

All Men Breathe but not all Men Breathe Freely

Saving MLK

A series Bible Presentation

Written by David M. O'Neill

Sandstone Artists

Genre: Historical Political Thriller

Location: Atlanta Georgia

Logline

When FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover declares Martin Luther King Jr. a threat to the nation, a young couple inside King's inner circle is pulled into a covert war between the Civil Rights Movement's vision of justice and the Bureau's ruthless campaign of surveillance, disinformation, and infiltration—culminating in a conspiracy that threatens to silence America's dream.

Tagline

"One dream shook a nation. One man vowed to stop it."

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Series Synopsis

Saving MLK is a serialized historical thriller that unearths the covert war waged between the Civil Rights Movement and J. Edgar Hoover's FBI. The story unfolds through the eyes of Byron and Marie Middleton, a young Black couple whose lives intersect with Martin Luther King Jr. at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Their marriage, their safety, and ultimately their future become entangled with the most dangerous struggle of the era: the fight for America's soul.

Across ten episodes, the series dramatizes the Civil Rights Movement not only as marches and speeches, but as a battle of mythologies: King's vision of the "Beloved Community" grounded in faith and nonviolence, versus Hoover's worldview of surveillance, suspicion, and control. While King mobilizes millions through his words and moral authority, Hoover launches COINTELPRO—a secret program of wiretaps, infiltration, and smear campaigns designed to fracture the movement and destroy King personally.

The series arcs from Montgomery to Memphis, weaving iconic historical milestones—the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Selma, the March on Washington, and King's final "Mountaintop" speech—with intimate personal stakes. Byron and Marie, initially caught between the desire for an ordinary life and the pull of history, become living witnesses to both the dream and the conspiracy to extinguish it.

At its core, *Saving MLK* asks: What happens when the state declares a moral leader its greatest enemy? And what is the cost—for a family, a people, and a nation—when the promise of freedom collides with the machinery of power?

The result is a suspenseful, emotionally charged series that blends family drama, political intrigue, and true historical events into a story of resistance and betrayal, love and sacrifice, faith and terror. It is both a gripping conspiracy thriller and a requiem for a dream that still reverberates today.

Civil Rights Mythology & Stakes

The Civil Rights Movement drew on the language of biblical prophecy, moral justice, and nonviolent resistance. “Freedom songs,” marches, and King’s speeches—“*I Have a Dream*,” “*How Long, Not Long*,” “*I’ve Been to the Mountaintop*”—were not just rallies; they **were rituals of resilience** that turned ordinary people into agents of history. For Hoover and the FBI, the mythology was inverted: King was the “Black Messiah” whose rise could ignite revolution. Hoover’s gospel was order, conformity, and white dominance masked as national security.

Stakes: If King succeeds, America confronts its hypocrisy and reforms. If Hoover succeeds, the dream dies—and with it, the chance for racial justice.

Series Engine

Each episode dramatizes a collision between **civil rights advance** and **FBI countermeasure**: a march, boycott, or speech met with infiltration, wiretaps, and covert discrediting. The serialized spine follows Byron and Marie Middleton, whose proximity to King puts them in the Bureau’s crosshairs, culminating in the lead-up to Memphis 1968.

J. Edgar Hoover’s Mythology & Moves

Hoover saw himself as America’s last line of defense against chaos—his mythology: the FBI as holy guardians of the Republic. To him, King was not a preacher but a radical prophet who could unravel white America.

- **Move #1:** Launches *COINTELPRO*, framing King as a communist pawn.
- **Move #2:** Orders wiretaps, bugs, and poison-pen letters to fracture King’s marriage and credibility.
- **Move #3 (seeded):** Sanctions shadow operatives and “cut-outs” that position James Earl Ray as a patsy.

Civil Rights Movement's Language

- “The Beloved Community” — King’s vision of justice through nonviolence.
- “Freedom Songs” — sung armor against fear.
- “Justice delayed is justice denied” — a rallying cry against the FBI’s stonewalling.

Pilot Beat Sheet

- **Inciting Incident:** Byron Middleton, a loyal worker at Ebenezer, discovers that King’s hotel room has mysteriously been moved to the exposed balcony of the Lorraine Motel.
- **First Act Turning Point:** King delivers his “Mountaintop” speech, aware of threats but undeterred. Byron feels history is converging.
- **Midpoint:** Byron races to Memphis, seeing a sniper’s glint in the window across from the Lorraine. He lunges toward King.
- **Point of No Return:** The shot rings out. Whether Byron prevented the assassination or merely altered it is left in mystery.
- **Final Image:** Young Byron recalls Emmett Till’s body—civil rights history is a cycle of sacrifice.
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Season 1 Character Arcs (One-line each)

- **Byron Middleton** – *Wants* safety, *Needs* courage, *Changes* by realizing survival is not enough; history demands risk.
- **Marie Middleton** – *Wants* family stability, *Needs* to embrace danger, *Changes* by becoming an activist partner, not just a wife.
- **Martin Luther King Jr.** – *Wants* racial justice, *Needs* to transcend fear of death, *Changes* by embodying martyrdom.
- **J. Edgar Hoover** – *Wants* control, *Needs* to confront his paranoia, *Changes* only by doubling down, ensuring tragedy.

