


**National
Civil Rights
Museum**

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threatened and he was aware of his vulnerability, Dr. King declared he had conquered his fear of death — and he acted accordingly. Shortly before 6 p.m. on April 4, he stepped outside his room, leaned against the iron railing of the balcony and talked casually with his staff as they prepared to go to dinner before the rally at nearby Clayborn Temple.

Then, from a back window of a rooming house 205 feet away, came a heavy-caliber bullet that exploded against Dr. King's right jaw, tore through his neck, severed his spinal cord and hurled him back against the wall.

It was H. Rap Brown who said violence was as American as apple pie, and in that moment of senseless destruction and national loss, it seemed Brown was right. Small places often make large histories: the cockpit of Charles

Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis, Lincoln's box at Ford's Theatre, John Glenn's orbiting space capsule, the back seat of John Kennedy's convertible in Dallas, the spot where Dr. King fell in Memphis.

He was still sprawled on the balcony when Joseph Louw, a photographer with the Public Broadcast Laboratory, snapped the picture that has become one of the most terrible but historic images of the civil rights years.

The picture shows a small group of men and a woman — Andrew Young, Jesse Jackson and Ralph Abernathy among them — standing on the balcony, pointing in the direction from which the shot came.

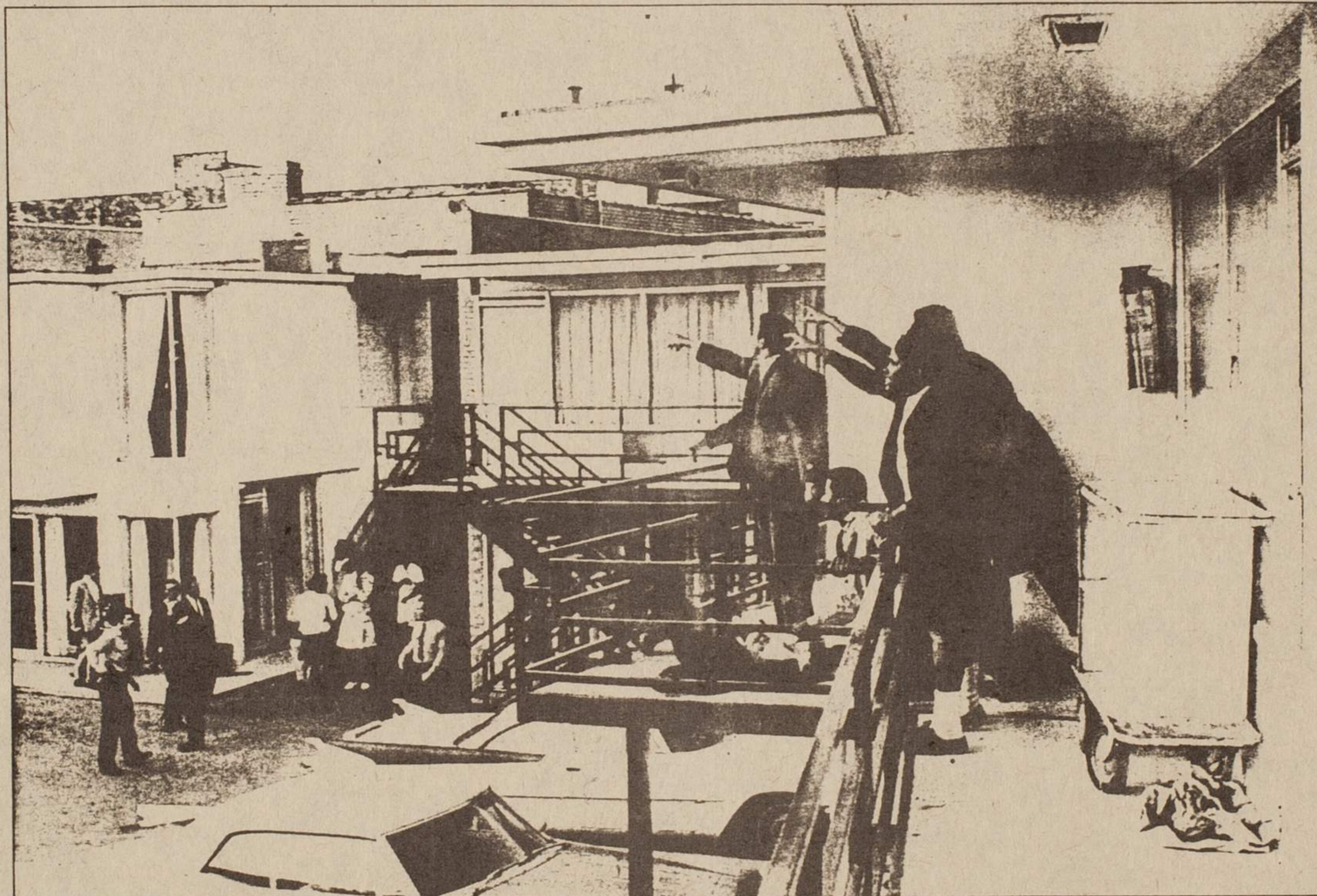
There are other images from the civil rights years: nine black kids facing angry mobs at Little Rock's Central High School; Rosa Parks refusing to give up her bus seat in Montgomery, Ala.; the lunch counter sit-ins, the freedom riders, the dogs and fire hoses in



