



NATIONAL  
INSTITUTE  
for  
CUSTOMIZING  
EDUCATION

# Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. vs. the Media, 1955 to 1968

*A Quantitative Content Analysis*

## Summer Research Internship, 2021

June - August, 2021

Prepared by Todd M. Mealy, Ph.D. and Steffany Baptiste-Bosco, Ed.D.

Internship Cohort: Jordan Schucker, Nathan Reed, Aaliyah Hayden, Rachel Ruff, Claire DeVinney, Danielle Simmons, Anabel Lee, and Solyana Mesfin.

## **Acknowledgments**

Thank you to Dr. Kelisha Graves and the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Graves, senior director of research, education, and program operations at The King Center, was willing to meet with the internship cohort in the final weeks of the program. Insight and suggestions provided by Graves helped students put the finishing touches on their reports.

The materials contained in this document and/or the document itself may be downloaded and/or copied provided that all copies retain the copyright, trademark and any other proprietary notices contained on the materials and/or document. No changes may be made to this document without the express written permission of the National Institute for Customizing Education. Any reference to this document, in whole or in part, on any web page must provide a link back to the original document in its entirety.

© National Institute for Customizing Education, LLC

**Directors:** Todd M. Mealy, Ph.D. and Steffany Baptiste-Bosco, Ed.D.

## **Contributions by Assignment**

1955-1959: Jordan Schucker and Nathan Reed

1960-1963: Aaliyah Hayden, Anabel Lee, and Claire DeVinney

1964-1968: Rachel Ruff, Danielle Simmons, and Solyana Mesfin

## **Funding**

This project received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. The National Institute for Customizing Education provided access to digital archival subscriptions and books to the interns.

## **Suggested Citation**

Mealy, Todd M. and Steffany Baptiste-Bosco. (2021). "Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. vs. the Media, 1955 to 1968." Lancaster, PA: National Institute for Customizing Education, LLC.

## **Dedication**

This report is dedicated to the cohort of interns who worked diligently for two months analyzing hundreds of newspaper articles during the period of fourteen years that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spearheaded the nonviolent struggle for legal and social equality.

## Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Internship Objectives .....	4
Internship Questions .....	4
Internship Responsibilities .....	4
Coding Procedure .....	5
Internship Expectations .....	5
Supervision and Mentoring .....	6
Termination of Placement .....	6
2021 Summer Research Interns .....	7
<b>General Hypotheses .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>General Finding 1 .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>General Finding 2 .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>General Finding 3 .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Part I: The Early Years, 1955-1959.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Martin Luther King in Context, 1955-1959 .....	16
Data, Analysis, and Findings .....	23
Conclusion .....	34
Bibliography .....	38
<b>Part II: The Middle Years, 1960-1963.....</b>	<b>41</b>
Martin Luther King in Context, 1960-1963 .....	45
Data, Analysis, and Findings .....	56
Conclusion .....	59

Bibliography .....	62
<b>Part III: The Final Years, 1964-1968.....</b>	<b>67</b>
Martin Luther King in Context, 1964-1968 .....	71
Data, Analysis, and Findings .....	94
Conclusion .....	98
<b>Limitations of the Study .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>101</b>

## Abstract

This research report is the final product of the National Institute for Customizing Education's Summer 2021 Research Internship Program titled "Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. vs. the Media, 1955 to 1968." Nine interns with varying degrees of education enrolled in the program, which ran from June 8 to August 12, 2021. Two interns were rising high seniors. Others included first-year undergraduate students, second-year graduate students, and a recent MBA graduate. Interns represented the following institutions: University of Denver, San Jose State University, Dickinson College, Fayetteville State University, Millersville University, The (Seattle) Downtown School, and Eastern (Louisville) High School.

Information about the interns is posted here: <https://www.niceed.org/internships>

Interns met weekly via Zoom communications with the program's directors, Drs. Todd M. Mealy and Steffany Baptiste-Bosco. All interns received a copy of Clayborne Carson's edited *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.* and a shared subscription to newspapers.com. The Institute purchased both items. Mealy and Baptiste-Bosco divided interns into groups of two to three. Each group received a period of King's life and told to use newspapers.com to interrogate how the media presented King to the public.

The following is the research study's problem:

A 1999 Gallup poll indicates that Martin Luther King, Jr. was the second most admired person in the United States during the twenty-first century, behind only Mother Teresa. Despite the ranking, King appeared just twice on Gallup's Top 10 list of most admired Americans during his lifetime.<sup>1</sup> The first was in 1964, the same year that the Nobel committee conferred its prestigious Nobel Peace Prize to King. At the time, many journalists criticized the Nobel committee's decision, declaring that King's nonviolent efforts were confined to the borders of the United States and thus disqualified him from the honor.<sup>2</sup> His second appearance on Gallup's Top 10 list was 1965, when he placed sixth. The last public opinion poll before his death showed just 32% of the public approved of King's direct action approach to the civil rights movement while 63% held a negative opinion about King. With these statistics in mind, the goal for this study is to have research interns evaluate the media's characterization of King during the years between the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-56) and his death (1968).

Based on the content analysis results, this report suggests (1) the *Abilene Reporter-News* provides an overall negative characterization of King when compared to the *Chicago Tribune*; (2) all media sources render a progressively negative characterization of King over time; and (3) waning media portrayal illuminates why King did not make Gallup's Top 10 Most Admired Americans list after 1965 and reveal why his approval rating was so low at the time of his death.

<sup>1</sup> Frank Newport. "Martin Luther King Jr.: Revered More After Death than Before." Gallup News. January 16, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> John O'Hara. "My turn." *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, CA). November 1, 1964. 21.

## Internship Objectives

- To conduct a quantitative content analysis of the media coverage of Martin Luther King Jr. by the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News* from 1955 to 1968
- To show that Martin Luther King, Jr. was the most consequential individual in the United States between 1955 and 1968
- To produce a comprehensive report that explains how the media made it difficult for Martin Luther King, Jr. to persuade the public to support the civil rights movement

## Internship Questions

- To what extent does media coverage of Martin Luther King Jr. between 1955 and 1968 help to advance the civil rights movement?
- How can a content analysis of the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News* prove that Martin Luther King Jr. changed the public conscious about the Civil Rights Movement?

## Internship Responsibilities

- Each intern will receive a directive to evaluate/score the *Chicago Tribune's* and the *Abilene Reporter-News* coverage of MLK during an assigned time period (1955-1959, 1960-1963, and 1964-1968).
- Each intern will write a comprehensive report ranging from 15-25 pages. Interns should conduct a quantitative content analysis of newspaper articles. Interns should also draw conclusions based on the scores. Interns will also conduct supplemental reading to be included in the analysis section of the report.
- Research Steps
  - Receive your assignment
  - Content Analysis of the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News* using [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com)
    - Step 1: Scoring and classification of newspaper content
    - Step 2: Analysis of the newspaper content using statistical methods and historical analysis

## Coding Procedure

Was the article positive, negative or neutral? (You will decide by determining if the article had more positive or negative words, phrases.)

- A positive code: “a leading citizen...”
- A negative code: “King stoked anger among the community....”
- A neutral code: “King led a protest in Birmingham yesterday.”

If an article had four positive descriptions and two negative descriptions, it should be scored as a positive article. If the article had two positive references and two negative references, then it should be scored as neutral. Articles scored as positive should receive an overall mark of one point. Neutral articles receive a zero. Negative articles receive negative one. Interns were told to re-read the article to make sure scoring is accurate.

## Internship Expectations

- Honesty
  - Communicate openly and frequently with Drs. Mealy and Baptiste-Bosco. Share the following information:
    - Work schedules
    - Vacation schedules
    - Days/times that you can perform work for this project
    - The best method and best time of the day to be contacted
  - Ask questions and share confusion about any assignment with Drs. Mealy and Baptiste-Bosco
- Communication
  - Check your email daily for updates, questions, and directives
  - When conflicts or problems surface, share that information with Drs. Mealy and Baptiste-Bosco
  - All questions about assignment details and deadlines should be directed to Drs. Mealy and Baptiste-Bosco and not another intern who may share the wrong information
- Work Commitment
  - Try to designate at least 10 hours a week to this project. We will value your methodical and meticulous approach to this work and trust any delays will be reported to Dr. Mealy.
- Meetings:
  - Interns will attend weekly Zoom meetings at a time everyone could make work. As noted elsewhere in this document, interns should frequently check email inboxes. Interns are also invited to email Drs. Mealy and Baptiste-Bosco questions.

## **Supervision and Mentoring**

- Interns should expect to receive both direct and indirect supervision. Direct supervision is key for the intern to gain valuable feedback from Drs. Mealy and Baptiste-Bosco. Daily and weekly check-ins will occur to allow for feedback and questions.
- **You Will Be Evaluated:** At the end of the internship Drs. Mealy and Baptiste-Bosco will share an evaluation of your work. You may also receive a letter of recommendation upon request.
- **You May Evaluate Us:** While you are welcome to offer us comments and suggestions at any stage of the internship, you will be asked to provide constructive feedback at the end of the program to help future internship programs. We will try to make the evaluation anonymous.

## **Termination of Placement**

- In certain situations it may be deemed that an intern should no longer continue on the project. In this case, Drs. Mealy and Baptiste-Bosco will inform the intern.
- In cases when a conflict surfaces that makes it impossible for an intern to complete the assignment, the intern should communicate that with Drs. Mealy and Baptiste-Bosco immediately. Interns can trust that a warning will be issued before dismissal.



## 2021 Summer Research Interns



*Jordian Schucker  
Dickinson College*



*Aaliyah Hayden  
San Jose State  
University*



*Nathan Reed, MBA  
University of Denver*



*Rachel Ruff  
Fayetteville State  
University*



*Claire DeVinney  
Millersville University*



*Danielle Simmons  
Fayetteville State  
University*



*Anabel Lee  
The Downtown School (Seattle, WA)*



*Soliyana Mesfin  
Eastern (Louisville) High School*



# Hypotheses

---

## Hypothesis 1:

The Texas-based *Abilene Reporter-News* will provide more negative coverage of Martin Luther King, Jr. than the Northern-based *Chicago Tribune*.

## Hypothesis 2:

The media will portray King more positively at the beginning of his efforts in the civil rights movement (1955-57) but will use stronger denunciations with the increase of his social presence after 1959. This means that the data will show a higher neutral score and a consistent negative score across all three stages of King's activism.

## Hypothesis 3:

Evidence will explain why King was so reviled after 1965 – the last time he appeared (as No. 6) in Gallup's Top 10 list of Most Admired Americans.

---

### *GENERAL FINDING 1*

---

**Hypothesis 1: The Texas-based *Abilene Reporter-News* will provide more negative coverage of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. than the Northern-based *Chicago Tribune*.**

	<i>Abilene Reporter-News</i>	<i>Chicago Tribune</i>
1955-1959	25% Positive, 35% Negative, 40% Neutral	17% Positive, 15% Negative, 20% Neutral
1960-1963	4% Positive, 6% Negative, 90% Neutral	9% Positive, 12% Negative, 79% Neutral
1964-1968	26% Positive, 34% Negative, 40% Neutral	22% Positive, 22% Negative, 56% Neutral
Total	18% Positive, 25% Negative, 57% Neutral	16% Positive, 16% Negative, 52% Neutral
Finding	Since the <i>Abilene Reporter-News</i> (25% Negative) has a higher negative score than the <i>Chicago Tribune</i> (16% Negative), the researchers conclude that the data support the hypothesis.	

---

### *GENERAL FINDING 2*

---

**Hypothesis 2: The media will portray Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King more positively at the beginning of his efforts in the civil rights movement (1955-57) but will use stronger denunciations with the increase of his social presence after 1959. This means that the data will show a higher neutral score and a consistent negative score across all three stages of King's activism.**

Positive Scores	Positive	Negative	Neutral
1955-1959	25%	35%	40%
1960-1963	4%	12%	84%
1964-1968	17%	29%	54%

**Finding** While the period from 1955 to 1959 contains a higher negative percentage, there is a significant drop in King's positive rating from 1964 to 1968. The researchers conclude that the data support the hypothesis when considering all the data, including a higher neutral score in the third stage of King's activism.

---

### *GENERAL FINDING 3*

---

#### **Hypothesis 3: Evidence will explain why King was so reviled after 1965 – the last time he appeared (as No. 6) in Gallup’s Top 10 list of Most Admired Americans.**

Overall figures indicate a decline in how the media portrayed King in 1964 to 1968 (29% negative). When the data is disaggregated by year, negative scoring marks are worse in 1965 compared to 1968.

- 1964: 33% Negative Coverage
- 1965: 35% Negative Coverage
- 1966: 24% Negative Coverage
- 1967: 28% Negative Coverage
- 1968: 23% Negative Coverage

**Finding**            According to these figures, we conclude that King’s appearance as No. 6 on the 1965 Gallup poll was determined by his accomplishments in 1964, which included leading the effort to convince lawmakers to pass the 24th Amendment and Civil Rights Act. He was also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. However, his popularity steadily declined as early as 1964, with the peak in negative coverage coming in 1965. From 1966 to 1968, negative coverage improved slightly despite coming out against the Vietnam War and announcing the Poor People’s Campaign. As a result, the findings do not prove the hypothesis.

# ***PART I***

***The Early Years, 1955-1959***

***The Beginning of Martin Luther King's Activism in the Name of Racial Justice***

---

## Introduction:

“Indeed, segregation and discrimination are strange paradoxes in a nation founded on the principle that all men are created equal”<sup>3</sup>

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., known for didactic statements such as the one above, as well as for his leadership during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, is praised today as a hero and a champion of change. Despite his many accomplishments, King’s life and work are often taught superficially in elementary schools across the United States. Stephen Sawchuck, Associate Editor of *Education Week* online, provided a “metaphor for how [King’s] life and legacy are often taught in public schools: truncated and tidied up.”<sup>4</sup> These lessons often lack a thoroughness and complexity that can only be provided through first-person accounts of the events and injustices he encountered. In addition to the biographical lens of King’s life that is examined in many schools, his achievements also stand today as a blueprint for those attempting to affect their own changes in communities via social movements across the nation.

Throughout the entirety of his journey as a pastor, a civil rights leader, a husband, a father, a hero, and much more, King faced backlash from seemingly all possible angles. In January of 1957, for example, a dozen sticks of dynamite were found on King’s front porch in an attempt to harm him and his family.<sup>5</sup> In September of 1958, a Black woman stabbed King with a letter opener at a book signing.

---

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.* Edited by Clayborne Carson (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 1998), 107.

<sup>4</sup> Sawchuk, Stephen. “MLK’s Legacy in the Classroom: Truncated and Tidied Up.” *Education Week* (Bethesda, MD), Apr. 3, 2018. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/mlks-legacy-in-the-classroom-truncated-and-tidied-up/2018/04>.

<sup>5</sup> Associated Press. “Plant Another Bomb at Negro Leader’s Home; Fails to Go Off; Second House Blasted.” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Jan. 27, 1957. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/371506927>.

King was rushed to the hospital with a severe wound that nearly resulted in his death.<sup>6</sup> The many acts of violence committed against a famously-nonviolent leader revealed the extent to which many members of the public feared--and even despised--the concept of change that King represented. They were unable to fathom the notion of equality for all or abandon a mentality of “separate but equal,” which many believed would ultimately result in fewer rights for themselves.

Another way that the efforts of King and his followers were “truncated and tidied up” (or suppressed altogether) was through the use of the media. Newspaper articles, a common source of media consumed by readers across the nation, often pushed their own agendas into the stories which they were reporting. As King became a more prominent voice for the Civil Rights Movement, newspapers on both sides of the fight for desegregation began to use stronger language laced with personal opinions. These agendas became threaded into various articles until consumers across the nation were reading the skewed articles daily.

As the thoughts and actions of the public became more polarized surrounding King and the Civil Rights Movements throughout the 1950s and 1960s, so did the outspoken views of the media, until intense emotions across the country could be readily gleaned from the printed words. Once divisive language became commonplace, more community members began choosing sides of the struggle for racial justice until neutrality on the issue was rare. According to Gallup Polls conducted in the 1960s, King jumped from a 37% negative rating in 1963 to a 63% negative rating in 1966.<sup>7</sup> This increase in negative opinions can be partially attributed to the use of printed media, which if utilized irresponsibly, can stoke the fire of discussion until it burns brightly as war.

---

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.* Edited by Clayborne Carson (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 1998), 118.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Newport, “Martin Luther King Jr.: Revered More After Death Than Before,” *Gallup*, Jan. 16, 2006. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/20920/martin-luther-king-jr-revered-more-after-death-than-before.aspx>.



Today, the turbulence of the Civil Rights Movement and the struggles of King's life are too often sanitized in the eyes of the public. The reality of the blatant racism across the nation in the 1950s and the 1960s has been dulled to protect the minds of children from stories of horror, and to create distance from the legacy of racism within the country at large. As a response to King's sanitation and the subjectivity of the media today, this study seeks to quantitatively determine how two regional newspaper outlets during the peak period of the Civil Rights Movement represented King to a bewildering public. By choosing two specific papers to study, the researchers hoped to focus specifically on the nomenclature used to describe King and his efforts, as well as on the numerical differences between the positive and negative articles found in each paper and geographical region.

The two newspapers utilized in the experiment, the *Abilene Reporter-News* (Abilene, TX) and the *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), were used as samples to summarize King's representation during the beginning years of his Civil Rights leadership. After examining articles found in these papers containing the key phrase "Martin Luther King," conclusions were drawn based upon the number of times that the articles were positively or negatively skewed. For each newspaper article, every phrase that positively described King would be counted against each phrase that negatively described him. After the tallies were made for the total number of phrases, each article was given a score of positive one or negative one, depending on the number of phrases that were skewed respectively.

From the results of this study, the researchers concluded that in this time period (1955-1959):

1. The *Abilene Reporter-News* was more likely to disapprove of King and his efforts, while the *Chicago Tribune* was more likely to show signs of support within the newspaper articles.
2. As King became more socially prominent throughout the 1950s, both newspapers increased use of divisive language.
3. The nomenclature used to describe King in the articles varied based upon the events of the Civil Rights Movement that surrounded King at the time.

## Martin Luther King in Context, 1955-1959:

“Today he is a symbol of the day the Negroes feel is coming.”<sup>8</sup>

- *Abilene Reporter-News*, May 16, 1957

Martin Luther King, Jr., a name not widely known in the United States before 1955, rose to prominence during the period of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in Alabama. The boycott began four days after the famous refusal and subsequent arrest of Rosa Parks for failure to surrender her bus seat to a white passenger. On December 5, 1955, boycotters in Montgomery began to walk or share car rides for transportation, rather than paying fares to travel on segregated buses.<sup>9</sup> That same day, the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) was formed “to oversee the continuation and maintenance of the boycott,” and King was elected as its chairman.<sup>10</sup> Along with providing the logistical, financial and strategic support for the bus boycott, the MIA also sought “to improve the general status of Montgomery, to improve race relations, and to uplift the general tenor of the community,” as King would later state at his grand jury hearing.<sup>11</sup>

By the end of 1955, King earned his doctorate in systematic theology from Boston University, was elected to a leadership position within the MIA, and secured a pastoral role at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery.<sup>12</sup> This academic experience and successive professional roles-- coupled

<sup>8</sup> Associated Press. “Negro Minister to Lead Desegregation Pilgrimage.” *Abilene Reporter-News* (Abilene, TX), May 16, 1957. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/45078036>.

<sup>9</sup> Stanford University. “Major King Events Chronology: 1929-1968.” The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Accessed Aug. 2, 2021. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-resources/major-king-events-chronology-1929-1968>.

