



## "Things My Grandfather Said" (Jefferson Rogers of SCLC)



**Alan Howard**  
Accounts Receivable Specialist

As I feel him hovering around me often these days, and perhaps am just beginning to understand why, I am inspired to share some of his truths that he told to me. At least, as best as I can remember. It is tough to say where I end and he begins on this, but, MLK day [and Black History Month], as well-meaning as its expression is when celebrated by the people, often contains a troubling misinterpretation.

What I mean is the idea that what they were fighting for was 'integration' and that they achieved their goals.

Granddad would say that his goal, their goal, was always nothing less than the abolition of social hierarchy itself. He had no interest in integration at all, and I'll leave it there. His interest, and that of the civil rights movement as a whole, was the equality of all humans, with quality of life for all humans.

They were unwilling to accept anything less and never did. A story is told with a happy ending- that while Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, Jim Crow laws were repealed, Black America got "Integrated" and that's all King wanted in the first place, so "end scene."

In truth, King was shot after Jim Crow laws were repealed. King was shot after SCLC tried to begin the next (failed/delayed) stage of the movement. "The Poor People's Campaign." When they started the campaign, King was told he would be killed, unless he stopped: unless he accepted the movement's prior successes as 'enough,' and stopped fighting. He did not stop. Then, he was assassinated. This is what my Grandfather told me.

The phase of the movement they were engaged with when King was assassinated was called "the Poor People's Campaign." The essential idea, as my grandfather told it, phase may sound familiar: the idea was to begin a dialogue across disparate and diverse communities for whom the current socio-economic system was oppressive. Out of that dialogue, create an agenda for both social change and, community improvement, accessing the legal and media infrastructure the civil rights movement had built to allow united communities of oppressed peoples to leverage real change. They planned to reach out across racial lines, especially to any non-white people with a strong social fabric (necessary for good movements)

It would seem that there was some level of concern, that this method would be inherently powerful. Well, such is my interpretation. I wish he could have met you all. In his honor, and Dr. Kings, I remind any celebrating to celebrate the real goal, of absolute human equality, for all future generations.

It is a dream still worth dreaming.

Be Well-