways the rights of each man must be upheld. This will be a march of dignity. The only force we will use is soul-force which is peaceful, loving, courageous, yet militant.

MONDAY, MARCH 18

17,000 Memphians attend rally where Dr. King calls for a citywide march on March 22.



THURSDAY, MARCH 28

Following a snow delay on the 22nd, a march from Clayborn Temple, led by Dr. King, is interrupted by window breaking. Police move into crowds with nightsticks, mace, tear gas and gunfire. A 16-year old boy, Larry Payne, is shot to death. Police arrest 280, report about 60 injured, mostly blacks. State legislature authorizes 7 p.m. curfew and 4,000 National Guardsmen move in.



FRIDAY, MARCH 29

Some 300 sanitation workers and ministers, march peacefully and silently from Clayborn Temple to City Hall — escorted by five armored personnel carriers, five jeeps, three military trucks and dozens of Guardsmen with bayonets fixed. President Johnson and AFL-CIO President George Meany offer assistance in resolving the dispute. Mayor Loeb turns them down.



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3

Dr. King returns to Memphis and addresses rally, delivering his "I've been to the Mountaintop" address at Mason Temple.

THURSDAY, APRIL 4

A sniper, later captured and identified as James Earl Ray, assassinates Dr. King as he stands on the balcony outside his room at the Lorraine Hotel.

MONDAY, APRIL 8

Mrs. King and dozens of national figures lead a peaceful memorial march through downtown in tribute to Dr. King and in support of the strike.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10

Undersecretary of Labor James Reynolds steps up meetings with city and union officials, most without publicity.

TUESDAY, APRIL 16

AFSCME leaders announce that agreement has been reached. The strikers vote to accept it. The strike is over.