<sup>10</sup> Stanford University. “Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA).” The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Accessed Aug. 2, 2021. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/montgomery-improvement-association-mia>.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., “Testimony in State of Alabama v. M.L. King, Jr.,” (Montgomery, AL, 1956), Accessed Aug. 2, 2021. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/testimony-state-alabama-a-v-m-l-king-jr>.

<sup>12</sup> Stanford University. “Major King Events Chronology: 1929-1968.” The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Accessed Aug. 2, 2021. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king->

with inspiration from Henry David Thoreau and Mahatma Gandhi-- provided King with a springboard into his work as a non-violent activist, setting the stage for his role as a national civil rights icon.

On February 23, 1956, King was arrested in Montgomery after an indictment of violating Alabama's anti-boycott laws. He was then released on a \$300 bond.<sup>13</sup> This arrest and subsequent trial marked the beginning of the legal pressure that King would continue to face for the remainder of his life. On March 22, King was convicted of violating the anti-boycott laws and was fined \$500, plus an additional \$500 in court costs.<sup>14</sup> King and his lawyers immediately appealed, hoping to take the case to the United States Supreme Court, and the fine was suspended.<sup>15</sup> On April 23, King and his followers attained a small victory as the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the boycotters. The ruling banned "racial segregation on public transportation within the borders of a state."<sup>16</sup> Despite this, many individuals in the South continued to enforce segregation. Montgomery Police Commissioner Clyde Sellers said he ordered "the arrest of any passenger or bus driver involved in a race mixing incident."<sup>17</sup> Although some found it difficult to accept the change in seating, there were many who continued to support the efforts of King and his vision for the nation.

On November 13, 1956, a second major legal victory came for King and his followers as the Supreme Court voted to uphold the previous decision that segregation on public transportation within state lines was unconstitutional.<sup>18</sup> The following day, King and other boycott leaders recommended that the boycott should end once the Supreme Court orders went into effect and the buses were no longer

---

resources/major-king-events-chronology-1929-1968. and Martin Luther King Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.* Edited by Clayborne Carson (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 1998), 46.

<sup>13</sup> Associated Press. "More Arrests Seen: Minister Held at Montgomery." *Abilene Reporter-News* (Abilene, TX), Feb. 23, 1956. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/39912981>.

<sup>14</sup> Associated Press. "Negro Pastor Convicted in Bus Boycott." *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Mar. 22, 1956. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/371434970/>.

<sup>15</sup> Associated Press. "Boycott Leader Vows He'll Continue Segregation Fight." *Abilene Reporter-News* (Abilene, TX), Mar. 23, 1956. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/39914656/>.

<sup>16</sup> Associated Press. "South Resists Segregation Ban on Buses: Lines Conform But Races Don't Mix." *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Apr. 25, 1956. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/372529358>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Dodd, Philip. "U.S. Outlaws Segregation on All Buses: High Court Acts to Clear Stand." *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Nov. 13, 1956. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/213305256>.

segregated. The crowds occupying the churches agreed.<sup>19</sup> The year-long bus boycott came to an end on December 20, 1956.<sup>20</sup>

The start of 1957 saw King begin to lend his presence and expertise to other integration efforts in the South, as well as to protests against racial inequality in its other institutional forms (such as in education and criminal justice) throughout society. In a meeting of Black leaders on January 9, 1957, a vote resulted in the formation of the Southern Leaders Conference (which would later become the Southern Christian Leadership Conference or SCLC). It was to be “a permanent organization to facilitate coordinated action of local protest groups.”<sup>21</sup> King was named as the Chairman of this organization, stepping into his own as a preeminent leader of anti-segregation efforts in the South.

King rose to prominence on a national stage as well during this time, appearing on the cover of *Time* magazine, speaking at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, and meeting with Vice President Richard Nixon. This renown (though many in the South at the time would argue was notoriety) continued into the following year (1958) with King’s participation in a meeting with President Eisenhower to discuss the state court injunction against federally-mandated school integration in Little Rock, Arkansas.<sup>22</sup> In addition to these integration efforts in education, King was interviewed at an Easter Sunday prayer meeting to protest the electrocution of convicted rapist Jeremiah Reeves Jr. While King stressed the protest was not centered around Reeves Jr.’s guilt or innocence, what was at issue was the readily apparent inequality in the justice system from the severity of punishments given to Black citizens to the double standard that arose from the lack of prosecution and punishment when white citizens committed the same crimes. King said at this protest, “right or wrong, a Negro’s word has little weight

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Author Unknown. “End Bus Boycott Today, Negroes in Montgomery Told.” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Dec. 20, 1956. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/371643687>.

<sup>21</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.* Edited by Clayborne Carson (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 1998), 101..

<sup>22</sup> Burd, Laurence. “Negroes See Ike On Civil Rights.” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), June 24, 1958. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/389978209>.

against a white opponent's.”<sup>23</sup> This racialized phenomenon would rear its ugly head again when it came to subjective representations of King in the media during the 1950s and 1960s.

Of course, becoming more widely known as a leader of a movement who successfully withdrew “cooperation from an evil system”—the phrase King preferred over “boycott”—had its pros and cons. The experience culminated in his first book: *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*, which was published on September 17, 1958.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, it meant that King would begin to have a much more antagonistic relationship with those in opposition. For example, King was arrested on September 3, 1958 for “loitering” on the steps of City Hall in Montgomery, although he was actually trying to gain access to a hearing involving his colleague Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy.<sup>25</sup> At his hearing, King chose to serve jail time rather than pay a fine. In an attempt to deflect from the obvious retaliation against King for being the leader of the successful boycott, Montgomery Police Commissioner Clyde Sellers paid King’s fine, accompanied with a prepared statement to the media in which he labeled King’s arrest and choice of a jail sentence as a “publicity stunt” for the upcoming book.<sup>26</sup> Media coverage of this arrest was skewed towards Sellers’ characterization of what took place and why. This was at the expense of the police brutality that King alleged took place during his arrest, which Sellers and the arresting officers easily dismissed. Even the alleged law violation for which King was convicted (loitering, which included the act of standing around for a lengthy time with no purpose) stems directly from the legacy of segregation that “Black Codes”—and later Jim Crow Era legislation—normalized.

Another 1958 incident which involved both backlash for King’s rising prominence and subjective representations in the media occurred when Izola Ware Curry, a deranged Black woman,

---

<sup>23</sup> Associated Press. "2,500 Negroes Join Alabama Mass Protest: Charge 'Injustice' in Courts." *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), April 6, 1958. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/372562713/>.

<sup>24</sup> Stanford University. "Major King Events Chronology: 1929-1968." The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Accessed Aug. 18, 2021. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-resources/major-king-events-chronology-1929-1968>.

<sup>25</sup> Stanford University. "Major King Events Chronology: 1929-1968." The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Accessed Aug. 2, 2021. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-resources/major-king-events-chronology-1929-1968>.

<sup>26</sup> Associated Press. "Negro Leader Jailed; Police Head Pays Fine" *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Sept. 6, 1958. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/389978887>.

stabbed King at one of his book signings in Harlem, New York. King later reflected on his brush with death: “the lack of restraint upon violence in our society along with the defiance of law by men in high places cannot but result in an atmosphere which engenders desperate deeds.”<sup>27</sup> While King himself processed this traumatic event (and much of the violence that came his way) with a surprising amount of calm and perspective, the media chose instead to cover pro-segregation groups like the “Funds For Isola League,” who sent money to Curry, “to be used by her as needed.”<sup>28</sup> What was called a “desperate deed” by King and his supporters was a normalized and celebrated action by his opposition and some members of the media.

King’s traumatic end to 1958 meant that he entered 1959 with some changes in his priorities. He had wanted to take a trip to India for some time, but events surrounding his activism up until the attack had invariably got in the way. So with his wife and friend Dr. Lawrence Reddick, King embarked on a month-long trip to India where he was inspired by the non-violent resistance to British rule by the late Mahatma Gandhi and his followers. King was also deeply moved by Gandhi’s distaste for the treatment of the “untouchables” (according to the traditional Indian caste system) by the very followers he had been chosen to lead. King spoke of this transformative experience saying, “Gandhi was able to mobilize and galvanize more people in his lifetime than any other person in the history of this world. And just with a little love and understanding, goodwill and a refusal to cooperate with an evil law, he was able to break the backbone of the British Empire.”<sup>29</sup>

Deeply impacted and with a renewed determination, King returned to the United States and what he called the “sea of the Southern segregation struggle.”<sup>30</sup> Throughout the remainder of 1959, his activism increased as he joined a voter registration campaign in preparation for the election in 1960 and

---

<sup>27</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.* Edited by Clayborne Carson (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 1998), 120.

<sup>28</sup> Author Unknown. “Georgia Group Sends Cash to King’s Stabber” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Sept. 24, 1958. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/371906303>.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.* Edited by Clayborne Carson (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 1998), 129.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 122.

collaborated with Black labor leaders to end discrimination. He also relocated to Atlanta, Georgia, which he claimed would give him a “wider base of operations” as the president of the SCLC.<sup>31</sup>

In summary, the successful withdrawal of cooperation from an evil system of segregation in the Montgomery Bus Lines catapulted King’s name into prominence and crystallized his identity as a warrior against the “separate but equal” mentality that reigned particularly in the South--as well as throughout the country--from 1955 through 1959. His impact was apparent by the beginning of 1959, as King was one of twelve men profiled in a book titled *They Stand Invincible* by Robert Merrill Bartlett. The author included a chapter on King, as he believed him to be one of the individuals at the time who was “reshaping our world.”<sup>32</sup> In addition, King’s book *Stride Towards Freedom* was placed on a list of book recommendations titled “Interesting Adult Books of 1958 for Young People,” compiled by the American Library Association (Young Adult Services Division).<sup>33</sup>

As was the case during King’s life and career, however, there was an ample amount of criticism in addition to the praise. King’s book being recommended by the American Library Association upset both the media and the government in Alabama, prompting special meetings of the Alabama Congress and negatively phrased reactions like the Associated Press article printed in the *Chicago Tribune* titled, “Racist’s Book Faces Inquiry by Alabamans.”<sup>34</sup> These events, in addition to the wide array of criticisms and praises of King within various forms of media, contributed directly to his popularity that grew throughout the 1950s.

## Methodology:

<sup>31</sup> Associated Press. “Rev. King To Center His Drive In Atlanta” *Abilene Reporter-News* (Abilene, TX), Nov. 30, 1959. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/46565691>.

<sup>32</sup> Goodwin, Polly. “They Work For A Dream” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), March 29, 1959. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/372944356>.

<sup>33</sup> Goodwin, Polly. “The Junior Bookshelf” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), March 8, 1959. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/370614737>.

<sup>34</sup> Associated Press. “Racist’s Book Faces Inquiry By Alabamans” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), May 4, 1959. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/371189105>.

In order to quantitatively determine the representation of Martin Luther King, Jr. by the media between the years 1955 and 1959, researchers utilized a coding metric paired with newspaper articles published in two major regional outlets. The scoring guidelines consisted of a two-fold analyzing process. The first step was to pull articles from the two newspapers by using the database newspapers.com and searching for articles in the time period containing the entire keyword phrase “Martin Luther King.”<sup>35</sup> The researchers pulled these articles from a Southern United States newspaper--the *Abilene Reporter-News*--and a Northern United States newspaper--the *Chicago Tribune*. Both of these newspapers contained a combination of articles that were printed originally as well as sourced from separate outlets, such as the *Associated Press*.

Once the articles were saved and clipped from the database, the researchers examined their diction, searching for phrases describing Martin Luther King, Jr. with positive, negative, and neutral meanings. Once the article was completely analyzed, it received an overall score of positive one, negative one, or zero based on the cumulative score of phrases from each category it contained. For example, an article with four positive phrases and two negative phrases in reference to King or his work received an overall positive score, along with a mark of positive one. An article with an equal number of positive and negative phrases received a neutral overall score and a mark of zero.

Before the researchers began compiling the newspaper articles from the assigned time period, several hypotheses were made in response to the research question: How does the media represent Martin Luther King, Jr. from the mid-to-late 1950s? Based on the information gathered by the researchers before analyzing the newspaper articles, as well as general background knowledge surrounding the Civil Rights Movement across the United States, the following outcomes were expected:

---

<sup>35</sup> Newspapers.com. *Abilene Reporter-News*. Ancestry. 2021. Accessed Jul. 1, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/paper/abilene-reporter-news/591/>. and Newspapers.com. *Chicago Tribune*. Ancestry. 2021. Accessed Jul. 1, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/paper/chicago-tribune/4351/>.



**Hypothesis 1:** That the Texas-based *Abilene Reporter-News* will provide more speculative coverage of Martin Luther King, Jr. than the Northern-based *Chicago Tribune*. To that end, the *Abilene Reporter-News* will contain more negatively-scored articles.

**Hypothesis 2:** That the media will portray King more hesitantly and neutrally at the beginning of his prominence (1955-57) but will use stronger denunciations with the increase of his social presence (post-1958).

**Hypothesis 3:** That the nomenclature used to describe King will vary depending on the year, events that have occurred, and his social presence in that region. In other words, media outlets will omit King's professional titles ("Rev.," "Dr.," "Rev. Dr."), choosing instead to call him "Martin Luther King" or simply "King" despite the success or failure of the activism/events he leads.

### **Data, Analysis, and Findings:**

Key findings from the research include the yearly numerical scores from the analyzed articles, as well as the significance of the trend in scores throughout the overall time period. In the year 1955, zero articles were published in the *Abilene Reporter-News* or the *Chicago Tribune* that contained the keyword phrase "Martin Luther King." This was likely due to the infancy of King's role in the Civil Rights Movement during this year, until the creation of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and the start of the Montgomery bus boycott in December of 1955.

In the year 1956, the two regional outlets published 31 articles that contained the keyword phrase "Martin Luther King." Out of these 31 articles, 7 were scored positively, 9 scored negatively, and 15 scored neutrally. The *Chicago Tribune* had more articles that were scored positively (5 vs. 2), and the *Abilene Reporter-News* had more articles that were scored negatively (7 vs. 2). Overall, the year 1956 received a score of -1 because of the identification of more negative articles by the researchers.

In the year 1957, 23 articles were published in the *Abilene Reporter-News* or the *Chicago Tribune* that contained the keyword phrase. Out of these 23 articles, 8 were scored positively, 5 were scored negatively, and 10 were scored neutrally. The *Chicago Tribune* had more articles that were scored positively (5 vs. 3), but it also contained more articles that were scored negatively (5 vs. 0). Overall, the year 1957 was given a score of 1 because of the identification of more positive articles by the researchers.

In the year 1958, 27 articles were published in the *Abilene Reporter-News* or the *Chicago Tribune* that contained the keyword phrase. Out of these 27 articles, 7 were scored positively, 17 were scored negatively, and 3 were scored neutrally. The *Chicago Tribune* had more articles that were scored positively (5 vs. 2), and the *Abilene Reporter-News* had more articles that were scored negatively (11 vs. 6). Overall, the year 1958 was given a score of -1 because of the identification of more negative articles by the researchers.

In the year 1959, 14 articles were published in the *Abilene Reporter-News* or the *Chicago Tribune* that contained the keyword phrase. Out of these 14 articles, 2 were scored positively, 2 were scored negatively, and 10 were scored neutrally. The *Chicago Tribune* had more articles that were scored positively (2 vs. 0), but it also contained more articles that were scored negatively (2 vs. 0). Overall, the year 1959 received a score of 0 because of the identification of an equal number of positive and negative articles by the researchers.

Based on the quantitative data found in Tables 2-7, it is evident that all three of the researchers' initial hypotheses were correct. With reference to Hypothesis 1, the researchers discovered that the quantitative and qualitative data analyzed in the study strongly supported the conclusion that the *Abilene Reporter-News* presented more negative views about King than the *Chicago Tribune*. Over the course of the five-year time period, the *Abilene Reporter-News* published 18 negatively-scored articles, while the *Chicago Tribune* published 15 negative articles. Furthermore, the *Abilene Reporter-News* only published seven positively-scored articles, while the *Chicago Tribune* published 17 positive articles.

For the years in the analyzed period, the following scores were reported for each of the newspapers: The *Abilene Reporter-News* received scores of 0, -1, 1, -1, and 0, while the *Chicago Tribune* received scores of 0, 1, 0, -1, and 0. Over the five-year time period, the *Reporter-News* had an overall score of -1 while the *Tribune* had an overall score of 0. These scores, along with the combined periodical scores, prove that the *Reporter-News* reflected more negative views of King and his efforts than the *Tribune*, according to the scoring metric utilized by the researchers.

Hypothesis 2 was additionally supported by the data analysis. The analyzed time period (1955 through 1959) was separated by the researchers into two sections of data in order to calculate the results of this hypothesis. During the first half of the time period (December 1955 through December 1957), 25 articles were scored neutrally. During the second half of the time period (January 1958 through December 1959), only 13 articles were scored neutrally. Although this data supports the hypothesis, the researchers also had to take into account the total number of articles for each year that was analyzed. During the first half of the time period, there were 54 articles that contained the phrase “Martin Luther King,” while in the second half of the time period there were 41 articles. It was calculated that approximately 46% of the articles in the first half of the time period were scored neutrally while approximately 32% of the articles in the second half were scored neutrally.

Quantitatively, the data support the hypothesis that articles at the beginning of King’s social prominence would be more neutral than articles in the later years of his civil rights leadership. Despite this correlation, the researchers would like to note that one limitation of studying this hypothesis was the numerical definition of the neutrality of the articles. For example, if an article contained eight positive phrases and eight negative phrases, it would have been quantitatively scored the same as an article that contained ten neutral phrases and zero positive or negative phrases. Therefore, an article that was realistically more neutral in its diction could have been scored with the same merit as an article that contained more divisive language overall.

With regard to Hypothesis 3, the data generally supported that King's nomenclature varied depending on the year, events that occurred, and his social presence in that region. One way this hypothesis is supported is by the absence of articles mentioning King in 1955. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, which marked the beginning of King's recognized civil rights leadership, commenced on December 5, 1955. The *Abilene Reporter-News* and the *Chicago Tribune* do not mention King prior to this event, until his arrest on February 23, 1956. In the beginning stages of this resistance movement that came to be known as the Civil Rights Movement, many media outlets were hesitant to support or denounce any instances of activism, such as the bus boycott.

Variance in King's nomenclature began in 1956 and crystallized around King's leadership in the bus boycott. In the early months of 1956, at the start of King's leadership of the boycott, he was often referred to as the "Negro minister."<sup>36</sup> Towards the later months of the boycott in 1956, King was more commonly known in newspaper articles as the "bus boycott leader," among other similar titles.<sup>37</sup> Also striking was how King's nomenclature during this window rarely mentioned the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church or referred to him as the leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). Additionally absent during this time period was the mention of his formal title of "Dr." which accompanied King's doctorate degree in systematic theology from Boston University. This proves that the method of identifying King in the media was more connected to his activism than his professional roles, titles, or academic accomplishments.

One limitation of the study was the abstract definition of positive and negative words. By restricting the scoring metric to define words with a ternary guideline, the researchers were often limited to only using diction, rather than being able to use tone, context clues, and the author's point of view in their analysis. If the parameters of the scoring metric were slightly widened, giving researchers the

---

<sup>36</sup> Associated Press. "In Boycott Trial: Defense to Call Final Witness." *Abilene Reporter-News* (Abilene, TX), Mar. 22, 1956. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/39914649>.

<sup>37</sup> Associated Press. "Bus Boycott Ends; Montgomery Quiet." *Abilene Reporter-News* (Abilene, TX), Dec. 22, 1956. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/39928840>.

ability to use these additional linguistic devices, the articles may have revealed more qualitative and quantitative information than they were allowed.