Birmingham, the voters' march from Selma to Montgomery, James Meredith's march from Memphis, south against fear. There's more. But none is more compelling than the images of Dr. King's

rooms and the balcony where he died. For it is here that time, space and violence converged, leaving us with a history that — given the National Civil Rights Museum — we are not likely to forget.

Rev. Jesse Jackson and Dr. King confer at a Mason Temple mass meeting April 3, 1968, the night before Dr. King's death. He told a crowd of 2,000 that a march planned for April 8 had to proceed to refocus attention on the sanitation workers' strike, even though the march was banned by a federal injunction. "If the police dogs and fire hoses in Alabama couldn't stop us, an injunction in Memphis, Tenn., can't," Dr. King said.



April 4, 1968: Aides stand over the dying Dr. King and point toward where the assassin's shot came from. The photograph was made by Joseph Louw who was working on a documentary.



Coretta King leads a march on Memphis City Hall on April 8, 1968. At left are sons Martin Luther King III and Dexter King. At right is Rev. Ralph Abernathy. An estimated 19,000 people participated.

WITNESS: HENRY LOEB III

Loeb, 70, was Memphis mayor during the 1968 city sanitation workers' strike. He was said to have an aggressive, sometimes confrontational style, which many blamed for the situation that led to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Loeb, who lives in Forrest City, Ark., still sponsors Henry Loeb's Dutch Treat Luncheon in Memphis each month. A stroke in 1988 left him unable to communicate verbally.

Through the years, Loeb gave no indication he felt he was wrong in his dispute with the sanitation workers or that he would change the way he handled it. Supporters have pointed to his strong conservative fiscal record as mayor and said Loeb's actions were based on concern for the city tax dollar and not any racial motivation.



In a meeting with foreign journalists in 1971, Loeb said: "I intensely regret the death of Dr. King here, but we do not like to remind ourselves of something that has hurt the community so much. We are looking ahead, not back."

As Loeb left office in January 1972, The Commercial Appeal editorially discussed his "apparent inability to tolerate differences with his own opinion." The editorial also said, in part: "Henry Loeb has acted as a man without doubts who did what he believed was right for the city. We all have to respect him for that."



With a shotgun hidden under his desk, Mayor Henry Loeb shakes hands with Rev. Joseph P. Toney on April 5, 1968. At center is Rev. Nicholas L. Vieron of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church. They were among 300 ministers from the city's two largest ministerial groups who marched from St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral to City Hall and implored Loeb to recognize the sanitation workers' union and grant a union dues checkoff.



Some cried as marchers, led by Dr. King's widow and other black leaders, arrived at City Hall on April 8, 1968.

CREDIT DUE

The photographs on these two pages are from The Commercial Appeal and Memphis Press-Scimitar files. Photographers included Robert Williams, Charles Nicholas, Barney Sellers, William Leaptrott (deceased), Ken Ross (deceased), Sam Melborn (deceased) and Jack Thornell of The Associated Press. Photographs from the Press-Scimitar files were provided courtesy of the Mississippi Valley Collection at Memphis State University.