



The Mountaintop

By Katori Hall
Directed by Ron OJ Parson



Setting & Characters



April 3, 1968
Room 306, Lorraine Motel
Memphis Tennessee

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Thirty-nine, Nobel Peace Prize-winning civil rights
movement leader

Camae. Twenties, Lorraine Hotel maid.



Synopsis

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. retires to room 306 in the Lorraine Motel after giving a speech to a Memphis church congregation during the sanitation workers' strike. When a mysterious young hotel maid comes to visit him during the night, King is forced to confront his mortality and the future of his people.

Important Themes

LEGACY & IMPACT

The Mountaintop looks at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy as a leader of the civil rights movement, but also asks viewers to understand the positive and negative impact they can make on the world around them.

FACT & FICTION

Playwright Katori Hall's portrayal of Dr. King is not a factual one, but a magical imagining of the last night of his life. Hall uses facts about him as well as rumors from his lifetime to create her character of Dr. King, exploring a humanized King and the place of fact and fiction in how we view him today.

CONVICTION & ADVERSITY

As Dr. King examines his own legacy, Hall looks at the consequences of doing what you feel is right even in the face of difficulty and resistance. Hall's characterization of King gives the audience a window into the personal struggle of a heroic figure.

Fact vs Fiction



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Actor David Alan Anderson

Who was MLK?



Excerpted from the King Center's biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.:

During the less than 13 years of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership of the modern American Civil Rights Movement, from December, 1955 until April 4, 1968, African Americans achieved more genuine progress toward racial equality in America than the previous 350 years had produced. Dr. King is widely regarded as America's pre-eminent advocate of nonviolence and one of the greatest nonviolent leaders in world history.

Who is Camae?



An Excerpt from the Script:

Negro talk strike faster than lightnin'. They say folks was all cryin'. Sangin'. Mmph. Mmph. Mmph. I woulda liked to have seen that. Somethin' to tell my chirren. "When I wun't nothin' but a chick-a-dee, I seen't Dr. Martin Luther Kang, Jr., cuttin' up in the pulpit." Mmmhmmmm. I bet that was somethin' to see.

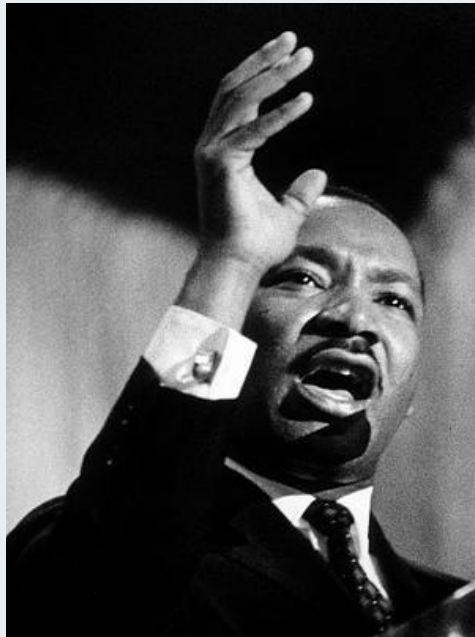


**April 3
1968**

On April 3, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. flew to Memphis to give a speech in support of the sanitation workers' strike. Afterwards, King returned to his room at the Lorraine Motel, which is where *The Mountaintop* begins.

I've Been to the Mountaintop

The conclusion of the speech sets the tone for the play and what would happen to Dr. King the following day:



"Well, I don't know what will happen now; we've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter to with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life—longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land. 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. And so I'm happy tonight; I'm not worried about anything; I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."



April 4 1968

In the evening of April 4, King stepped out onto the balcony of room 306 to speak with SCLC colleagues, who were standing in the parking lot below his room. At 6:05 PM, an assassin fired a single shot from a balcony across the street from the Lorraine. The bullet hit King and caused severe injuries. He was rushed to St. Joseph's Hospital where doctors attempted surgery, but he was pronounced dead at 7:05 PM.

MLK's Associates



Ralph Abernathy



Jesse Louis Jackson



Malcolm X



KING

So are you an honorary Panther?

She growls like a panther; she's pretty good

CAMAE

Walkin' will only get you so far, Preacher Kang.

KING

We're not just walking, we're marching.

CAMAE

Whatever it is, it ain't workin'.

MLK & J. Edgar Hoover

In 1956, Hoover created the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), which was used to target King. Following the 1963 March on Washington, King's home and the SCLC headquarters were wiretapped. Hoover even installed microphones in King's hotel rooms. While no Communist connection was proved, the monitoring produced alleged evidence of extramarital affairs. After the investigation, the FBI anonymously sent King a tape recording of him "carousing" in a Washington, D.C. hotel room and a letter that the SCLC interpreted as telling King to commit suicide to avoid public shame.

King:
What, y'all think you can trap me?
Record me with a woman? Well,
you're not going to catch me! Sending
tapes to my wife. Tryin' to break up
my family. Tryin' to break my spirit!



Post-Play Discussion

- 1) What do you think of when you think of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?
- 2) How do you see the impact of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement? How does his legacy affect you today?
- 3) Why does Hall include the description of Camae's death?
- 4) What do you think of the portrayal of God in the script? What does Hall do for the play by making God an African-American woman?
- 5) Why does Hall imagine King in this way? What does it do for the play?
- 6) Why does Hall choose to end the play by looking at the impact of King, both what his work achieved and what has not yet been achieved?

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