Another limitation of the study included the reprint of newspaper articles in the two regional outlets that were analyzed by the researchers. From 1955 to 1959, 73 of the articles in the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News* that contained the keyword phrase “Martin Luther King” were originally written and printed by another news source. The majority (84%) of these reprinted articles originally came from the *Associated Press*. Because these articles were not originally written or printed in the same region as the newspapers the researchers analyzed, they do not hold the same qualitative merit that originally-printed articles do. For example, an article that was scored positively, but was first written by the *Associated Press* and then reprinted in the *Abilene-Reporter News*, would not necessarily represent the same feelings towards Martin Luther King, Jr. as the editors and staff at the *Reporter-News* hold. Although the regional newspaper outlets had the ability to choose which articles they ran in their papers, the reprinted articles should not have been scored with the same merit as articles that were originally published in the regional outlets.

For further study, the researchers recommend that additional newspaper outlets be analyzed. In order to obtain more accurate data, several regional outlets could be taken into account, in addition to the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News*. Furthermore, several regional outlets should be analyzed in order to more accurately score articles that were printed originally in their respective papers. Since the overwhelming majority (76%) of newspaper articles from the aforementioned regional outlets are reprinted, analyzing more papers from different areas would give the researchers an increased number of original perspectives.

**Table 1.1: Events/Time Period, 1955 to 1959<sup>38</sup>**

Event	Time Period
Martin Luther King is awarded his doctorate in systematic theology from Boston University	June 5, 1955
Yolanda Denise King, Correta and Martin Luther King's first child, is born	November 17, 1955
Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to move to the back of a city bus in Montgomery	December 1, 1955
The Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) is formed and Martin Luther King becomes its first president	December 5, 1955
Montgomery Bus Boycott	December 5, 1955 - December 20, 1956
MLK receives a threatening phone call at night and has a spiritual revelation that allows him to carry on with strength	January 27, 1956
While Martin Luther King is speaking at a mass meeting, his home is bombed. His wife and daughter are not injured, and Dr. King returns home to speak to a crowd where he calls for nonviolence	January 30, 1956
Martin Luther King is arrested in Montgomery after an indictment of violating Alabama's anti-boycott laws	February 23, 1956
Martin Luther King is convicted of violating Alabama's anti-boycott laws, and he is fined \$500 plus an additional \$500 for court costs.	March 22, 1956

<sup>38</sup> Biographical information retrieved from: Stanford University. "Major King Events Chronology: 1929-1968." The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Accessed July 18, 2021. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-resources/major-king-events-chronology-1929-1968>. and Martin Luther King Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.* Edited by Clayborne Carson (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 1998), 40-134.

This fine is suspended after King and his lawyers immediately decided to appeal their case	
The U.S. Supreme Court rules that segregation in public transportation within the borders of a state is unconstitutional	April 23, 1956
The U.S. Supreme Court affirms the lower court opinion in <i>Browder v. Gayle</i> that declares the Montgomery and Alabama bus segregation laws unconstitutional	November 13, 1956
Montgomery City Lines resume all bus routes, and Martin Luther King is one of the first passengers to ride on an integrated bus	December 21, 1956
The Southern Christian Leadership Conference is founded, and Martin Luther King is named chairman (formerly Southern Negro Leaders Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration)	January 10-11, 1957
An unexploded bomb containing 12 sticks of dynamite was found on Dr. King's porch	January 27, 1957
Martin Luther King appears on the cover of <i>Time</i> magazine	February 18, 1957
Martin Luther King attends the independence celebrations of the new nation of Ghana and meets with Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah	March 6, 1957
At the Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King delivers his first national address, "Give Us The Ballot," at the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom	May 17, 1957
Martin Luther King and Ralph D. Abernathy meet with Vice President Richard Nixon and issue a statement on their meeting	June 13, 1957
Coretta and Martin Luther King's second child, Martin III, is born	October 23, 1957
Martin Luther King meets with other civil rights leaders and President Eisenhower in Washington D.C.	June 23, 1958

Martin Luther King is arrested on the steps of City Hall in Montgomery, Alabama for “loitering”	September 3, 1958
Martin Luther King publishes his first book, <i>Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story</i>	September 17, 1958
During a book signing in New York, Martin Luther King is stabbed by Izola Ware Curry with a letter opener	September 20, 1958
Martin Luther King leaves for a month-long trip to India where he meets with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and followers of Gandhi	February 3, 1959
Martin Luther King announces he will be relocating from Montgomery to Atlanta in order to have a “wider base of operations” in his post as President of the SCLC	November 29, 1959



**Table 1.2: Summary of Newspaper Analysis, Dec. 1955-Dec. 1959**

Number of Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr.						Totals
	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	
Positive	0	7	8	7	2	24
Negative	0	9	5	17	2	33
Neutral	0	15	10	3	10	38
Total	0	31	23	27	14	95

**Table 1.3: Summary of Newspaper Analysis, *Abilene Reporter-News*, Dec. 1955-Dec. 1959**

Number of Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr., <i>Abilene Reporter-News</i>						Totals
	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	
Positive	0	2	3	2	0	7
Negative	0	7	0	11	0	18
Neutral	0	4	8	2	4	18
Total	0	13	11	15	4	43

**Table 1.4: Summary of Newspaper Analysis, *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 1955-Dec. 1959**

Number of Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr., <i>Chicago Tribune</i>						Totals
	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	
Positive	0	5	5	5	2	17
Negative	0	2	5	6	2	15
Neutral	0	11	2	1	6	20
Total	0	18	12	12	10	52

**Table 1.5: Percentages of Newspaper Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr., Dec. 1955-Dec. 1959**

Percentage of Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr.						Totals
	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	
Positive	-	23%	35%	26%	14%	25%
Negative	-	29%	22%	63%	14%	35%
Neutral	-	48%	43%	11%	71%	40%

**Table 1.6: Percentages of Newspaper Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr., *Abilene Reporter-News*, Dec. 1955-Dec. 1959**

Percentage of Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr., <i>Abilene Reporter-News</i>						Totals
	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	
Positive	-	15%	27%	13%	0%	16%
Negative	-	54%	0%	73%	0%	42%
Neutral	-	31%	73%	13%	100%	42%

**Table 1.7: Percentages of Newspaper Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr., *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 1955-Dec. 1959**

Percentage of Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr., <i>Chicago Tribune</i>						Totals
	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	
Positive	-	28%	42%	42%	20%	33%
Negative	-	11%	42%	50%	20%	29%
Neutral	-	61%	17%	8%	60%	38%

## Conclusion:

“Right or wrong, a Negro’s word has little weight against a white opponent’s.”<sup>39</sup>

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Throughout King’s life as a civil rights leader, a voice for nonviolence, and ultimately as a symbol for universal equality, the African American pastor faced much adversity. In 1966, King had a 63% disapproval rating in the United States.<sup>40</sup> The rising tensions throughout the 1950s and 1960s surrounding the Civil Rights Movement and changes in legislature culminated in a loathing for King and other leaders of the movement. On September 20, 1958, King was critically stabbed by a woman with a letter opener at his own book signing in Harlem, New York.<sup>41</sup> Although this act of violence was direct, King also faced various forms of microaggressions and covert racism, particularly in his portrayal by the media. Biases against King revealed themselves through the removal of his title of “Dr.” in his early media coverage, as well as the choice of the newspapers to cover more negative moments in King’s life than positive moments.

The Civil Rights Movement is a period of time that is officially over but still reveals its effects day after day in the United States. In a similar fashion of inequity and mistreatment of Black Americans across the country, systemic racism continues to prevail as commonplace and exists outside of scrutiny as “the way that things are.” Police brutality against People of Color, a prevalent side effect of systemic racism, modern parallels the treatment of Black Americans by law enforcement officials during the Civil Rights Movement. Similar to the display of solidarity at the Selma to Montgomery march, organized and led by King from March 21 to March 25, 1965, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement

<sup>39</sup> Associated Press. “2,500 Negroes Join Alabama Mass Protest: Charge ‘Injustice’ in Courts.” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), April 6, 1958. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/372562713/>.

<sup>40</sup> Frank Newport, “Martin Luther King Jr.: Revered More After Death Than Before,” *Gallup*, Jan. 16, 2006. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/20920/martin-luther-king-jr-revered-more-after-death-than-before.aspx>.

<sup>41</sup> DeNeed L. Brown, “Martin Luther King Jr. was Stabbed by a Deranged Woman. At 29, He Almost Died.” *Washington Post*. Jan. 21, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/01/21/martin-luther-king-jr-was-stabbed-by-deranged-woman-he-almost-died/>.

today has spent eight years attempting to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities.”<sup>42</sup>

Following the murder of the African American man George Floyd by a white police officer on May 25, 2020, the BLM movement rapidly caught the attention of people of all races across the United States and around the world. One study conducted by the Equity Institute for Race Conscious Pedagogy analyzed statements made by large corporations, elected officials, professional athletes, and American universities regarding the murder of Floyd and the beginning of the widespread protests.<sup>43</sup> One major conclusion that was drawn from the report included the concept of passive support. Out of 831 statements that were analyzed during the summer of 2020, “97% made no reference to ‘systemic’ or ‘institutional’ racism, thus undermining the BLM message while presenting themselves or their institution as a new ally in the movement for Black lives.”<sup>44</sup> Although few statements directly defended the actions of the police officer, Derek Chauvin, in his treatment of Floyd, few statements were also made that directly condemned his actions and linked them to systemic racism in law enforcement. As the Institute noted, many “statements center Whiteness only to reassure White emotions instead of asserting bold claims that remove the burden of racism off People of Color’s shoulders and transfer it to Whites.”<sup>45</sup> This observation is not only consistent amongst media coverage today, but also that of the media in the mid-20th-century.

The superficiality of many of the statements that were analyzed by the Equity Institute reflected the media during much of the Civil Rights Movement. Although some newspaper articles from the

---

<sup>42</sup> Stanford University. “Selma to Montgomery March.” The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Accessed Aug. 13, 2021. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/selma-montgomery-march>. and Black Lives Matter. “About.” *Black Lives Matter*. Accessed Aug. 13, 2021. <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

<sup>43</sup> Todd M. Mealy, “Performative Gestures: A Content Analysis of Public Statements about Inherent Racism in Policing and Other American Institutions, and Whether Those Statements Benefit Black Americans,” Lancaster, PA: RCP Publishing, Equity Institute for Race Conscious Pedagogy, LLC. Aug. 17, 2020. [https://d373417d-11f5-4516-b9aa-c6fdad8f7f48.filesusr.com/ugd/139279\\_94aa355996a44b0d9296ec77dafba934.pdf](https://d373417d-11f5-4516-b9aa-c6fdad8f7f48.filesusr.com/ugd/139279_94aa355996a44b0d9296ec77dafba934.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 12.

1950s were analyzed that included strong and divisive language, many articles remained relatively neutral on the topic of race relations in America. From December 1955 through December 1957, 46% of the articles found in the *Abilene Reporter-News* and the *Chicago Tribune* were scored by the researchers as neutral. From January 1958 through December 1959, 32% of the articles were scored neutrally. Throughout the entirety of the period from 1955 through 1959, 40% of the articles found in the newspapers were scored neutrally, which is greater than the expected 30% split between positive, negative, and neutral articles. Although the number of neutral articles varied during the individual years of the Civil Rights Movement, the overall findings of this report were similar to the desired neutrality of many lawmakers and corporations when it came to their stance on the murder of George Floyd in 2020. This correlation reveals the concept that no matter the time period or form of media consumed, an innate desire often exists for people to replace their polarizing opinions with sanitized versions that will preserve their public image.

A similar parallel between the BLM movement and King's efforts during the Civil Rights Movement is the assumption of law enforcement officials that Black bodies are automatically threatening. This overwhelming bias experienced by police officers leads to a higher rate of police violence against Black Americans than White Americans.<sup>46</sup> In addition to the blatant murders of Black Americans at the hands of law enforcement officials, the police have also been known to shut down protests at the expense of the rights provided to United States citizens by the first amendment to the Constitution.<sup>47</sup>

In Selma, Alabama on March 7, 1965--a day now known as "Bloody Sunday"--law enforcement officials violently shut down a peaceful march led by activist John Lewis and other

---

<sup>46</sup> Elle Lett, Emmanuella Ngozi Asabor, Theodore Corbin, and Dowin Boatright, "Racial Inequity in Fatal US Police Shootings," *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, vol. 75, issue 4. 2021. Accessed Aug. 13, 2021. <https://jech.bmj.com/content/75/4/394>.

<sup>47</sup> John Eligon, "Black Lives Matter Grows as Movement While Facing New Challenges," *New York Times*, Sept. 3, 2020. Accessed Aug. 13, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/28/us/black-lives-matter-protest.html>.

members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).<sup>48</sup> Protestors were met with police resistance at the end of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, which escalated quickly into beatings and arrests. In America today, several protests inspired by the BLM movement have been similarly shut down by the police, many of whom were following the orders of their state governors. Unfortunately, some peaceful protests have been infiltrated by looters and rioters, and these instances have overshadowed the true aims of the protesters.<sup>49</sup> These intense events have subsequently put many law enforcement officials on edge. Much like the march in Selma over 50 years ago, many BLM-inspired protests are met with resistance before they even begin.

Although the blatant racism of Jim Crow laws in the South has become rare in the United States today, many parallels can still be drawn between the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and the movement for Black Lives today. However, it cannot be said that no progress has been made in the fight for equal rights and improved race relations. Just as Bloody Sunday can be considered a turning point in the history of the Civil Rights Movement, hopefully, too, can the protests today inspired by the BLM movement be considered a turning point in the future for the relationship between Black Americans and law enforcement. As police officers are recently being held more accountable, the actions of leaders during the Civil Rights Movement should also be credited. Without the bravery of those fighting for justice nearly 70 years ago, many today would not have the courage to attempt to affect their own changes. Furthermore, if important media outlets would have refused to cover the events that shaped the country today, the intensity of the original major fight for freedom may have been lost on many Americans. No matter the use of media in the past or present of the United States, it is abundantly clear that history does indeed tend to repeat itself, particularly through race relations and the socially constructed hierarchy of the nation.

---

<sup>48</sup> Christopher Klein, "How Selma's 'Bloody Sunday' Became a Turning Point in the Civil Rights Movement," *History*, Jul. 18, 2020. Accessed Aug. 13, 2021. <https://www.history.com/news/selma-bloody-sunday-attack-civil-rights-movement>.

<sup>49</sup> John Eligon, "Black Lives Matter Grows as Movement While Facing New Challenges," *New York Times*, Sept. 3, 2020. Accessed Aug. 13, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/28/us/black-lives-matter-protest.html>.

## **Bibliography:**

### **Books**

King, Martin Luther, Jr. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.* Edited by Clayborne Carson. New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 1998.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1958.

### **Legal Documents**

King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Testimony in State of Alabama v. M.L. King, Jr." (Montgomery, AL., 1956). <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/testimony-state-alabama-v-m-l-king-jr>.

### **Newspapers**

Newspapers.com. *Abilene Reporter-News. Ancestry*. 2021. Accessed Jul. 1, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/paper/abilene-reporter-news/591/>.

Newspapers.com. *Chicago Tribune. Ancestry*. 2021. Accessed Jul. 1, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/paper/chicago-tribune/4351/>.

### **Reports**

Lett, Elle, Emmanuella Ngozi Asabor, Theodore Corbin, and Dowin Boatright. "Racial Inequity in Fatal US Police Shootings." *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, vol. 75, issue 4. 2021. <https://jech.bmj.com/content/75/4/394>.



Mealy, Todd M. "Performative Gestures: A Content Analysis of Public Statements about

Inherent Racism in Policing and Other American Institutions, and Whether Those Statements Benefit Black Americans." Lancaster, PA: RCP Publishing, Equity Institute for Race Conscious Pedagogy, LLC. Aug. 17, 2020. [https://d373417d-11f5-4516-b9aa-c6fdad8f7f48.filesusr.com/ugd/139279\\_94aa355996a44b0d9296ec77dafba934.pdf](https://d373417d-11f5-4516-b9aa-c6fdad8f7f48.filesusr.com/ugd/139279_94aa355996a44b0d9296ec77dafba934.pdf).

## Web Sources

Black Lives Matter. "About." *Black Lives Matter*. Accessed Aug. 13, 2021. <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

Brown, DeNeen L. "Martin Luther King Jr. was Stabbed by a Deranged Woman. At 29, He Almost Died." *Washington Post*. Jan. 21, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/01/21/martin-luther-king-jr-was-stabbed-by-deranged-woman-he-almost-died/>.

Eligon, John. "Black Lives Matter Grows as Movement While Facing New Challenges." *New York Times*. Sept. 3, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/28/us/black-lives-matter-protest.html>.

Klein, Christopher. "How Selma's 'Bloody Sunday' Became a Turning Point in the Civil Rights Movement." *History*. Jul. 18, 2020. <https://www.history.com/news/selma-bloody-sunday-attack-civil-rights-movement>.

Newport, Frank. "Martin Luther King Jr.: Revered More After Death Than Before." *Gallup*. Jan. 16, 2006. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/20920/martin-luther-king-jr-revered-more-after-death-than-before.aspx>.

Sawchuk, Stephen. "MLK's Legacy in the Classroom: Truncated and Tidied Up." *Education Week* (Bethesda, MD), Apr. 3, 2018. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/mlks-legacy-in-the-classroom-truncated-and-tidied-up/2018/04>.

Stanford University. "Major King Events Chronology: 1929-1968." The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Accessed July 18, 2021. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-resources/major-king-events-chronology-1929-1968>.

Stanford University. "Selma to Montgomery March." The Martin Luther King, Jr.

Research and Education Institute. Accessed Aug. 13, 2021. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/selma-montgomery-march>.

# ***PART II***

***The Middle Years, 1960-1963***

***Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. vs. the Media from 1960-1963***

---

## Introduction:

“Violence is an old story for the 31-year-old King, who moved to the forefront of the integration battle preaching what he called the light of love as the only answer to racial hate. He has known almost constant personal strife since 1954, the year of the historic U.S. Supreme Court school desegregation decision, when he went to Montgomery, Ala. as an obscure Baptist pastor.”<sup>50</sup> This March 1960 characterization of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. printed in the *Abilene Reporter-News* is fairly consistent with many portrayals of King during his activism. Although a beloved figure today, in his lifetime, King was not highly regarded.<sup>51</sup>

At the time of this study, 53 years have passed since the assassination of King in 1968, and he is just as well-known now as he was during his lifetime. His birthday is a federal holiday, and a memorial honoring him stands in Washington D.C. between those of Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt. Despite the fame of King’s legacy, many aspects of his life remain unrecognized. James C. Cobb, professor emeritus of history at the University of Georgia, points out that though King’s modern approval rating tops 90%, it was barely 25% at the time of his death.<sup>52</sup> Why is the collective memory of King so different from the public reaction to his activism during his lifetime? Understanding media coverage of King during his life contextualizes both the opposition to justice that he faced and criticism of social movements today.

Our research question is: how does the media represent Martin Luther King, Jr. in the early 1960s? This study of King quantitatively analyzed the depiction of him between two major newspapers from 1960 to 1963. The *Chicago Tribune* was a newspaper based in Chicago, while the *Abilene Reporter-News* was based in Texas. Both newspapers frequently mentioned King. In this study, we

---

<sup>50</sup> Neil Gilbride. “Integration Unstoppable, Says Veteran Campaigner.” newspapers.com. *Abilene Reporter-News*, March 10, 1960.

<sup>51</sup> Nicolas Boyon. “A 90% Favorability Rating for Martin Luther King Jr. on His 90th Birthday.” ipsos.com. Ipsos, January 8, 2019.