Saving MLK – Season One (12 Episodes)

Episode 1 – “The River”

- **Beat Sheet:** Opens with the lynching of Emmett Till; young Byron Middleton and Marie witness Klan terror in Georgia. Introduces the mythic stakes of survival vs. silence. Ends with their fateful connection to Ebenezer Church.
- **One-liner:** *A childhood of terror plants the seed of destiny.*

Episode 2 – “Ebenezer”

- **Beat Sheet:** Byron and Marie seek MLK’s blessing for marriage. Through their eyes, we see King as both man and movement-builder. Hoover first registers King as a “problem.”
- **One-liner:** *Love meets history at the pulpit of change.*

Episode 3 – “The Watchers”

- **Beat Sheet:** The FBI’s COINTELPRO begins: wiretaps, informants, dossiers. Byron’s quiet church duties bring him into contact with threats piling up against King. Hoover and Tolson plot in the shadows.
- **One-liner:** *The dream is born under the gaze of the Bureau.*

Episode 4 – “March”

- **Beat Sheet:** King leads marches that shake the South; Selma looms. Byron and Marie navigate family pressures, while Hoover directs agents to sabotage King’s credibility.
- **One-liner:** *Each step forward is met with a strike from above.*

Episode 5 – “The Wire”

- **Beat Sheet:** FBI bugs King’s phones and hotel rooms. Marriage pressures surface—Byron wants safety, Marie wants purpose. A threatening letter from Hoover’s office is delivered to King.
- **One-liner:** *The line between truth and surveillance grows thin.*

Episode 6 – “The Beloved Community”

- **Beat Sheet:** King delivers soaring speeches (“I Have a Dream”), rallying hope, while Byron witnesses firsthand the hate mail and threats filling Ebenezer’s basement. Marie pushes Byron to take a stand.
- **One-liner:** *A vision of love collides with a machinery of hate.*

Episode 7 – “The Messiah”

- **Beat Sheet:** Hoover labels King “the Black Messiah,” cementing his paranoia. James Earl Ray’s backstory surfaces: broken home, prison, and resentments that make him malleable. Byron feels the noose tightening.
- **One-liner:** *A messiah rises, and a weapon is forged against him.*

Episode 8 – “Cracks”

- **Beat Sheet:** The FBI leaks rumors of King’s affairs; trust within the movement is strained. Byron and Marie’s marriage wavers under fear and economic hardship.
- **One-liner:** *Smear and sabotage strike at the heart of faith.*

Episode 9 – “Memphis”

- **Beat Sheet:** King arrives to support striking sanitation workers. Byron senses a setup when King’s room is mysteriously moved to the balcony. Hoover’s shadow network closes in.
- **One-liner:** *The battleground shifts to Memphis, and the trap is set.*

Episode 10 – “The Mountaintop”

- **Beat Sheet:** King delivers his final speech, aware of death’s shadow. Byron races against fate as Ray positions himself with a rifle. Marie waits by the phone, terrified.
- **One-liner:** *A man of God looks beyond the mountaintop, knowing what’s to come.*

Episode 11 – “The Shot”

- **Beat Sheet:** Byron lunges toward King on the balcony as the shot rings out. Chaos erupts. The FBI scrambles to control the narrative, setting up Ray as the lone assassin.
- **One-liner:** *History pivots in a single gunshot.*

Episode 12 – “The Reckoning”

- **Beat Sheet:** 1975: Byron testifies before the Senate Committee, haunted by what he saw and what he could not stop. Marie demands truth be told. Hoover’s myth prevails—for now—but the dream refuses to die.
- **One-liner:** *The past will not stay buried, and the dream still breathes.*

Comps

1. **The Crown** – Borrowing the *historical dramatization of power versus morality*, but subverting by centering Black resilience over royalty.
2. **Mindhunter** – Borrowing *FBI procedural tension*, but subverting by making the Bureau the antagonist, not the savior.
3. **Selma (Ava DuVernay)** – Borrowing the *intimacy of King’s speeches and organizing*, but expanding scope into a serialized thriller of conspiracy.