Poor People’s Campaign: Movement and Community
Exhibit Script

Intro:
In the spring and early summer of 1968, as many as 3000 people camped out on the National Mall to demand economic rights. This encampment, known as Resurrection City, began with the gathering of participants from all over the country and the caravans that brought them to the capital. This tour tells the story of those caravans and shows how people communicate their ideas through movement. This movement forged a multi-racial and multi-regional coalition that continued to fight for economic justice even after Resurrection City was demolished.

1. Image:
Coretta Scott King – May 2, 1968
Caption:
The "Freedom Train" started from the site of Dr. King's assassination to officially begin the Poor People's Campaign. Coretta Scott King laid a wreath for her husband, Reverend Abernathy spoke, and more than 100 people began their journey to Washington, DC.

2. Image:
Participants in the Poor People’s Campaign outside bus in Nashville, TN – May 8, 1968
Caption:
The Freedom Train Caravan stopped in Nashville, TN on May 8. The original Memphis marchers were joined by people from Marks, Mississippi on May 5 and wound their way through Tennessee and Virginia on their way to the capital. As with most of the caravan stops, the campaigners rallied in the morning and drove during the afternoon.

3. Image:
Father James Groppi – May 8, 1968

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Father Groppi led open housing marches in Milwaukee and became the de facto leader of the Midwestern Caravan. The members of this caravan were mostly young, African American men who had been recruited to serve as marshals in Resurrection City. The caravan left Milwaukee on May 8, 1968 and gathered participants in major industrial cities on its way to Washington.³

4. Image:
Protesters from the Midwestern Caravan of the Poor People’s Campaign – May 13, 1968
Caption:
These members of the Midwestern Caravan march through Detroit to spread their message and recruit more participants. One man holds a sign saying “I have a dream” with a dead rat hanging below. One of the missions of the PPC was to make the physical conditions of poverty visible.⁴

5. Image:
Brown Berets – May 10, 1968
Caption:
The Western Caravan left Los Angeles on May 10. Many of the young participants were members of the Brown Berets, a Chicano Pride youth organization.⁵ The experience these young people gained in the PPC would influence Chicano activism throughout the following decade.⁶

6. Image:

³ Mantler, “Black, Brown and Poor: Martin Luther King Jr., The Poor People’s Campaign and Its Legacies,” 191.
⁶ Mantler, “King’s Last March: Grassroots Voices, Memory, and the Poor People’s Campaign.”
Reies Tijerina in Denver
Caption:
Reies Tijerina was one of the Mexican-American leaders of the Western Caravan. His popularity in the Chicano Pride movement and a chance meeting with Dr. King shortly before the assassination lent authority to his position. Here he speaks to a crowd in Denver on their way to D.C.

7. Image:
Native American Participant in the Poor People’s Campaign
Caption:
The “Indian Trail” caravan left Seattle on May 10. The caravan carried members of the Flathead, Sioux, Yakima, Seneca, and Hopi nations. Many of these participants had been active in fishing rights struggles and saw the PPC as a way to lobby for tribal sovereignty.

8. Image:
Wagon from the “Mule Train” Caravan
Caption:
The Mule Train left Marks, Mississippi a week behind schedule on May 13. This caravan featured a universal symbol of sharecropping and southern poverty and provided a wealth of stories for local and national media.

9. Image:
Southern Caravan Flyer
Caption:

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8 “Poor From Over Nation Going To Capital: Poor to Follow King’s Route to D.C. with Nine-Part March.”


10. Image:
Help Wanted
Caption:
Hey, HistoryPin user! Do you have an image of the Eastern Caravan?
They started from Brunswick, Maine (though some sources say Boston) and gathered multiracial groups in the cities of the Eastern seaboard.\footnote{“Poor From Over Nation Going To Capital: Poor to Follow King’s Route to D.C. with Nine-Part March”; Mantler, \textit{Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition and the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974}, 134; Mantler, “Black, Brown and Poor: Martin Luther King Jr., The Poor People’s Campaign and Its Legacies,” 191; Nathan Wright, “Civil Rights ‘Unfinished Business’: Poverty, Race, and the 1968 Poor People’s Campaign,” 258.}

11. Image:
Help Wanted
Caption:
Hey, HistoryPin user! Do you have an image of the Appalachian Trail caravan of the Poor People's Campaign?
These participants were mostly poor whites from Kentucky, West Virginia, and Southwestern Virginia.