<sup>52</sup> Cobb, James C. “Even Though He Is Revered Today, MLK Was Widely Disliked by the American Public When He Was Killed.” Smithsonian.com. Smithsonian Institution, April 4, 2018.

decipher through both newspapers in order to understand the media's involvement throughout King's time period. The main idea of this study is to establish the effect the newspapers had on the public's knowledge in regards to King's involvement in the civil rights movement. Hence, our analysis observed passages pertaining to King that were subjective, whether they were positive, negative, or neutral they were still considered to be subjective. Furthermore, the goal of the study is to expose media coverage during this time period. Newspapers were essential to communication and persuasion of society, the study will reinforce that the media did influence societal beliefs of King.

King was one of the most influential leaders of the civil rights movement in America who is known for his commitment to nonviolence. He was born on January 15, 1929 to Martin Luther King, Sr. and Alberta Williams in Atlanta, Georgia. Shortly after he received a doctorate from Boston University, he met Coretta Scott, whom he married in 1953. They had four children: two sons and two daughters.<sup>53</sup>

King first rose to prominence among the black community in 1955. During his tenure as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, he was politically active. He joined the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter, and before the end of the year, he was a member of the executive committee.<sup>54</sup> His first large call to action was Rosa Parks' arrest, which caused him to lead the historic Montgomery bus boycott: a nonviolent demonstration that lasted 381 days.<sup>55</sup> This gained him national attention, and from then on, he was constantly in the spotlight.

During King's lifelong fight for desegregation, he served as the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), mobilized a campaign against segregation in Birmingham, was at the forefront of the March on Washington, and founded the Poor People's Campaign.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> "Martin Luther King Jr. - Biographical." nobelprize.org. The Nobel Prize.

<sup>54</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (1998), 46-49.

<sup>55</sup> "Martin Luther King Jr." thekingcenter.org. The King Center.

<sup>56</sup> "Martin Luther King Jr." The King Center.

In 1960, “A period began in which the emphasis shifted from the slow court process to direct action”.<sup>57</sup> King engaged in the widespread sit-in movement, for which he was arrested in Atlanta.<sup>58</sup> In 1962, King was heavily involved in the Albany Movement.<sup>59</sup> In 1963, King led the Birmingham campaign.<sup>60</sup>

Media in the 1960s had a uniquely polarizing effect on viewers. Lehigh University professor of Political Science Edward Morgan points out that the advent of television led media providers to publicize the flashiest programming possible, without elaborating on the causes and consequences of the events they covered.<sup>61</sup> In some cases, these tactics could be taken advantage of successfully by the organizers of the civil rights movement, including King. Davi Johnson, Southwestern University associate professor of communications, notes that the memorable photos of child protestors being attacked with police dogs and firehoses in the 1963 Birmingham marches created a sense of horror and sympathy for many viewers.<sup>62</sup> Unfortunately, this phenomenon cut both ways. Americans might have felt compassion for a school child being tortured with a firehose, but that didn’t always translate to a robust understanding of or sympathy for the strategies of the civil rights movement.. In June of 1963, 60% of Americans thought that protests and demonstrations were hurting the cause of civil rights. By the spring of 1964, that number was 74%.<sup>63</sup>

After thoroughly analyzing articles from both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News*, we conclude that there were many neutral articles. The *Chicago Tribune* provided more in-depth articles about the civil rights movement and King’s leadership than the *Abilene Reporter-News*, which

---

<sup>57</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 139.

<sup>58</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 142.

<sup>59</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 152-155.

<sup>60</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 170.

<sup>61</sup> Michael Stamm. *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 7, no. 1 (2013): 149-52.  
doi:10.14321/jstudradi.7.1.0149.

<sup>62</sup> Johnson, Davi. "Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 Birmingham Campaign as Image Event." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2007): 1-25.

<sup>63</sup> Reinhart, R.J. "Protests Seen as Harming Civil Rights Movement in the '60s." Gallup Vault. Gallup, January 21, 2019.

provided many *Associated Press* articles that were not opinionated. Articles from each newspaper outlet provided underlying information that would incur the reader to decide if it was a positive or negative comment. If articles were neutral, they would evidently include instances of violent or non-passive protest but describe them in a factual manner. Even when King wasn't directly involved with these protests, he was still linked to them because of his reputation and platform as a civil rights activist. There were also articles that reported on King's leadership of nonviolent protest, such as the freedom rides. We noticed that in 1961, most of the *Abilene Reporter-News* articles were *Associated Press* articles, which could have led to the increase in positive and neutral articles. In contrast, the *Chicago Tribune* provided more editorial articles that exposed frustrations or admiration for King. Even though most articles were neutral or positive most of the time, negative articles seemed to weigh more on the reputation of the movement and King. As time went on, frustration about lack of change or too much change was more represented in articles.

Based on our findings, our report argues that there is no pattern regarding the number of years after 1960 and the media's portrayal of King. Rather, King's representation in the media varied every year depending on current events and the general status of the civil rights movement. In addition, for every year in our time period, a majority of the articles from the *Chicago Tribune* and *Abilene Reporter-News* were neutral.

### **Martin Luther King in Context, 1960-1963:**

In April of 1960, the *Abilene Reporter-News* ran an *Associated Press* article detailing "growing tension in the South" amid "sit-downs against segregated lunch counters."<sup>64</sup> It also reported that Martin Luther King Jr. would speak at a conference of Southern college students. This story came in the midst of the Southern sitdown movement, which began in February of 1960 and continued through much of the year. In his autobiography, King described the movement as "electrifying...a glowing example of

---

<sup>64</sup> Associated Press. "Negroes from Eight States to Plan Sitdown Procedure." *Abilene Reporter-News*. April 15, 1960: 50. [Newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).

disciplined, dignified nonviolent action against the system of segregation.”<sup>65</sup> By July of 1960, the Greensboro, North Carolina Woolworth’s lunch counter that had been the scene of the first sit-in was integrated.<sup>66</sup>

Along with participating in several sit-ins, King served as an inspiration and spokesperson for the demonstrators and often praised their work in public. During the spring of 1960, when interest in the sit-ins hit its zenith, both the *Tribune* and the *Reporter-News* ran several articles about King’s involvement with the sit-ins. In April, he spoke at a post-sit-in rally,<sup>67</sup> said that he believed that the protests would be deemed legal in courts, and described protesting against segregation as a “moral obligation” against “blatant injustice.”<sup>68</sup> In May, he suggested that similar sit-in tactics might be used to achieve racial equality in registering for elections.<sup>69</sup>

Unfortunately, the successful sit-in protests were not the only notable events in 1960 for King. King was tried for perjury on the allegation that he had lied about his state income taxes for 1956 and 1958. Alabama Governor John Patterson, renowned for his attempts to derail the civil rights movement, personally ensured that the case was prosecuted. Despite the fact that the state’s case was shaky—King’s bank records had been viewed without a warrant, and the charge of perjury rather than tax evasion was a transparent attempt to link him to a more serious crime—King was certain that he would be convicted. Instead, on May 28, an all-white jury in Montgomery returned a verdict of “not guilty.”<sup>70</sup>

In support of King, the *New York Times* ran an ad before his trial asking for donations to cover his legal expenses, an action which landed the *Times* in its own legal woes in September of 1960.

---

<sup>65</sup> King Jr., Martin Luther. 1998. “The Sit-In Movement.” In *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* edited by Clayborne Carson, 135-141. New York City: Grand Central Publishing.

<sup>66</sup> Ray, M.. “Greensboro sit-in.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 22, 2020.

<sup>67</sup> Associated Press. “Negroes from Eight States to Plan Sitdown Procedure.” *Abilene Reporter-News*. April 15, 1960: 50. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>68</sup> Associated Press. “King Thinks Negro Sit-In Shows Will Be Upheld Legally.” *Abilene Reporter-News*. April 18, 1960: 24. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>69</sup> Associated Press. “Nonviolent Sit-Ins Said to Be Used for Election Voting.” *Abilene Reporter-News*. May 12, 1960: 24. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>70</sup> Rubinowitz, Leonard. “Martin Luther King Jr.’s Perjury Trial: A Potential Turning Point and a Footnote to History.” *Indiana Journal of Law and Social Equality* 5, no. 2 (2017): 237-279.



According to the Chicago Tribune, “suits were filed in the state court...on the theory that an advertisement...libeled Gov. John Petterson and the mayor and two city commissioners.”<sup>71</sup> After being ordered to pay \$500,000 in November of 1960, the Times successfully petitioned in June of 1961 to argue their appeal in the United States District Court rather than the plaintiff-friendly Alabama Circuit court.<sup>72</sup>

On September 23, King received a fine and a twelve month jail sentence for driving with an improper license.<sup>73</sup> After moving from Montgomery to Atlanta, King had failed to acquire a Georgia driver’s license within the requisite ninety days. His sentence was suspended on probationary conditions, including a stipulation that he not commit any crimes.<sup>74</sup>

On October 19, King was arrested for participating in a sit-in in Atlanta, which carried a possible jail sentence of four months.<sup>75</sup> The *Abilene Reporter-News* lamented, “Who really believes that Reverend King, a recipient of degrees from five colleges, must spend four months in custody because his driving is a menace to the people of Georgia?...He is not being punished for his real offense, but for another one...we like courts that meet real instead of pretended issues and prosecutions that level with the people.”<sup>76</sup> The charges were dropped in exchange for an end to both sit-ins and lunch counter segregation in Atlanta.<sup>77</sup>

Although the charges were dropped, the arrest violated the terms of King’s parole and reopened the possibility that he might serve the suspended twelve months from the earlier traffic violation. Although King was originally denied bail, an intervention from John and Robert Kennedy influenced

---

<sup>71</sup> “Libel in Alabama.” *Chicago Tribune*. September 28, 1960: 16. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>72</sup> “Times Libel Suits Kept in Federal Court.” *Chicago Tribune*. June 28, 1961: 55. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>73</sup> “Martin Luther King, Jr. - Arrests,” The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University.

<sup>74</sup> Warren, Michael, “The Case for a Historic Marker; Commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr.,” DeKalb History Center.

<sup>75</sup> “Martin Luther King, Jr. - Arrests,” The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University.

<sup>76</sup> “Justice?.” *Abilene Reporter-News*. Oct 30, 1960: 18. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>77</sup> Warren, Michael, “The Case for a Historic Marker; Commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr.,” DeKalb History Center.

the judge to temporarily release King from the Dekalb County Jail on bond pending appeal.<sup>78</sup> In March of 1961, the Georgia Court of Appeals ruled in agreement with King's attorney, Donald L. Hollowell, who reasoned that King's arrest violated his constitutional rights by seeking to enforce segregation.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the twelve month sentence length was legal malpractice, as the maximum sentence for King's offense was six months, and the sentence was voided.<sup>80</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1961, King led an effort by young adults to desegregate southern transportation: "After the bus burning episode in Anniston, Ala., and the violent mob scenes in Birmingham and Montgomery, the Mississippi reception of the Freedom Riders came as something of a surprise...The Freedom Riders came, they integrated and were jailed."<sup>81</sup> Because of the violent nature of much opposition to the Freedom Riders, the focus of many articles mentioning King is not solely on him. His involvement in the Freedom Rides was as an advisor and a spokesperson, although he was included in a June 1961 injunction against aiding passengers "traveling in interstate commerce thru or in Alabama for the purpose of testing state or local laws."<sup>82</sup> Despite scorching resistance and constant danger to the Freedom Riders, their campaign was successful. In October of 1961, "three major railroads...ordered racial desegregation of all of their facilities in the South."<sup>83</sup>

The end of 1961 saw King and others arrested during a series of marches in Albany, Georgia, after which the protestors originally elected to stay in prison rather than be released on bail.<sup>84</sup> After

---

<sup>78</sup> Warren, Michael, "The Case for a Historic Marker; Commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr.," DeKalb History Center.

<sup>79</sup> "Lawyers Seek to Void Negro Pastor's Term." Chicago Tribune. February 9, 1961: 56. Newspapers.com.

<sup>80</sup> "Atlanta Pact Adopted to End Sit-Ins." Chicago Tribune. March 8, 1961: 7. Newspapers.com.

<sup>81</sup> Mulligan, Hugh. Associated Press. "Can Nonviolence Continue?." Abilene Reporter-News. July 16, 1961: 73. Newspapers.com.

<sup>82</sup> "King Is Included." Chicago Tribune. June 3, 1961: 3. Newspapers.com.

<sup>83</sup> Associated Press. "3 Major Railroads Set Desegregation." Abilene Reporter-News. October 17, 1961: 30. Newspapers.com.

<sup>84</sup> "King Among 266 Negroes Being Held." Abilene Reporter-News. Dec 17, 1961: 57. Newspapers.com.

hearings were postponed indefinitely, many protestors, including King, chose to post bail to wait for the beginning of legal proceedings.<sup>85</sup>

In 1962, the media's coverage of King was quantitatively neutral. A majority of the articles published in the *Chicago Tribune* and *Abilene Reporter-News* were *Associated Press* articles that factually reported on events and included quotes from involved parties.

In the first half of the year, a limited number of articles mentioned King. January through June accounted for only 19% of the total number of articles that mentioned King from both newspapers in 1962. In those articles, King was not the main focus: he was mentioned in relation to other figures, such as Coretta Scott King and Rev. Ralph W. Abernathy. This lack of coverage was caused by King's inactivity in the beginning months of 1962. In December of 1961, King was summoned to Albany by W. G. Anderson, leader of the Albany Movement.<sup>86</sup> King described Albany as "a symbol of segregation's last stand."<sup>87</sup> It became a target city of the civil rights movement, and the Albany Movement led many nonviolent demonstrations.<sup>88</sup> But after that uprising, the Albany Movement paused protest activity until the summer.

On July 10, 1962, King, Abernathy, and two others chose to spend 45 days in jail instead of paying fines for parading without a permit during the December demonstrations.<sup>89</sup> In 1960, the jailing of demonstrators was included in articles to criminalize supporters of the civil rights movement. But in 1962, the jailing of demonstrators brought to the public's attention the strength and momentum of the integration movement in Albany. Therefore, we did not mark phrases that referenced arrests or incarceration as negative, and the media's portrayal of jail-ins was quantitatively neutral. An article in the *Abilene Reporter-News* titled "Negroes Protest Jailing of King" that was published on July 12 is an

---

<sup>85</sup> "Negro Hearing in Georgia is Postponed Indefinitely." *Abilene Reporter-News*. Dec 19, 1961: 34. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>86</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 153.

<sup>87</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 153.

<sup>88</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 154.

<sup>89</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 154.

example of a typical report on a jail-in. The article includes information about the protest, how the demonstrators were taken to jail, King's situation in jail, and nonviolent protests happening in other parts of the country. The article contains quotes from civil rights leaders and the police chief, and it highlights how the jail-in was a sign of progress for integrationists: "In sending out the marchers, King's aide, the Rev. Wyatt T. Walker of Atlanta, said, 'You are the first wave to make the initial confrontation with evil.' 'You have the honor of joining Dr. King and Abernathy,' he said."<sup>90</sup>

King's bond was paid by an unknown person two days later, and he was released from jail. The Albany Movement was not deterred by this news though, and they continued to stage protests. With the shared leadership between the Albany Movement and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which King was the president of, nonviolence persisted.<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately, a peaceful Albany Movement demonstration on July 24 became a victim of police brutality. In response to the officials' harassment, some black onlookers who were not a part of the group "hurled bottles and stones at the police."<sup>92</sup> Following the incident, the *Chicago Tribune* published articles that focused more on the violence and how Governor Vandiver felt the need to alert national guardsmen. A quote from a *Chicago Tribune* article reads, "The governor, asked to spell out just what people the guardsmen would move from Albany, said, 'I'm referring to Martin Luther King and agitators who are keeping those people constantly disturbed and upset.'"<sup>93</sup> The *Abilene Reporter-News* focused more on the court injunction that was the cause of the demonstration. A quote from an *Abilene Reporter-News* article reads, "Integrationists seek court action today to upset a federal judge's injunction barring them from staging

---

<sup>90</sup> Associated Press. "Negroes Protest Jailing of King." *Abilene Reporter-News*. July 12, 1962: 22. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>91</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 155.

<sup>92</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 159.

<sup>93</sup> United Press International. "Alert Georgia Guard in Racial Tension." *Chicago Tribune*. July 27, 1962: 10. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

mass demonstrations and other desegregation activities in Albany.”<sup>94</sup> The injunction was soon lifted by Chief Judge Elbert Tuttle of the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.<sup>95</sup>

During this time of racial strife, President Kennedy showed a lack of interference. King “felt at points that he was so concerned about being president of the United States that he would compromise basic principles to become president.”<sup>96</sup> Black citizens who helped Kennedy win the presidency in 1960 felt disappointed in him.<sup>97</sup>

After King “agree[d] to halt demonstrations” in Albany on August 10, his focus shifted to Montgomery, Alabama for the last months of 1962.<sup>98</sup> However, the civil rights movement seemed to be in a deadlock. For every positive event that there was to write an article about, there was a negative one. Three consecutive articles that mention King in the *Abilene Reporter-News* are titled “Klan Leaders Call for Unity Effort,” “Negro to Seek Georgia Senate,” and “Alabama Studies Militia Program.”<sup>99</sup> As the year came to a close, both sides were steadfast in their efforts. After suffering an attack from an American Nazi, King prepared to integrate five black students into the University of Alabama.<sup>100</sup> Meanwhile, white integrationists continued to ensure that it was “social suicide in Alabama to even suggest that the state yield to integration edicts, either by law or court order.”<sup>101</sup>

“Is it a hate movement? In an effort to dramatize race prejudice, they have overdramatized”.<sup>102</sup> In the 1963 articles about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr neutrality and biases seemed to be a commonality.

<sup>94</sup> Associated Press. “Integrationists Seek Court Action to Upset Injunction.” *Abilene Reporter-News*. July 23, 1962: 35. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>95</sup> Associated Press. “Governor Warns of Police Power While Negroes Pray.” *Abilene Reporter-News*. July 26, 1962: 7. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>96</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 150.

<sup>97</sup> Associated Press. “Clergymen End Long Jail Stay.” *Abilene Reporter-News*. September 4, 1962: 24. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>98</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 151.

<sup>99</sup> *Abilene Reporter-News*.

<sup>100</sup> Associated Press. “American Nazi Hits Rev. King; Fined, Jailed.” *Chicago Tribune*. September 29, 1962: 2. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>101</sup> Associated Press. “Alabama Resists Violence.” *Abilene Reporter-News*. December 14, 1962: 40. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>102</sup> “A Serious Movement”. *Chicago Tribune*. 24 February 1963. 6. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com)

Throughout the articles biases were hidden within the articles as contradicting phrases. While Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was praised for his nonviolent tactics, he would also be criticized for his involvement politically and socially amongst his community. During 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's involvement within society was reported in a controversial and contradicting way. MLK's involvement pertaining to his tactics and connection to other advocates for civil rights and political leaders was questioned. The presence of MLK in our society altered individuals' beliefs, additionally the newspapers during 1963 abetted partiality.

In 1963 the newspaper article from both the Chicago Tribune and the Abilene Reporter-News told a story of the civil rights movement aligning with King's agenda. While the vast amount of newspaper articles were neutral, it seemed that some articles displayed bias. In 1963 the Chicago Tribune seemed to have more bias while the Abilene Reporter-News was neutral. The articles similarly discussed King's involvement, decriminalized him, and questioned his inspiration within society. Through the year King was depicted as inadequate and controversial, but towards the end of 1963 King was portrayed as an influential community leader.

