

National Civil Rights Museum

The National Civil Rights Museum , a few blocks south of Beale Street at 450 Mulberry St (Mon-Sat 9am-5pm, Sun 1-5pm, June-Aug 9am-6pm; \$8.50), has been built around the remains of the Lorraine Motel , specifically the room where Dr Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated by James Earl Ray on April 4, 1968. In increasingly hardline speeches, Dr King had explicitly linked black poverty with military spending in Vietnam. He was killed by a single bullet the evening before he was due to lead a march in Memphis in support of a strike by black sanitation workers. The struggle for civil rights is traced from A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, who originally called for a march on Washington in 1941, through to the Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers. Great resources have been devoted to an impressive exposition of the movement's history, along with a few effective exhibits - sitting on the front seat of a reconstructed Montgomery bus that triggers a recorded message instructing you to move to the back. However, for such an emotional subject, it's hardly surprising that the museum has drawn its detractors, who argue that Memphis's role in Dr King's death should be a source of shame rather than a tourist attraction, and that his memory would have been better served by investment in social programs