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Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition and the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974 (Justice, Power, and Politics)

Gordon K. Mantler

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The Poor People's Campaign of 1968 has long been overshadowed by the assassination of its architect, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the political turmoil of that year. In a major reinterpretation of civil rights and Chicano movement history, Gordon K. Mantler demonstrates how King's unfinished crusade became the era's most high-profile attempt at multiracial collaboration and sheds light on the interdependent relationship between racial identity and political coalition among African Americans and Mexican Americans. Mantler argues that while the fight against poverty held great potential for black-brown cooperation, such efforts also exposed the complex dynamics between the nation's two largest minority groups.
Drawing on oral histories, archives, periodicals, and FBI surveillance files, Mantler paints a rich portrait of the campaign and the larger antipoverty work from which it emerged, including the labor activism of Cesar Chavez, opposition of Black and Chicano Power to state violence in Chicago and Denver, and advocacy for Mexican American land-grant rights in New Mexico. Ultimately, Mantler challenges readers to rethink the multiracial history of the long civil rights movement and the difficulty of sustaining political coalitions.

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