King's agenda for change was frequently doubted in the media, constantly as a civil rights leader King's credibility for change was disputed. In February 1963 an article from the *Chicago Tribune* titled "A Serious Movement" was published stating that, "'Is it a serious movement?' Yes it is, and it is growing. It appeals to those who have been injured by white men".<sup>103</sup> It seemed that this article fed onto the doubts of society about the civil rights movement, the article pondered on the thought of King's movement not being serious enough. The article seemed to portray White fear of the civil rights movement. Instead of explaining that desegregation was the goal of the movement, it exerted that only those oppose to discrimination in society would benefit. Contradictory, the article went on to acknowledge that King's leadership encouraged behavior, "...more consistent with the creed of Jesus

---

<sup>103</sup> "A Serious Movement". *Chicago Tribune*. 24 February 1963. 6. [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com)

than the program of Black Muslims”.<sup>104</sup> Even though the article did clarify that King’s movement was peaceful it still seemed to compare it to the Black Muslims movement. Even though both were movements the article claimed that King’s movement wasn’t as bad as the wrath of the Black Muslims movement because unlike King’s movement Black Muslims didn’t want to swear their allegiance with the country.

Furthermore, articles in the *Chicago Tribune* compared to *Abilene Reporter-News*, around this year would decriminalize King stating that, “...in open defiance of a court order, marched from the church at the head of 40 official marchers, singing the hymn, ‘We Will Overcome’...”.<sup>105</sup> This short passage seemed to be contradicting because it declares that King violated the law, but then the passage explains King’s usage of peaceful protest tactics. An article from the *Abilene Reporter News* on the same day published an article explaining that the protest had no violence at all, but instead described the march as a “protest parade” in which King was arrested.<sup>106</sup> Both newspapers covered the current event that had happened that day, one with more prejudice than the other.

Moreover, both newspapers could contradict each other at certain instances when it came to many current events involved around the civil rights movement. But, it seemed that both newspapers covered King’s arrest and citation of contempt in court in April of 1963 similarly. Knowing that King wouldn’t have the ability to post bail he still wanted to march. Even though the, “...bondsman who had been furnishing bail for the demonstrators notified [them] that he would be unable to continue” King and some of his colleagues still led the demonstration.<sup>107</sup> King’s inability to post bail altered the original plan of the demonstration, which led to King resigning in solitary confinement in jail. Due to the failed plan King had no way of being able to bail himself out, which leads Mrs. Coretta King to call President Kennedy. Following these series of events the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News* issued

<sup>104</sup> “A Serious Movement”. *Chicago Tribune*. 24 February 1963. 6. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com)

<sup>105</sup> “Martin King Jailed; Police Block March”. *Chicago Tribune*. 13 April 1963. 1. [Newspaper.com](http://Newspaper.com)

<sup>106</sup> “Rev. King Jailed in Protest March”. *Abilene Reporter-News*. 13 April 1963. 5. [Newspaper.com](http://Newspaper.com)

<sup>107</sup> King, Jr., *The Autobiography*, 181.

publications about it. Neutrality was key in both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News* as they explained that there was contact made between President Kennedy and Mrs. Coretta King. Consequently, they had similar publishings until the publication of an editorial in the *Chicago Tribune*. Even though neutrality was depicted in most articles, this editorials stood in disguise amongst the rest of the neutral articles. The editorial explains that to the knowledge of the publisher, "...no one in Birmingham was preventing the Rev. Mr. King from calling his wife...".<sup>108</sup> The editorial claims that the news articles display false or exaggerated information. Then the editorial mentions that they know credible sources told him that King and his wife did have telecommunications access. The editorial pointed out that Kennedy's supposed aid of King possibly was a tactic to gain more Black votes for re-election.

After a long year of constantly being depicted in a disputable manner King got the recognition he deserved through the coverage of the *Abilene Reporter-News* recognizing King for getting "Man of Year " and the *Chicago Tribune* for displaying King getting a Saint Francis Peace Medal. The year was filled with many events good and bad for King, one major event was the March on Washington in which he gave his "I Have a Dream" speech.

---

<sup>108</sup> "Just A Bit Phony". *Chicago Tribune*. 24 April 1963. 18. [Newspaper.com](https://www.newspaper.com)



## Methodology:

The objective of this project is to evaluate the media's characterization of King from 1955 to 1968. To do this, we analyzed articles published in the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News* about King during this time period. From its founding, the *Chicago Tribune* acted as a voice for the Republican Party.<sup>109</sup> However, after the death of lead editor and publisher Robert R. McCormick in 1955, the newspaper expressed more moderate views.<sup>110</sup> We also examined The *Abilene Reporter-News*, “the oldest existing business institution in the city of Abilene.”<sup>111</sup> Newspapers during this time period were vital to societal communication, and the contrasting locations of the newspapers offer insight into many different perspectives. These two newspapers combined give a representation of what America as a whole thought of King.

To access these papers, we used the newspapers.com database, which is the largest online newspaper archive.<sup>112</sup> The database allows users to enter keywords, dates, and papers. For example, you can search “Martin Luther King” from 1960 in the *Chicago Tribune*, and it will find every article in the *Chicago Tribune* from 1960 that includes the string of words “Martin Luther King”. For each article, we counted how many positive, negative, and neutral phrases there were. Then, the plurality winner became the overall rating for the article. However, the overall rating for the article did not always match the general feeling of the article. For example, a July 1961 article about Jessica Mitford’s visit to the American south was rated negatively because it referred to Martin Luther King as “controversial,” but the article in general was sympathetic towards the civil rights movement, with Mitford expressing alarm at the violence directed towards Freedom Riders and the indifference of local police.<sup>113</sup> Conversely, many articles refer to King neutrally but list many instances of violence associated with civil rights

<sup>109</sup> “Chicago Tribune.” encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org. Encyclopedia of Chicago.

<sup>110</sup> “Chicago Tribune.” encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org. Encyclopedia of Chicago.

<sup>111</sup> “About the Reporter-News.” www.reporternews.com. Abilene Reporter News.

<sup>112</sup> “Home.” www.newspapers.com. Newspapers.

<sup>113</sup> Sibley, Celestine. “Visit to Tense, Troubled South.” *Chicago Tribune*. July 16, 1961: 10. [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com).

protests without contextualizing them with information about the policy goals and nonviolent beliefs of the civil rights movement.

Our first hypothesis was that both papers would contain more negative articles as time progressed. We thought this because King was a more prominent civil rights leader in 1963 than 1960, so he would gain more national attention and consequential criticism with time. Our second hypothesis was that the *Chicago Tribune* would have more positive articles than the *Abilene Reporter-News* because the North was more supportive of the civil rights movement than the South.

### Data, Analysis, and Findings:

**Table 1:** Time Periods/Events

Event	Time Period
Southern sit-in movement	February 1960 - December 1960
<i>The New York Times</i> libel case	March 1960 - November 1960
King's perjury case	February 1960 - May 1960
King in Reidsville State Prison	October 1960
Freedom Riders	May 1961 - December 1961
Albany Movement	July 1962 - August 1962
King in Albany City Jail	July 1962 - August 1962
Birmingham Campaign	April 1963 - May 1963
King in Birmingham City Jail	April 1963
March on Washington	August 1963

16th Street Baptist Church bombing	September 1963
------------------------------------	----------------

**Table 2:** Summary of Newspaper Analysis, Jan. 1960-Dec. 1963

	1960	1961	1962	1963
Positive	2	4	1	8
Negative	5	4	3	9
Neutral	47	36	71	47
Total	54	44	75	64

**Table 3:** Summary of *Chicago Tribune* Analysis, Jan. 1960-Dec. 1963

	1960	1961	1962	1963
Positive	2	3	1	6
Negative	3	3	3	7
Neutral	23	17	36	33
Total	28	23	40	46

**Table 4:** Summary of *Abilene Reporter-News* Analysis, Jan. 1960-Dec. 1963

	1960	1961	1962	1963
Positive	0	1	0	2
Negative	2	1	0	2

Neutral	24	19	35	14
Total	26	21	35	18

**Table 5:** Percentages of Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr., Jan. 1960-Dec. 1963

	1960	1961	1962	1963
Positive	4%	9%	1%	13%
Negative	9%	9%	4%	14%
Neutral	87%	82%	95%	73%

**Table 6:** Percentages of *Chicago Tribune* Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr., Jan. 1960-Dec. 1963

	1960	1961	1962	1963
Positive	7%	13%	2.5%	13%
Negative	11%	13%	7.5%	15%
Neutral	82%	74%	90%	72%

**Table 7:** Percentages of *Abilene Reporter-News* Articles Referencing Martin Luther King, Jr., Jan. 1960-Dec. 1963

	1960	1961	1962	1963
Positive	0%	5%	0%	11%
Negative	8%	5%	0%	11%
Neutral	92%	90%	100%	78%

After concluding the study the results did yield similar results of what we expected. Dr. King was framed in the media, in order to create a social construction of the current events during 1960-1963. From the tables above one can see that the articles were neutral and informative, with underlying positive and negative phrases. King was framed by both newspapers in many different viewpoints. As a key finding we did find that articles from the *Chicago Tribune* were more in depth when explaining current events of the civil rights movement and King. True inner linings of the King along with the civil rights movement were documented in the *Chicago Tribune*. The *Chicago Tribune* displays emotions of the writers for the reader to interpret. There are more editorial pieces for the *Chicago Tribune* and more *Associated Press* articles for the *Abilene Reporter-Newspaper*. Both newspapers played a fundamental role in the amount of bias and framing of King in the media, no matter the amount of neutrality.

An unanticipated problem that we encountered within the study was the ability to actually understand the events happening during the time period. Which leads us to limited access to data and information. Referring back to the book and other sources were helpful but, we found it difficult to grasp the events happening during our time period. Understanding the time period was an important aspect of the study because correlation, whether its political or social, is key to understanding the media during that time period.

## Conclusion:

In September of 1960, the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article that included the line: “The solution is to give serious consideration to...the persuasion of opponents by nonviolent means...the nonviolent method has worked...with the Rev. Martin Luther King in Alabama.”<sup>114</sup> The problem for which this solution was suggested was national anxiety over the Cold War. In May of 1961, the *Abilene Reporter-*

---

<sup>114</sup> “Sees Nation Behaving Like Mental Cases: Cold War ‘Symptoms’ Listed by Doctor.” *Chicago Tribune*. September 4, 1960: 14. [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com).

*News* printed an article decrying Martin Luther King as an “extremist” and a “phony crusader”: “It is becoming obvious...that the real purpose of these people is not thoughtful protest but rather baiting provocation, not an advance for the Negro race but rather personal publicity.”<sup>115</sup> In the first article, King is compared to Mahatma Gandhi. The article suggests that implementing his ideas could abolish war and prevent anxiety and fear in the world. The second article demonizes King as a fraud. These two articles differ greatly in their assessment of King, but together, they are a good representation of how he is preserved in today’s public collective memory. King’s specific policy standpoints—support for unions, urban antipoverty programs, and condemnation of the Vietnam War—are largely forgotten.<sup>116</sup>

While Americans may venerate the King that serves as a symbol of martyrdom in the service of justice and equality, the real King advocated a tangible structural shift in society. Portraying King’s opponents as only the hood-wearers and cross-burners of the South erases the very real criticism and controversy he faced from moderates, other activists, and even those who, like the author of the second article, thought that his work was for publicity. The biggest obstacle to justice isn’t necessarily a violent, small part of the population, but average people who are, out of ignorance or prejudice, resistant to change.

When we canonize King as a myth, rather than a man, who was admired by all but a shadowy, sinister group that, in our collective public memory, vaguely represents the concept of evil, we do a grave disservice to King’s legacy, and we degrade our own ability to recognise the flaws in our society. If our leaders and thinkers have to be above reproach in every way, never criticized, always popular, never proposing a legal or ethical boundary that diverges from the mainstream, who is there to follow? If we remember the Ku Klux Klan as racist, but not reporters who wrote about King with thinly veiled

---

<sup>115</sup> White, William S. “For Freedom? Or Publicity?” *Abilene Reporter-News*. May 31, 1961: 38. [Newspapers.com](http://Newspapers.com).

<sup>116</sup> Yanco, Jennifer J., and Martin Luther King. “What We Remember.” In *Misremembering Dr. King: Revisiting the Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.*, 9-19. Indiana University Press, 2014.

distaste, how do we recognise today's milder forms of injustice? Remembering a sanitized, commercialized version of King erases him, and it makes it harder for his hopes to be realized.

## Bibliography

### Books

King Jr., Martin Luther. 1998. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* edited by Clayborne Carson. New York City: Grand Central Publishing.

### Journal Articles

Bruyneel, Kevin. "The King's Body: The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial and the Politics of Collective Memory." *History and Memory* 26, no. 1 (2014): 75-108.  
doi:10.2979/histmemo.26.1.75.

Johnson, Davi. "Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 Birmingham Campaign as Image Event." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2007): 1-25.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41940115>.

Michael Stamm. *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 7, no. 1 (2013): 149-52.  
doi:10.14321/jstudradi.7.1.0149.

Rubinowitz, Leonard. "Martin Luther King Jr.'s Perjury Trial: A Potential Turning Point and a Footnote to History." *Indiana Journal of Law and Social Equality* 5, no. 2 (2017): 237-279.  
<https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1064&context=ijls>  
e.

Yanco, Jennifer J., and Martin Luther King. "What We Remember." In *Misremembering Dr. King: Revisiting the Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.*, 9-19. Indiana University Press, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gh8m7.6>.

### Newspapers

Abilene Reporter News (Abilene, TX)

Chicago Tribune (Chicago, IL)

### Newspaper Articles

Associated Press. "3 Major Railroads Set Desegregation." *Abilene Reporter-News*. October 17, 1961: 30. [Newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/46564264/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.

Associated Press. "Alabama Resists Violence." *Abilene Reporter-News*. December 14, 1962: 40. [Newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).



<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45397882/?terms=%22martin%20luther%20king%22&match=1>.

Associated Press. "American Nazi Hits Rev. King; Find, Jailed." Chicago Tribune. September 29, 1962: 2. Newspapers.com.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/374808615/?terms=%22martin%20luther%20king%22&match=1>.

Associated Press. "Clergymen End Long Jail Stay." Abilene Reporter-News. September 4, 1962: 24. Newspapers.com.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45377497/?terms=%22martin%20luther%20king%22&match=1>.

Associated Press. "Governor Warns of Police Power While Negroes Pray." Abilene Reporter-News. July 26, 1962: 7. Newspapers.com.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45269190/?terms=%22martin%20luther%20king%22&match=1>.

Associated Press. "Integrationists Seek Court Action to Upset Injunction." Abilene Reporter-News. July 23, 1962: 35. Newspapers.com.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45267084/?terms=%22martin%20luther%20king%22&match=1>.

Associated Press. "King Awaits Court Ruling." Abilene Reporter-News. March 8, 1961: 33. Newspapers.com.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45188136/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.

Associated Press. "King Thinks Negro Sit-In Shows Will Be Upheld Legally." Abilene Reporter-News. April 18, 1960: 24. Newspapers.com.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45168712/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.

Associated Press. "Negroes from Eight States to Plan Sitdown Procedure." Abilene Reporter-News. April 15, 1960: 50. Newspapers.com.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45167726/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.

Associated Press. "Negroes Protest Jailing of King." Abilene Reporter-News. July 12, 1962: 22. Newspapers.com.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45254771/?terms=%22martin%20luther%20king%22&match=1>.

"Nonviolent Sit-Ins Said to Be Used for Election Voting." Abilene Reporter-News. May 12, 1960: 24. Newspapers.com.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45183083/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.

- “Atlanta Pact Adopted to End Sit-Ins.” Chicago Tribune. March 8, 1961: 7. Newspapers.com.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/374763692/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.
- “Justice?.” Abilene Reporter-News. Oct 30, 1960: 18. Newspapers.com.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45380688/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.
- “King Among 266 Negroes Being Held.” Abilene Reporter-News. Dec 17, 1961: 57.  
Newspapers.com.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/46586359/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.
- “King Is Included.” Chicago Tribune. June 3, 1961: 3. Newspapers.com.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/374770122/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.
- “Libel in Alabama.” Chicago Tribune. September 28, 1960: 16. Newspapers.com.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/374702918/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.
- “Lawyers Seek to Void Negro Pastor’s Term.” Chicago Tribune. February 9, 1961: 56.  
Newspapers.com.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/374706687/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.
- Mulligan, Hugh. Associated Press. “Can Nonviolence Continue?.” Abilene Reporter-News.  
July 16, 1961: 73. Newspapers.com.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/46466237/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.
- “Negro Hearing in Georgia is Postponed Indefinitely.” Abilene Reporter-News. Dec 19, 1961:  
34. Newspapers.com.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/46586626/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.
- “Sees Nation Behaving Like Mental Cases: Cold War ‘Symptoms’ Listed by Doctor.” Chicago Tribune. September 4, 1960: 14. Newspapers.com.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/374718414/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.
- Sibley, Celestine. “Visit to Tense, Troubled South.” Chicago Tribune. July 16, 1961: 10.  
Newspapers.com.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/374760257/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.

“Times Libel Suits Kept in Federal Court.” Chicago Tribune. June 28, 1961: 55.

Newspapers.com.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/374625528/?terms=martin%20luther%20king%20jr&match=1>.

United Press International. “Alert Georgia Guard in Racial Tension.” Chicago Tribune. July 27, 1962: 10. Newspapers.com.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/374784416/?terms=%22martin%20luther%20king%22&match=1>.

White, William S. “For Freedom? Or Publicity?” Abilene Reporter-News. May 31, 1961: 38.

Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/46108631/>.

### Popular Media Articles

Cobb, James C. “Even Though He Is Revered Today, MLK Was Widely Disliked by the American Public When He Was Killed.” Smithsonian.com. Smithsonian Institution, April 4, 2018. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/why-martin-luther-king-had-75-percent-disapproval-rating-year-he-died-180968664/>.

Reinhart, R.J. “Protests Seen as Harming Civil Rights Movement in the ‘60s.” Gallup Vault. Gallup, January 21, 2019. <https://news.gallup.com/vault/246167/protests-seen-harming-civil-rights-movement-60s.aspx>.

### Websites

“About the Reporter-News.” Abilene Reporter News. <https://static.reporternews.com/about/>.

“Home.” Newspapers. <https://www.newspapers.com/>.

“Martin Luther King, Jr.” The King Center. <https://thekingcenter.org/about-tkc/martin-luther-king-jr/>.

“Martin Luther King, Jr. - Arrests,” The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/mlk-topic/martin-luther-king-jr-arrests?page=1>.

“Martin Luther King Jr. - Biography.” The Nobel Prize. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1964/king/biographical/>.

Ray, M. “Greensboro sit-in.” Encyclopaedia Britannica, July 22, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Greensboro-sit-in>.

Warren, Michael, “The Case for a Historic Marker; Commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr.,” DeKalb History Center, <https://dekalbhistory.org/blog-posts/the-case-for-a-historic-marker-commemorating-king-in-decatur/>.

Wilson, Mark R. "Chicago Tribune." Encyclopedia of Chicago.  
<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/275.html>.

# ***PART III***

***The Final Years, 1964-1968***

***From the Mountain Top and Into the Promised Land: The Media and the Final Years of  
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr***

---

## Introduction

The current relevance of Martin Luther King, Jr. is based on the unresolved fractures in society pertaining to race relations and racial discrimination in America. The state of modern America continues to expose instances of racism and discrimination against black Americans. The overall access to information provides the public with more information to process concerning civil rights, which brings up many questions about King. Researching the architect of the modern civil rights movement provides an opportunity for a comparative analysis between his fight for civil rights in the past, and the fight for civil rights in the present. King is still relevant primarily due to the unrealistic idea that he is the most impactful and prized figure in the plight of black Americans. Liberals, conservatives, and moderates alike invoke his words so often when articulating a path forward for the nation. However, his relevance is tied to physical landmarks and curricula created to inform the public about the freedom struggle. While schools vary in how much of the written and executed curriculum concentrates on the civil rights movement, the general public has an altered and generally skewed perspective of Dr. King and the effort to, first, eradicate Jim Crow legislation, and second, to work toward a more economically, social and politically equitable nation.

The current social movements of our time have prompted a need to accurately report his impact on American society and the genuine opinions of the American people during his campaign for Civil Rights. On January 18, 2021, King's daughter, Dr. Bernice A. King tweeted, "Please do not act like everyone loved my father. He was assassinated. A 1967 poll reflected that he was one of the most hated men in America. Most hated. Many who quote him now and evoke him to deter justice today would likely hate, and may already hate, the authentic King."<sup>117</sup> The inaccuracy of the representation of King is a seemingly shocking yet prominent truth. Martin Luther King Jr. was at one point considered one of

---

<sup>117</sup> Bernice King, Twitter post, January 2021, 3:49 a.m.,  
<https://twitter.com/BerniceKing/status/1351089397584846849>

the most hated men in America. One of the major factors that contributed and inflamed this negative depiction was the media.

### **Purpose of Research**

Between 1955 and 1968, he was involved in many racial demonstrations, public debates on race, and political organizing. Dr. King was highly mentioned in these years up to his assassination in 1968. The vital part about this period is that media outlets had started to publish articles that reflected their opinions and their readers' opinions. Some opinions were positive, and some were negative. The major part in this research is recognizing the tones and terminology and conducting comparative content analysis between the northern and southern press. In addition, providing historical context and exploring certain themes.

The goal of this study is to lead other discussions about the current media concerning public opinion about other leaders and activists in social movements. Another goal of this study is to reveal certain biases media outlets held based on their geography concerning Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement. Few doubt that King is considered a pioneer of civil rights efforts and the face of racial demonstrations from 1955 to 1968. Yet still, he was one of the most vilified, criticized, and misrepresented figures in his day. We believe a look at two newspapers during the thirteen and a half years King served as the architect of the civil rights movement can tell us much about the culture of communication that exists between the media and the public. In that view, this study can expose the reasons why so many disapproved of his nonviolent methods.

### **Methodology**

More specifically, this is a section of our study about the media's characterization and subjective representation of Martin Luther King Jr. from 1964 to 1968. This quantitative content analysis was conducted by three researchers. The primary sources that were used were newspaper articles from the *Chicago Tribune* and *Abilene-Reporter News*, which came from the website

newspaper.com. A score metric was used to score and classify the articles. The objective was to decide if an article was positive (1), negative (-1), or neutral (0), by calculating how many positive, negative, and neutral words or phrases there were. Some articles were from the *Associated Press*, which were automatically scored as neutral, because they didn't originally come from the newspapers. The rest of the articles were chosen by their relevance to Martin Luther King, significance of representation of him, and historical context. Another primary source was the book "The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr." edited by Clayborne Carson, which gave Martin Luther King's perspective, a timeline of events, and historical context. Secondary resources were documentaries and other books and websites.

The first hypothesis is that the *Chicago Tribune* will provide more neutral or positive articles concerning Dr. Martin Luther King, and as the year's progress, will get more negative. Although the *Chicago Tribune* is a northern news media outlet that does not imply that the reporting will remain positive. The other part to this hypothesis is that the *Abilene Reporter-News* will consistently put out negative articles in reference to Dr. Martin Luther King and will publish more *Associated Press* articles. The southern views of Dr. Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights movement will be heavily reflected throughout the course of this time period in the articles the *Abilene-Reporter News* publishes.

The second hypothesis is that the *Abilene-Reporter News* will have more negative articles than the *Chicago Tribune*. The *Chicago Tribune* will have more positive articles. The north and the south were very distinct. The south was more hard-hitting and resistant, especially when it came to race. The north would seem to be more reserved and conservative. It would even seem to be more progressive and open to embrace Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement. These distinctions between the north and the south will be reflected and demonstrated in the press.



## Martin Luther King in Context

### *1964: Exploring the Polarization of Current Events and Attitudes*

*“The mainstay of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) program was still in the area of nonviolent direct action. Our feeling was that this method, more than any other, was the best way to raise the problems of the Negro people and the injustice of our social order before the court of world opinion, and require action”<sup>118</sup>*

Martin Luther King, Jr. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.*

With the music of significant victories blasting throughout the streets, there was still pessimistic appeals surrounding the progress of the Civil Rights Movement in 1963<sup>119</sup>. 1964 was an election year, and the fight for Civil Rights was blossoming with Dr. Martin Luther King at the forefront. Racial issues divided the government, the public, and the media. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was making its way through Congress slowly but steadily. Northern and southern newspapers were battling to win public opinion and gain notoriety for targeted audiences. On Civil Rights and Dr. Martin Luther King, both the *Chicago Tribune* and *Abilene Reporter-News* consistently published articles to involve each outlet's perspective targeted audiences. The general themes each newspaper dedicated opinions about were: the St. Augustine riots, bi-racial committees, governmental influence, leadership rifts, and the Nobel Peace Prize. Both the *Chicago Tribune* and *Abilene Reporter-News* contributed positive, negative, and neutral analyses of these topics throughout 1964.

The first key topic in 1964 that both newspapers covered was Dr. King's participation in racial demonstrations, specifically the demonstrations in St. Augustine. The articles published by the *Abilene*

<sup>118</sup> Carson, Clayborne and King, Martin L. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Warner Books, 2001), 240.

<sup>119</sup> Carson and King, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 239.

*Reporter-News* almost always characterized King as a civil delinquent and trouble maker when it came to these racial demonstrations. The *Chicago Tribune* had a more positive approach but still commented on King's involvement in racial demonstrations. Furthermore, the *Abilene Reporter-News* made it a point to focus on this characterization, while the *Chicago Tribune* did not have a firm stance on characterizing King as a civil delinquent.

The St. Augustine riots in Florida responded to the racial tension between the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the John Birch Society with local Negroes. The nonviolent protests against segregation were met with violence from the KKK, and the SCLC was called to Florida to facilitate new protest strategies. The initial request of the local unit in St. Augustine was to: (1) form a bi-racial committee; (2) desegregate public accommodations; (3) hire police officers, firefighters, and office workers in municipal jobs; and (4) drop charges against persons peacefully protesting for their constitutional rights<sup>120</sup>. For seven months, riots and destruction plagued America's oldest city. Many protestors, including King, were arrested, some were injured, and some were killed by law enforcement or Klansmen. In the end, the SCLC was able to develop legal and physical strategies to ensure compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was projected to pass.

The *Abilene Reporter-News* took the negative approach to report what was occurring in St. Augustine. Some headlines of articles published during the riots include: "St. Augustine Violence Boils"<sup>121</sup> and "Trouble Erupts at White Beach."<sup>122</sup> On June 12, 1964, the *Abilene Reporter-News* published an article titled, "Peaceful March Held in Florida."<sup>123</sup> At first glance, it seems to be a positive or neutral analysis; however, the article was very negative in mocking the recent arrests of protest leaders. King was arrested at a protest, and more protesters were beaten and killed when this article was

---

<sup>120</sup> Carson and King, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 240.

<sup>121</sup> Associated Press, "St. Augustine Violence Boils", *Abilene Reporter-News*, June 1964.

<sup>122</sup> Wills, Paul, "Trouble Erupts at White Beach", *Abilene Reporter-News*, Associated Press, June 1964.

<sup>123</sup> McKee, Don, "Peaceful March Held in Florida.", *Abilene Reporter-News*, Associated Press, June 1964.

published. The article failed to mention any of the killings or beatings and attributed the low turnout of the protest to be in response to King's arrest. The lack of attendance in the march was likely due to the violence protesters experienced. Furthermore, the *Abilene Reporter-News* failure to report those challenges tells of its position on racial demonstrations.

The *Chicago Tribune* took the neutral approach to report what was occurring in St. Augustine. The published articles contained more information about the essential facts about what was happening outside of the violence. An example of the neutral stance is an article published on June 6, titled "Rev. King Lists Objectives in St. Augustine"<sup>124</sup> by the *Chicago Tribune*. The article provides quotes from King describing the purpose of the movement in St. Augustine and leaves the topic up to the reader's interpretation.

After reporting about the St. Augustine demonstrations, there was another component to reporting about racial demonstrations: the formation of bi-racial committees. The *Chicago Tribune* reported most about community efforts from bi-racial committees, whether in St. Augustine or other places. The *Abilene Reporter-News* stayed away from reporting about the bi-racial committees in St. Augustine but reported about bi-racial committees in Alabama and other cities.

One of the first articles published on March 27, 1964, was "King Predicts Further Negro Protests Over Senate Delay"<sup>125</sup> from the *Abilene Reporter-News*. The article characterizes King and the purpose of a potential protest as a continuation of "civil disobedience." The intentional point of the article to quote Dr. King talking about "civil disobedience" is a negatively charged notion as it infers the protest will be violent. Although King has always been an advocate for non-violence, some articles written by *Abilene Reporter-News* intentionally imply that he is commending violence and destruction at racial protests. Another example was an article published January 15, 1964, titled, "More in 64 Is

---

<sup>124</sup> Associated Press, "King Lists Objectives In St. Augustine", *Chicago Tribune*, June 1964.

<sup>125</sup> Associated Press, "King Predicts Further Negro Protests Over Senate Delay", *Abilene Reporter-News*, March 1964.

Theme Of Integration Leaders"<sup>126</sup> by *Abilene Reporter-News*. The title alone implies that the focus of Negro leaders and King is to create chaos surrounding civil rights issues.

The *Chicago Tribune* contributed to this narrative by publishing an editorial on May 12, 1964, titled, "New Threats From Negro Leaders."<sup>127</sup> It was a negative interpretation of the pressure Negro leaders and King put on Congress to draft a civil rights bill that addressed institutional injustices. "The bill now pending in Congress is the child of a storm, the product of the most turbulent motion the nation has ever known in peace-time."<sup>128</sup> The Civil Rights Act of 1964 had been causing significant issues throughout the nation on race and King's "access" to government.

The *Abilene News-Reporter* significantly added to the narrative of King's access to government when talking about his relationship with President Lyndon B. Johnson. A campaign ad<sup>129</sup> for Clyde Morgan was published in the *Abilene Reporter-News* on May 1, 1964. The ad claimed that Lyndon B. Johnson's administration was "inspired" by Martin Luther King, which would cause controversy because all did not admire King. Some ads and articles only used King to justify any political opposition to civil rights or the purpose of racial demonstrations.

---

<sup>126</sup> McKee, Don, "More in 64 Is Theme Of Integration Leaders", *Abilene Reporter-News*, January 1964.

<sup>127</sup> Maxwell, W.D., "New Threats from Negro Leaders", *Chicago Tribune*, May 1964.

<sup>128</sup> Carson and King, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 239.

<sup>129</sup> "Clyde Morgan Campaign Ad", *Abilene Reporter-News*, May 1964.

## Analysis

*Senator Goldwater had neither the concern nor the comprehension necessary to grapple with this problem of poverty in the fashion that the historical moment dictated. On the urgent issue of civil rights, Senator Goldwater represented a philosophy that was morally indefensible and socially suicidal.*<sup>130</sup>

During the presidential campaign of 1964, King had endorsed President Johnson. However, his opponent, Barry Goldwater, became a prominent critic of King. Most of the criticism was published in the *Abilene Reporter-News*, and most of King's rebuttals were published in the *Chicago Tribune*. Goldwater disliked King's endorsement of Johnson because it cost him a majority of the black vote. Goldwater also used his opposition to King to boost efforts in the South. Another notable governmental figure that heavily criticized King was the Mayor of Chicago, Richard J. Daley. Mayor Daley was constantly in the news and publications in both newspapers criticizing King's role in the polarizing representation of racial demonstration.

Leadership and influence are very important when it comes to reporting information about important figures in newspaper publications. The rifts in black leadership was an important talking point for newspapers to exploit in order to further diminish civil rights work. The *Abilene Reporter-News* covered the disagreements between and other black figures egregiously to disregard the influence of King. On March 20, 1964 the *Abilene Reporter-News* published two articles in regards to King's comments about Cassius Clay and his recent membership among Black Muslims.<sup>131</sup> Both articles provided a sarcastic entail of black leadership and the "togetherness" of the civil rights movement. The articles exploited the notion that all black activists think the same and would later in the decade prove

<sup>130</sup> Carson and King, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 247.

<sup>131</sup> Associated Press, "Fight, Don't Talk King Tells Cassius"; "Dr. King Rebukes Clay", *Abilene Reporter-News*, March 1964.

to serve as a talking point against the black power movement. The *Chicago Tribune* did not mention King in anything about this relationship or the comments King made about Black Muslims.

The rift between Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Dr. King had always been constant; between different doctrines about how to agitate for civil rights. However, there was a particular focus on their relationship as Powell recalled an occasion in which he was not invited to attend a meeting with the president. On January 26, 1964, the *Chicago Tribune* published an article, titled, “Asks Why Powell Wasn’t Called Upon.” The article’s author suggests King’s decision to answer the White House invitation as a slight toward Powell, implying that the latter was left out because he is not an “important” black official.<sup>132</sup>

On August 6, 1964, the *Chicago Tribune* published another article with the same perspective on “Negro Editor Backs Barry For President.”<sup>133</sup> It used the opinions of George Schuyler, associate editor of the renowned Black newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, about Goldwater and King. Although this would not be considered a point deduction in our grading metric, it was an attempt by the *Chicago Tribune* to criticize King’s actions for meeting with the Republican nominee for President of the United States. The *Abilene Reporter-News* uses a similar technique in an article, titled, “Harlem Leaders Angered at “Slight” by Dr. King” published on July 28, 1964.<sup>134</sup>

At the end of 1964, neither newspaper reported heavily about King winning the Nobel Peace Prize. The only difference between the coverage of each news source was that the *Chicago Tribune* provided more editorials on King’s nomination and subsequent acceptance of the peace prize, while the *Abilene Reporter-News* provided only reprinting of Associated Press articles.

### ***1965: The Continuation of Progress and Criticism***

<sup>132</sup> Associated Press, “Asks Why Powell Wasn’t Called Upon”, *Chicago Tribune*, January 1964.

<sup>133</sup> Associated Press, “Negro Editor Backs Barry for President”, *Chicago Tribune*, August 1964.

<sup>134</sup> Associated Press, “Harlem Leaders Angered At “Slight” by Dr. King”, *Abilene Reporter-News*, July 1964.

In the beginning of 1965, King was an award winning, well known social activist. If there was any doubt, the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 cemented his place as the leading voice for Black rights in the United States. However, this accomplishment was not underwritten by his critics. Even many his supporters remained sceptical about where King would take the civil rights struggle in the following year.

King followed the acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize with a localized campaign for voting rights in Selma, Alabama. The *Abilene Reporter-News* establishes a position on King's new campaign with a string of negative publications. The newspaper no longer used as many Associated Press articles but published more editorials by its columnists.

The narrative pushed by the *Abilene Reporter-News* was that King had unnecessarily started a new campaign to get more attention on his cause. Most of the publications took the negative side of racial demonstrations and the number of people arrested. After a series of speeches once the marchers reach Montgomery from Selma after several failed attempts to make the 53-mile trek to the state's capital city, the *Abilene Reporter-News* enviled heavier negative coverage of King's efforts. On April 3, 1965, the newspaper published an article that characterizing the Selma campaign as "new riots" that took a "toll on Alabama."<sup>135</sup> Black households were bombed. Participants in the marchers were attacked, including Viola Liuzzo who was run off the road by members of the Ku Klux Klan and killed. More protesters were arrested. The *Abilene Reporter-News* published many articles surrounding this topic; however, it failed to provide any insight or criticism to the bombers. The newspaper did mention the solution from protests that would improve Black voter registration and turnout.<sup>136</sup>

The *Chicago Tribune* stayed away from pushing any narratives about what was happening in the beginning of the year. Most of the coverage was neutral and only reported the necessary details.

---

<sup>135</sup> Associated Press. "Bombing, King's Boycott Plan Both Get 'Bama Fire", *Abilene Reporter-News*, April 1965.

<sup>136</sup> Associated Press, "Alabama Replaces Literacy Tests With Simpler System", *Abilene Reporter-News*, July 1965.

There were little to no editorials, and the majority of articles published were Associated Press. The first coverage by the *Chicago Tribune* was of the possible communist involvement in Alabama surrounding King and civil rights demonstrations. On January 4, 1965, the *Chicago Tribune* published an article outlining the Federal Bureau of Investigation's plan to investigate possible communist ties with the civil rights movement.<sup>137</sup> In an article published on June 30, 1965, all governmental and non-governmental organizations associated with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference were accused of being "red."<sup>138</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* published many informative articles about the specific claims of communism on civil rights groups, as it was a constant theme throughout the year. However, the articles published by the *Chicago Tribune* about communism were overwhelmingly neutral and had little analysis embedded in the text.

The *Chicago Tribune* published its fair share of articles criticizing King's actions; however, coverage by the Northern newspaper was not as harsh as those published by the *Abilene Reporter-News*. One of the first articles published on February 11, 1965, characterized King as a lawbreaker.<sup>139</sup> Republican members of the House of Representatives were "drawing the line" with King's tactics and his use of children in racial protests. In other articles, the *Chicago Tribune* did take a stance against using children to advance protests. Another article published by the *Chicago Tribune* on May 22, 1965, was about the St. Augustine riots and King's involvement.<sup>140</sup> The article called King "intrusive" and that he had a "trained army of provocateurs." Although the article came down hard on King, it also addresses the role of the KKK and the media.

One of the *Chicago Tribune's* last themes was King's move to Chicago and the general public criticism. The *Chicago Tribune* did not support King's move to Chicago as there were more editorials published about how controversial he truly is to the public. An article published September 8, 1965, by

---

<sup>137</sup> Anderson, William, "Reds Try to Exploit Race, Hoover Says, *Chicago Tribune*, January 1965.

<sup>138</sup> Associated Press, "3 Rights Groups Called Red Fronts in Alabama", *Chicago Tribune*, June 1965.

<sup>139</sup> United Press International, "Alabama Vote Drive Widens; 1,000 Arrested", *Chicago Tribune*, February 1965.

<sup>140</sup> Associated Press, "King Gets Blame", *Chicago Tribune*, May 1965.



the *Chicago Tribune* reported on the views of Bishop Louis H. Ford and Ralph H. Metcalfe.<sup>141</sup> Both ministers subtly criticized King's want for working in Chicago because they already felt that the group currently in the city was working to improve racial conditions.

The *Chicago Tribune* started to publish more editorials like "Home Truths"<sup>142</sup> to imply further that there was no need for King to start racial demonstrations in Chicago. The posting in the *Chicago Tribune* became more polarized as King was making moves to the city, and can be seen in articles published at the end of the year. For example, on December 22, 1965, the *Chicago Tribune* published an article undermining the previously supported voting rights drive.<sup>143</sup> The article explicitly states that voting drives were a waste because Black Americans do not go out and vote. The article represented the newspaper's gradual polarization and what was to come in the next few years.

Moving towards 1966, media coverage indicates that King's attention moved from Alabama toward Chicago. His reputation was being upheld, but it was clear that the general public's "patience" with him was running thin.

### ***1966: Moves to Marches***

The heavy coverage persisted into 1966 with King's dual involvement in his then hometown, Alabama, and in Chicago, the first city in the North where he would eventually make the center of attention. He remained an integral piece within marches and demonstrations in both cities, but leaned toward primarily focusing on the city of Chicago during the beginning days of 1966. The *Chicago Tribune* provides more insight on the action planned by King. By mentioning the specific institutions and initiatives that King contributed to, the newspaper was sure to document the advocacy of a prominent figure that recently moved to the city. Meanwhile, the *Abilene Reporter-News* contained minimal coverage, even during the evident Georgia organizing that King spearheaded.

---

<sup>141</sup> "New Chicago Civil Rights Group Forms", *Chicago Tribune*, September 1965.

<sup>142</sup> Maxwell, W.D., "Home Truths", *Chicago Tribune*, October 1965.

<sup>143</sup> Maxwell, W.D., "You Can't Legislate Away Indifference", *Chicago Tribune*, December 1965.

Late January 1966, King and family moved into a third-floor apartment at 1550 South Hamlin in the North Lawndale community of Chicago, marking the date of his immediate advocacy within Chicago.<sup>144</sup> While the *Abilene Reporter-News* didn't report on his move up north, the *Chicago Tribune* highlighted his process of obtaining the apartment and moving in. Each of the articles ranged from positive to neutral to negative. An article on January 25, 1966 states, "King Will Move Tomorrow To West Side Flat."<sup>145</sup> This publication serves to define what flat King will be living in, and it's specific address. Finally, one on January 26, 1966 reads, "Dr. King's Flat, Altho Painted, Is Very Dismal." This article describes the conditions the apartment was in when King toured, as it notes the freshly painted walls.<sup>146</sup> An article reads, "Dr. Martin Luther King moved into his apartment at 1550 S. Hamlin Avenue yesterday and immediately threatened to lead a series of rent strikes if demands to rid the city of slums are not met."<sup>147</sup> Soon after his move, *The Chicago Tribune* started documenting King's specific interactions combating housing inequity and systemically infused racial discrimination. A January 28, 1966 article displays this stating, "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. briefed police yesterday on his three-pronged attack against slum conditions in the city."<sup>148</sup> During this time, Dr. King also aided in the advocacy of other prominent Civil Rights leaders, such as Al Raby. Dr. King's activism didn't go without distaste. In early February of 1966, reports of potential assassination plots by an ex-Klansman that targeted President Johnson, Vice President Humphrey, and Rev. Martin Luther King were published in the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News*.

The instant involvement and coverage King participated in did not halt his planned demonstrations or action. Although, King did make trips back and forth to Atlanta to conduct organizing and Sunday services. Organizations and civil rights leaders aided him in his mission to eliminate slums and improve the living conditions of African Americans, and as time went on, King also shifted his

---

<sup>144</sup> "King Picks 'Typical' Flat; 8 Men Repair It", *The Chicago Tribune*, Jan 23

<sup>145</sup> "King Will Move Tomorrow To West Side Flat", *The Chicago Tribune*, Jan 25

<sup>146</sup> "Dr. King's Flat, Altho Painted, Is Very Dismal", *The Chicago Tribune*, Jan 26

<sup>147</sup> "Dr. King, Mate Live In Flat- For One Day," *The Chicago Tribune*, Jan 27

<sup>148</sup> Associated Press, "King Briefs Police on Rights Campaign", *The Chicago Tribune*, Jan 28

focus to end job discrimination. A supporting article published on February 15, 1966 in the *Chicago Tribune* states, “We read that the Rev. Martin Luther King, apostolic delegate of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to benighted Chicago, is shifting part of his emphasis from slums to job discrimination. He has proclaimed that a bagful of legislation has done little or nothing to improve the lot of Northern Negroes, and has sternly adjourned Chicago to get in step with him.”<sup>149</sup> He focused specifically on food firms because, “He said the food companies will be investigated to determine whether Negroes are being barred from key jobs.”<sup>150</sup> Since the topic of ending job discrimination and slums hold similar causes, he was able to pursue advocacy within both realms in a non-conflicting manner. Toward the end of February 1966, King was able to implement what he had been urging for in the elimination of slums. An article writes, “Three civil rights organizations, led by the Rev. Martin Luther King, assumed ‘trusteeship,’ without court authority, over a west side slum building. The Rev. Mr. King says \$400 a month will be collected from four families living in the building, and the money will be used to make needed improvements, provide heat and pay for a clean-up of the building.”<sup>151</sup> Lawmakers and government officials slammed this idea, while the Mayor at the time, Richard Michael Daley, stood in support and even mentioned that Chicago would “be rid of slums” by 1967. During the uprising of King’s message, the *Abilene Reporter-News* published an article on March 7, 1966, titled, “Questions Surrounding King’s Plans for Chicago.”<sup>152</sup> In this very detailed report, it acknowledges multiple perspectives within the leaders and initiatives King interacts with. It documents his intention and the implementation of policy and programs. Throughout the next few weeks, King never shied away from demonstrations inside the Chicago borders, as he urged many institutions and organizations to abide.

---

<sup>149</sup>Associated Press, “Useful Work for the Rev. Martin Luther”, The Chicago Tribune, 15 Feb.

<sup>150</sup> Associated Press, “King To Direct Job Campaign At Food Firms”, The Chicago Tribune, 19 Feb.

<sup>151</sup> Associated Press, “Martin Luther The Lawgiver”, The Chicago Tribune, 25 Feb.

<sup>152</sup> Conway, William J, and William J Dill. “Questions Surround King’s Plans For Chicago”, The Abilene Reporter-News, 7 Mar.

To provide for this initiative, King launched a European Tour to boost funds. He received praise from countries in Europe, with an editorial from the *Chicago Tribune* on April 2, 1966, titled, “Swedes Treat Belafonte and King as Heroes.”<sup>153</sup> Due to all the advocacy and speeches, his continuous action opened the door for interviews and Sunday entertainment. On April 9, 1966, the *Chicago Tribune* released an article announcing, “A Sunday with Martin Luther King.”<sup>154</sup> King took the route of entertainment and was featured on more events, most notably, *The Face of the Nation* on May 29, 1966.

During this time, King was traveling back and forth from the North to the South to aid in civil rights demonstrations. The *Abilene Reporter-News* published multiple articles on his involvement in the Mississippi “March Against Fear” in June, 1966. A passage in King’s autobiography reads, “James Meredith has been shot! After several calls between Atlanta and Memphis, we learned that the earlier reports of Meredith’s death were false and that he would recover. This news brought relief, but it did not alter our feelings that the Civil Rights Movement had a moral obligation to continue along the path that Meredith had begun. The next morning I was off to Memphis along with several members of my staff”<sup>155</sup>. Articles in the *Chicago Tribune* and *Abilene Reporter-News* highlighted King’s willingness to move forward with the movement.

During the next few months, King’s relationship grew with the Mayor of Chicago, Richard Michael Daley. Mayor Daley invited King to discuss many topics surrounding racial and housing discrimination, job insecurity, and other systemic issues faced by African Americans. Through these conversations and press conferences, it appears as though there wasn’t much distinction between his work and legislation. A snippet published in the *Chicago Tribune* on July 12, 1966 stated, “Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights leader, and Mayor Daley, along with their aides, hold a three-hour meeting on Chicago’s racial problems in the mayor’s office. King emerges and announces his group is dissatisfied

---

<sup>153</sup> Associated Press. “Swedes Treat Belafonte and King as Heroes”, The Chicago Tribune, 2 Apr.

<sup>154</sup> Associated Press, “A Sunday with Martin Luther King”, The Chicago Tribune, 9 Apr.

<sup>155</sup> Carson, Clayborne, editor. Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr., IPM in Association with Little Brown and Co., 1999, pp. 314–315.

because city officials made no commitments on their demands. He says many more marches will take place this summer. Mayor Daley says the rights groups offer no answers about what more can be done to satisfy them.”<sup>156</sup> The *Abilene Reporter-News* quoted King about the meeting stating, “[Mayor Daley] gave warm and sympathetic expressions but made no specific commitments.”<sup>157</sup>

Although, King’s advocacy methods were not accepted by the general public, the community-wide impact of these movements had led to social and legislative halts. The *Chicago Tribune* published an article titled, “King Assails Ruling; He May Ignore It.” The August 20th publication states, “Dr. Martin Luther King asserted yesterday that the court injunction obtained by the city yesterday to limit his demonstrations was unjust, said the marches would go on, and indicated he might ignore the court order.”<sup>158</sup> The statements of the news articles implied that Mayor Daley was against marches heavily conducted by King, despite supporting his statements regarding eliminating slums in the past. With the threatening remarks and a temporary court order that would limit demonstration, King agreed to obey the ever-so-slight limitations of his ongoing movements. An editorial in the *Chicago Tribune* the very next day reads, “Civil rights demonstrators will March into the southeastern sections of the city and into at least two southwestern suburbs today and their continuing fight for open housing. The Rev. Martin Luther King said the marchers will obey the temporary injunction issued Friday limiting open housing marches and demonstrations in the city. The injection does not pertain to marches outside the city limits.”<sup>159</sup> The *Abilene Reporter-News* reports how the rain interfered with the march containing 500 supporters, and how this “prevents major violence.”

In the next few months, the court order did not limit King and his marches. In fact, we see an increase in marches reported by the media, dedicated towards his continuous fight for elimination job discrimination and the slums. As we approached the end of 1966, publications in both newspapers had

---

<sup>156</sup> Associated Press, “Chicago”, The Chicago Tribune, 12 July.

<sup>157</sup> Associated Press, “Negroes Vow To 'Open' Grenada”, The Abilene Reporter-New, 12 July.

<sup>158</sup> Associated Press, “King Assails Ruling; He May Ignore It”, The Chicago Tribune, 20 Aug.

<sup>159</sup> “King Orders New March Held Today (Also Plans Trip to the Suburbs)”, The Chicago Tribune, 21 Aug.

seemed to decline. At this moment, King had already had a first impression within Chicago and his work seemed more like habits that became less shocking over time. The *Chicago Tribune* covered King and his relocation to Chicago in the very beginning of 1966. The newspaper was very detailed with his weekly actions, it provided information about specific governmental structures, institutions and individuals he worked with, and reported his plans for the city. The *Abilene Reporter-News* seemed to take a broad approach when reporting about King. Often, information would be published weeks after it had occurred and would focus on King as an individual rather than his work. When mentioning him, it would mostly be surrounding his position as chairman of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Although, the *Abilene Reporter-News* did publish multiple articles whenever King did something directly monumental within the south. It was also able to provide different perspectives, which is more challenging for a publication further away.

### ***(1967) Project Uprise***

King's effort to shift focus to economic inequality in 1966 persists throughout 1967. The coverage by *The Chicago Tribune* and *The Abilene Reporter-News* during this year has significantly declined, with the latter rarely dedicating any of its columns to King's activism.

During the early months of 1967, King was noticeably criticized by government and unelected officials. Among those most vocal was Mayor Daley, who attacked his efforts in wanting to further civil rights outcry. *The Chicago Tribune* states in a March 24, 1967 article that, "Mayor Daley criticizes the Rev. Martin Luther King and his aid in Chicago, the Rev. Andrew B. Young, for remarks about the civil rights trouble that could occur this summer in the city. When he is told that the Rev. Mr. Young has said this summer will make last year look mild, the mayor says the city is fed up with statements about possible trouble here by outsiders."<sup>160</sup> Mayor Daley firmly believed that the demonstrations were

---

<sup>160</sup> "The Editor's Digest of Today's News", *The Chicago Tribune*, 24 Mar.

politically based. However, King continuously stated that his work is a nonpartisan effort and stayed true to the focus of his organization.

He travelled to New York's Riverside Church to deliver his first anti-war speech on April 04, 1967. This was the start of his prominent opposing voice about the Vietnam War. The *Chicago Tribune* article the following day stated, "In a speech linking his criticism of the war with his position as a civil rights leader, King said his escalating opposition was sparked in part by his slum organizing campaign in Northern cities over the last three years."<sup>161</sup> King is a strong proponent in nonviolent action, as violence resembles the "wrong side" of a group or organization. Within his speech, he urges the United States to take initiative in ending the war. People weren't fond of King's dual outspokenness on civil rights and the Vietnam War. The headlines from the *Chicago Tribune* read, "Bunche Assails King's Dual Role on Civil Rights, Anti-War." As well as, "Wilkins Raps King Viet View."<sup>162</sup> King shared his sentiments in an excerpt from his autobiography that reads, "When I first took my position against the war in Vietnam, almost every newspaper in the country criticized me. It was a low in my life. I could hardly open a newspaper. It wasn't only white people either; it was Negroes. But then I remember a newsman coming to me one day and saying, 'Dr. King, don't you think you're going to have to change your position now because so many people are criticizing you?' That was a good question, because he was asking me the question of whether I was going to think about what happens to me or what happens to the truth and justice in this situation."<sup>163</sup> In addition to the criticism, reportedly his opposition resulted in a lack of financial support, but as time went on, he was able to gain new contributors. King stood with his previous statements and on April 15th, he led an anti-war march in N.Y. of 400,000 demonstrators from the park to the U.N. This turned into the largest peace protest in the history of the United States. He, and a five-man delegation, delivered a statement iterating how the US has violated the U.N. charter. He says, "honor its word" and "stop the bombing of North Vietnam." As the months

---

<sup>161</sup> Associated Press, "U.S 'Purveyor of Violence,' King Asserts", *The Chicago Tribune*, 5 Apr.

<sup>162</sup> Associated Press, "Wilkins Raps King Viet View", *The Chicago Tribune*, 20 Apr.

<sup>163</sup> Carson, Clayborne, editor. *Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.*, IPM in Association with Little Brown and Co., 1999, pp. 342–343.

went on, documentation on his stance towards the Viet Nam war seemed to dial down but made it apparent that King was still fighting for nonviolence.

Despite being very vocal in the anti-war movement, King has not deterred from the marches. So much that an article was published on July 06, 1967, reporting the jailing of King and seven Black ministers in Alabama. *The Abilene Reporter-News* seems to have no documentation of this headline. *The Chicago Tribune* article states, "On June 12th, the court affirmed by a 5 to 4 vote the contempt of court convictions of King and other leaders of desegregation demonstrations held in Birmingham Alabama, in April 1963, in violation of an Alabama court order."<sup>164</sup> Due to not obtaining a permit, King and his colleagues spent five days in a Birmingham jail.

Towards the second half of 1967, King took a reflective approach as he published his last book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* In the past few years, his work has been community-based. This analysis looks back to the start of the civil rights movement and focuses on the growth of the leaders, strategies, and settings all to evaluate effectiveness. He describes what he has taken with him all these years and how they benefited his future campaigns and movements. The book, quite literally, asks where we do go from here and how do we choose to move forward. It details the "Man's Struggle" and how it existed in that current moment.

The articles within the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News* declined as time passed by. The newsletter reported during monumental moments in King's career, in comparison to the previous year. As we approach 1968, there is a vital initiative that persists throughout the rest of his lifetime. In December of 1967, MLK publicly announced SCLC's vision of a Poor People's Campaign. An initiative planning to combat economic and governmental contribution to poverty. The ending of 1967 is a powerful transition into King's final months on earth.

---

<sup>164</sup> Beckman, Aldo, "Conviction of King Is Upheld." Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 12 June 1967,



### ***1968: A Historic and Tragic Year***

The beginning of 1968 was the beginning of social and political change, innovation, and tumult. President Lyndon B. Johnson was in his last year of presidency, U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War continued, the presidential election began, and changes occurred in the racial movements. Martin Luther King was steadfast in his leadership in the Civil Rights Movement, his opposition to the Vietnam War, and launching the Poor People's Campaign. His leadership in the Civil Rights Movement was primarily based in the south, until he transitioned to the north. He stated that the "the shock and horror of Northern riots exploded before our eyes and we saw that the problems of the Negro go far beyond mere racial segregation"<sup>165</sup>. This was a different battleground from the south. There were crucial issues of riots, police brutality, poverty, and unemployment. While King continued racial demonstrations in the north, the press continued their degradation of him.

Northern newspapers, particularly the *Chicago Tribune*, were very critical of King. Southern newspapers, such as the *Abilene Reporter-News*, did not publish many articles about him in the beginning of 1968. It would seem that the northern newspaper would be more reserved than the southern newspaper. In reality, there were times when the *Chicago Tribune* was just as hard-hitting as the *Abilene Reporter-News*. For instance, King and his associates were developing the Poor People's Campaign and were planning to start in April. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that "The capital is awaiting, with some trepidation, the opening of the 'poor people's campaign' in late April under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr."<sup>166</sup> The *Abilene Reporter-News* stated that "To some, this is also a reminder of just how difficult a task King has staked out for his nonviolent, Southern-based and nearly broke Southern Christian Leadership Conference-SCLC."<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>165</sup> Carson, pp.290-293

<sup>166</sup> James Yuenger, "Capital Girds for Dr. King Protest", *Chicago Tribune*, March 1968.

<sup>167</sup> Associated Press, "Martin Luther King Plots A Long Summer Camp-In", *Abilene-Reporter News*, March 1968.

Along with the social unrest and turmoil in the urban areas, political conflicts also became a significant factor in this precarious climate. The biggest political factor was U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, which not only led to President Johnson's unpopularity but Martin Luther King's as well as. A onslaught of criticism not only came from the northern and southern press, but also from white and black people. Civil rights leaders, men of the cloth, and even friends criticized King for "not sticking to the business of civil rights."<sup>168</sup> King stated that, "In newspaper columns and editorials, both in the Negro and general press, it was indicated that Martin King, Jr., is 'getting out of his depth.'" Addressing the idea of withdrawal from the war, an article from the *Chicago Tribune* quoted conservative chairman Anthony Barber calling it "an unconditional surrender which would announce to the world that communist aggression pays off."<sup>169</sup> The writer agreed with the statement and suggested that "Senators Bobby Kennedy, Eugene McCarthy, and J. William Fulbright, as well as Dr. Benjamin Spock, Martin Luther King, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin of Yale, and all other malcontents had the same 20-20 vision." The *Abilene Reporter-News* only mentioned King speaking to a congregation about "his opposition to the war in Vietnam, calling it 'one of the most unjust wars fought in the history of mankind.'" <sup>170</sup>

Another political conflict was the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. As a result of the increasing number of African American and Hispanic men in the Vietnam War, their families back home struggled with purchasing or renting homes because of their race or nationality.<sup>171</sup> Passing this act would expand the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, nationality, or sex regarding sale, rental, and financing of housing. King was in favor of this legislation and along with other civil rights leaders, urged people to protest and hold demonstrations for the implementation of it. However, this proved to be a difficult task. Tremendous tension ensued between

---

<sup>168</sup> Carson, p.334

<sup>169</sup> W.D. Maxwell and J. Howard Wood, "Liability in Riots", *Chicago Tribune*, January 1968.

<sup>170</sup> Associated Press, Lawrence L. Knudson, "Demo, GOP Conventions May Be New King Targets", April 1968.

<sup>171</sup> Douglas L. Massey, "The Legacy of the 1968 Fair Housing Act", *Sociological Forum Vol. 30 No. 1* (2015): <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4808815/>

Democrats and Republicans, and more specifically, tension between southern politicians and northern politicians. Based on newspaper articles, largely from the *Chicago Tribune*, some Democratic politicians were not admirable supporters of King. They were vociferous opponents and the Civil Rights Movement.

One of his familiar critics, Mayor Daley, was known for purposefully implementing racist practices, including racial discrimination in housing.<sup>172</sup> Chicago was one of the cities King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) were invited to, and they chose to continue the nonviolent movement there<sup>173</sup>. Chicago was one of the most violent and resistant cities in the north. Commenting on the mobs in Chicago, King stated that “I have seen many demonstrations in the south, but I have never seen anything so hostile and so hateful as I’ve seen here today.”<sup>174</sup> Notable movements and campaigns, such as the Operation Breadbasket and the Chicago Campaign took place in Chicago. Daley was not at all supportive of these campaigns and demonstrations. He publicly criticized King in the press alleging that “He is not interested in our positive programs.”<sup>175</sup>

With constant criticism from politicians, there was additional criticism coming from black people. This was not only due to his opposition to the war, or launching of the Poor People’s Campaign, but to the uprising of the Black Power Movement. This was the year that the younger generation were being energized and revolutionized. A new way of being racially motivated and possessing pride was occurring. The Civil Rights Movement was considered the past, out-of-date, and ineffective. Changes between the two racial movements transpired.

---

<sup>172</sup> Clare Proctor and Tom Schuba, “Richard J. Daley a ‘horribly racist mayor’, great-grandson says in letter”, *Chicago Sun Times* (2020): <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2020/11/15/21565497/richard-j-daley-letter-racism-bobby-vanecko-daley-family>

<sup>173</sup> Carson, p.297

<sup>174</sup> Phil Bertelsen and Rachel Dretzin. “Hope & Fury: MLK, The Movement and the Media.” *NBC News*. (2018): <https://www.nbcnews.com/video/hope-fury-mlk-the-movement-and-the-media-84873285973>

<sup>175</sup> “Orders Brooks to List Expenses.” *Chicago Tribune*, February 1968.

The press fed people negativity and fear about the Black Power movement. They were fixated on the combatively and forcefulness that the Black Power Movement conveyed. “It captured white anxiety about black activism.”<sup>176</sup> The Black Power Movement became a hot topic in the media. They began to cool on the Civil Rights Movement. It wasn’t as controversial or sparked a lot of emotion as the Black Power Movement. In the early 1950s and 1960s, it was easy for the press and the public to choose sides with reference to the Civil Rights Movement. Yet with the Black Power Movement, it created controversy, tension, and debate.

It also created comparisons between King and Black Power leaders such as Stokely Carmichael. The press accused him of being just as hostile and militant as some of the leaders. One of the *Chicago Tribune* articles stated that “While the effort is being made, we suggest that the N.A.B. try to get Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, to go to work at something useful instead of running around the country trying to stir up unproductive marches, disorders, and riots.”<sup>177</sup> They accused King of the riots, looting, and tried to portray him as a dangerous and distrustful leader. The *Abilene Reporter-News* however, did not do that. Instead of criticizing him, they stated how he tried to meet with the Black Power leaders who are “prone to violence.”<sup>178</sup>

Criticism coming from the press, politicians, whites, and blacks, things continued to get worse. In February, 1,300 sanitation workers went on strike to demand higher pay and better working conditions.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, Echol Cole and Robert Walker, both sanitation workers, lost their lives tragically due to the poor working conditions. This sparked an enormous outrage, which drew King’s attention. He travelled to Memphis to offer his support.<sup>180</sup> On March 28th, King led the sanitation workers’ strike in Memphis. It began with 6,000 nonviolent people in the sanitation workers’ strike and

---

<sup>176</sup> Bertelsen and Dretzin, “Hope and Fury: MLK, the Movement and the Media”

<sup>177</sup> W.D. Maxwell and J. Howard Wood. “A Sensible Approach”, *Chicago Tribune*, March 1968.

<sup>178</sup> Associated Press, “King to Oppose Violence in March.” *Abilene-Reporter News*, March 1968.

<sup>179</sup> Carson, p. 352

<sup>180</sup> Colette Coleman, “How the 1968 Sanitation Workers’ Strike Expanded the Civil Rights Expanded Struggle.” *History* (2020): <https://www.history.com/news/sanitation-workers-strike-memphis>

ended with rioting, looting, and burning.<sup>181</sup> It also ended in grave tragedy when a sixteen year old black teenager was killed.

This was one of the major topics that scattered throughout the press. They reported the rampage that occurred and characterized King as a weak, disloyal, traitor that should not be trusted or admired. In the *Abilene Reporter-News*, it stated that, “As soon as the first window was broken, King left the march and went immediately to a hotel where an aide said that he was conferring with local ministers.” The *Chicago Tribune* further criticized him saying that “King took it on the lam, sprinting down a side street and making off in a jalopy.”<sup>182</sup> The press wasn’t the only group that blamed him for the violence.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, senators such as Robert C. Byrd called King a “self-seeking rabble-rouser.”<sup>183</sup> He further stated that “King suffers from the delusion that only his eyes have the divine insight to detect what is wrong in our country.” Despite King trying to explain the context and entirety of what really happened the press and politicians continued to slander and belittle him. Similar to the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Abilene Reporter-News* reported that Attorney General Crawford Martin “blamed King for the Memphis riot” and was warning non-violent protesters.<sup>184</sup> He speculated that “I don’t think that Memphis would have had a riot if Martin Luther King had stayed home, and Martin Luther King knew it.” In spite of the criticism and defamations, King pressed forward and planned for another demonstration the following week. No one would know that this would not come to pass, and would be unprepared for the unfathomable.

On April 4th, Martin Luther King was standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, with his colleagues from the SCLC<sup>185</sup>. Suddenly, he was shot and instantly killed by a man who people believed to be James Earl Ray. This was a day after he came back to Memphis for the continuation of the

<sup>181</sup> Associated Press, “King March Ends In Riot, Looting”, *Abilene-Reporter News*, March 1968

<sup>182</sup> W.D. Maxwell and J. Howard Wood, “More ‘Nonviolence’ “, *Chicago Tribune*, March 1968.

<sup>183</sup> Philip Warden, “Cancel King’s March In D.C., Senators Ask”, *Chicago Tribune*, March 1968.

<sup>184</sup> Don Tabor, “Attorney General Warns ‘Non-Violent’ Marchers”, *Chicago Tribune*, March 1968.

<sup>185</sup> Carson, pp. 356-365

sanitation workers' strike. He gave his final speech, "I've Been to the Mountaintop" at Bishop Charles J. Mason Temple. In this infamous and haunting speech, he spoke about how God allowed him to go up to the mountain and see the Promised Land. Prophetically he said "I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land."

The news of Martin Luther King's assassination reached the press, and an outpour of shock and sorrow flooded throughout the nation. His death changed everything, including the media. The negative tone and attitude of the way they characterized King disappeared. They did not portray him as the dangerous and hostile agitator as they commonly did. As a matter of fact, they praised him as an "apostle of nonviolence,"<sup>186</sup> "martyred civil rights leader,"<sup>187</sup> and even acknowledged him as the "Nobel Laureate".<sup>188</sup> In a majority of the articles from the *Chicago Tribune*, they repeatedly described him as the "slain civil rights leader." All of this palpably demonstrates that in spite of all the criticism or personal opinions against King, they had to acknowledge that he was impactful even in death.

The press was not the only one that changed their attitude about King. Politicians expressed remorse about King's assassination, and sent their respects to his family. Astonishingly, Mayor Daley too switched from being a harsh critic, to a compassionate supporter<sup>189</sup>. Mayor Daley called King a "dedicated and courageous American who commanded the respect of the people of the world." The question of why politicians publicly changed their perspectives about King can be simply answered. Just as the press knew King was profoundly impactful, politicians knew it and publicly acknowledged it. After King's assassination, major cities such as Chicago, Illinois and Raleigh, North Carolina broke out in riots, looting, and fires<sup>190</sup>. The government was in a complete disarray as a result of the violence and disorder. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, President Johnson was on television to "plead for an

<sup>186</sup> Jules Loh, "Violence Always Stalked Apostle of Nonviolence", *Chicago Tribune*, April 1968.

<sup>187</sup> "Aid of Dr. King Vows to Try to Restore Calm to Chicago", *Chicago Tribune*, April 1968

<sup>188</sup> Associated Press, "Rights Leader Shot at Motel", *Abilene-Reporter News*, April 1968

<sup>189</sup> "Daley Pays Tribute to Negro Leader", *Chicago Tribune*, April 1968.

<sup>190</sup> Associated Press, "Violence Hits Nation's Major Cities", *Chicago Tribune*, April 1968.

end to racial strife and to announce that he will address a joint meeting of Congress Monday night in a plea for ‘constructive action instead of destructive action in this hour of national need’ “<sup>191</sup>.

Along with articles that contained heartfelt sentiments, were some articles that contained insensitive sentiments. One of the articles from the *Abilene Reporter-News* recounted his life while giving ironic and racist remarks. The writer found it ironic that “he was murdered on a quiet balcony and not a teeming street”<sup>192</sup>. He then found it impressive with how King spoke and connected to black people. Ignorantly, he thought that King hid his intellectualism by masterfully speaking in a “rough cut Southern vernacular” to connect with black people. Being insensitive to King after his assassination and stereotyping black people as country and uneducated was racist and ignorant. This demonstrates how the past and the present are sadly alike.

Approaching the end of a tragic and turbulent year, there was a desire for peace and unity. After Martin Luther King’s funeral, the Civil Rights Act of 1968 was passed, and Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated which was another heart-rending tragedy. Things didn’t seem like they would go back to normal, except for the press. All the adulations were gone, and the denigrations came back. Interestingly after King’s funeral, articles from the *Abilene Reporter-News* that mentioned Dr. King gradually decreased. One of the articles that did mention King, insensitively stated that Hubert Humphrey would have announced his Democratic Presidential nomination sooner “had it not been for the assassination Dr. Martin Luther King, the violence in scores of American cities which followed the murder, and the funeral services for the Negro leader which Humphrey attended”<sup>193</sup> If being blamed for the riots and delaying of the announcement of a presidential candidate wasn’t enough, the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy was voted the top story of 1968<sup>194</sup>. After all his arduous work in improving the social

---

<sup>191</sup> James Yuenger, “LBJ Pleads for Racial Peace”, *Chicago Tribune*, April 1968.

<sup>192</sup> Loh, “Violence Always Stalked Apostle of Non-Violence”, 1968

<sup>193</sup> Walter Trohan, “Hubert in the Lead?”, *Abilene-Reporter News*, April 1968

<sup>194</sup> Associated Press, “Apollo 8 Moon Shot Top Story of 1968”, *Abilene-Reporter News*, December 1968.

conditions in America, leading by example while bearing constant smear and bashings, his story was not at the top. His life, his leadership, and his legacy was not considered to be number one.

### **Data, Analysis, and Findings:**

*Table 1. Timeline of significant events from 1964 to 1968*

Event	Time Period
Segregationist violence prompts St. Augustine, Florida, civil rights leader Robert Hayling to invite the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to join struggle	February 9, 1964
After press conference at US senate, King has brief encounter with Malcom X	March 26, 1964
After the jailing of hundreds of demonstrators in St. Augustine, King appeals for outside assistance	May 28, 1964
After King's arrest in St. Augustine, bi-racial committee is formed	June 11, 1964
Why we can't wait is published	June, 1964
King attends signing of Civil rights act of 1964	July 2, 1964
King receives Nobel peace prize in Oslo	December 10, 1964
King delivers Nobel lecture at University of Oslo	December 11, 1964
Integrated dinner in Atlanta honors King	January 27, 1965
King is jailed with more than two hundred others after a voting rights march in Selma, Alabama.	February 1, 1965
Coretta Scott King meets with Malcom X in Selma, Alabama	February 5, 1965
Malcolm X is assassinated in Harlem	February 21, 1965



Jimmie Lee Jackson dies after being shot by police during demonstration in Marion, Alabama	February 26, 1965
Voting rights marchers are beaten at Edmund Pettus bridge	March 7, 1965
Rev. James Reeb dies after beating by white racists	March 11, 1965
Selma-to-Montgomery march concludes with address by king; hours later, Klan night riders kill Viola Gregg Liuzzo while she transported back to Selma	March 25, 1965
Widespread racial violence on Los Angeles results in more than 30 deaths	August 11-15, 1965
King arrives in Los Angeles at the invitation of local groups	August 17, 1965
King leads march to Chicago city hall to address a rally sponsored by Chicago's Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCCO)	July 26, 1965
King announces the start of the Chicago Campaign	January 7, 1966
King picks a flat in North Lawndale Chicago and moves in	January 23-26, 1966
Ex-Klansman threatening to assassinate President Johnson, Vice President Humphrey, and Rev. Martin Luther King	February 12, 1966
Dr. King's European Tour, Sweden calls King a Hero	April 2, 1966
King announces Sunday Entertainment on Radio	April 9, 1966
Interview with Face of the Nation	May 29, 1966
"March Against Fear" in Mississippi, James Meredith was shot, King had to step up	June 5, 1966
King's Press Conference with Mayor Daley	July 12, 1966

Court Order to Limit Demonstrations in Chicago	August 20, 1966
King's Anti-War (Vietnam) Speech	April 4, 1967
King led an anti-war march in N.Y. (the largest peace protest in the history of the country.)	April 15th, 1967
King's last book, <i>Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?</i> became published	June, 1967
King and seven of his Colleagues get sentenced to 5 days in Jail for disobeying court order	October 30, 1967
Launch of the Poor People's Campaign	December 4, 1967
King leads sanitation workers' strike which erupts into violence	March 28, 1968
King delivers last speech, "I've Been to the Mountaintop", at Bishop J. Mason Temple.	April 3, 1968
King is assassinated at the Lorraine Motel.	April 4, 1968

Table 2. Number of articles referring to Martin Luther King Jr. from 1964 to 1968.

Number of Articles Referring to Martin Luther King Jr.					
	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Chicago Tribune	227	488	608	365	734
Abilene Reporter News	110	177	135	0	252
Total	337	665	743	365	986

*Table 3. Number of Analyzed articles used referring to Martin Luther King Jr. from 1964 to 1968.*

Number of (Analyzed) Articles (Used) Referring to Martin Luther King Jr.					
	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Chicago Tribune	54	125	222	127	53
Abilene Reporter News	53	149	101	0	30
Total	107	274	323	127	83

*Table 4. Coding of analyzed newspaper articles used referring to Martin Luther King Jr. from 1964 to 1968.*

Coding of (Analyzed) Articles (Used) Referring to Martin Luther King Jr.					
	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Positive	25	24	62	29	11
Negative	35	96	77	36	19
Neutral	47	154	184	62	53
Total	107	274	323	127	83

*Table 5. Coding percentage of analyzed articles used referring to Martin Luther King Jr. from 1964 to 1968.*

Coding Percentage of (Analyzed) Articles (Used) Referring to Martin Luther King Jr.
---

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	Ave.
Positive	23.36%	8.76%	19.19%	22.83%	13.25%	17.4%
Negative	32.71%	35.04%	23.83%	28.34%	22.89%	28.6%
Neutral	43.93%	56.2%	56.96%	48.81%	63.86%	54%

## Analysis/Findings

The hypothesis is that the *Chicago Tribune* will provide more neutral or positive articles concerning Dr. Martin Luther King, and as the year's progress, will get more negative. Although the *Chicago Tribune* is a northern news media outlet that does not imply that the reporting will remain positive. The other part to this hypothesis is that the *Abilene Reporter-News* will consistently put out negative articles in reference to Dr. Martin Luther King and will publish more *Associated Press* articles. The southern views of Dr. Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights movement will be heavily reflected throughout the course of this time period in the articles the *Abilene-Reporter News* publishes.

The *Chicago Tribune* did provide more neutral and positive articles compared to *Abilene Reporter-News*. The general consistency of the *Chicago Tribune* to cover a range of topics concerning MLK is the most significant explanation to this result. The *Abilene Reporter-News* published more negative articles, most of the negative ones being editorials and not Associated Press. To imply that the regional differences between each newspaper is the cause for the differences in media coverage can be used in some ways, but the focus on certain topics by both newspapers should be focused on in the future.

## Conclusion

Modern media and technology provide a perspective on how information was being given to the general public during King's campaign. It is essential to analyze this information and understand how the public based their opinions of King. If the media was publishing stories to paint King in a

particular light, good or bad, that information is vital when trying to understand the impact of media representation. Studying the media provides a perspective and historical context to the current ways media outlets choose to portray notable activists and figures today. This study is the culmination of articles and data analysis to address the impact of the media in the 1950s and 1960s, specifically concerning Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement, his stance on the Vietnam War, launch of the Poor People's campaign, the Black Power Movement, and impact of his death. Viewers of this analysis might think the main idea is about exposing the past media for their portrayal of Dr. King; however, the main idea is to recognize the tactics used by the media to present American consumers with one version of events during Dr. King's campaign and other work.

## Limitations of the Study

Researchers identified two limitations of the study based on the scope of research. The first shortcoming rests on the two newspapers chosen for interrogation, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News*. In the 1960s, the *Tribune's* parent owner, Tribune Company, circulated through new markets, including up and down the East Coast. In 1961 and 1962, two *Tribune* contributors won the Pulitzer Prize, cartoonist Carey Orr and reporter George Bliss. On the contrary, the *Abilene Reporter-News*, the oldest business in Abilene, Texas, did not generate the same circulation level as the *Tribune* during the 1960s. This understandably generates the question, “Why would these two newspapers represent the public conscious in a way similar to *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, or *Los Angeles Times*?” Whereas the *Reporter-News* may be suspected of representing the national conscience, the *Chicago Tribune* is undoubtedly a reasonably reputable publication for interrogation.

A second limitation to the study was found in the number of Associated Press (AP) articles included in both newspapers. Our research aimed to interrogate how the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Abilene Reporter-News* characterized Martin Luther King Jr. from 1955 to 1968. The fact that both publications ran a great deal AP stories in place of beat reporters and columnists presented some difficulty in locating original articles covering King’s movements. Finding stories written by the *Tribune* and *Reporter-News'* beat writers was especially difficult during King’s early years, 1955 to 1959.

## Bibliography

### Abilene-Reporter News (Abilene, TX):

- “Alabama Replaces Literacy Tests With Simpler System”, Associated Press, July 1965.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45263995/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- “Bombing, King’s Boycott Plan Both Get ‘Bama Fire”, Associated Press, April 1965.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45198772/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- Campbell, Mary. “Apollo 8 Moon Shot Top Story of 1968.” *Associated Press*, December 26, 1968.  
 Accessed July 25, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/49187826/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- “Candidates Comment On King.” *Associated Press*, April 6, 1968. Accessed July 8, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/47447326/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- “Clyde Morgan Campaign Ad”, Abilene Reporter-News, May 1964.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45249210/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- “Conway, William J, and William J Dill. “Questions Surround King's Plans For Chicago.”  
 Newspapers.com, Associated Press, 7 Mar. 1966,  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45187559/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1>.
- Cormier, Frank, “LBJ Doesn’t Want Innocent Hurt by Boycott in Alabama”, Associated Press, July 1965.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45198694/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- “Door Is Slammed in King’s Face”, Associated Press, April 1965.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45206381/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- “Fight, Don’t Talk King Tells Cassius”; “Dr. King Rebukes Clay”, Associated Press, March 1964.
- “Garbage Strike March Planned.” *Associated Press*, March 28, 1968. Accessed June 30, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/47443794/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&matc>
- “Harlem Leaders Angered At “Slight” by Dr. King”, Associated Press, July 1964.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45536343/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- “King Hits NY Slums”, Associated Press, May 1965.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45217737/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- “King March Ends In Riot, Looting.” *Associated Press*, March 29, 1968. Accessed July 1, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/47444044/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&mat>

- “King to March Again In Riot-Torn Memphis.” *Associated Press*, March 30, 1968. Accessed July 2, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/47444650/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- “King to Oppose Violence In March.” *Associated Press*, March 5, 1968. Accessed June 30, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/47430288/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- "King Predicts Further Negro Protests Over Senate Delay", *Associated Press*, March 1964.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45216951/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- Knudson, Lawrence L. “Demo, GOP Conventions May Be New King Targets.” *Associated Press*, April 1, 1968. Accessed July 1, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/47445290/?terms=unjust%20wars&match=1>
- Loh, Jules. “Violence Always Stalked Apostle of Nonviolence.” *Abilene-Reporter News*, April 7, 1968. Accessed July 27, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/11222794/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- “Martin Luther King Plots A Long Summer Camp-In.” *Associated Press*, March 24, 1968. Accessed June 29, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/47441092/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- McKee, Don, "More in 64 Is Theme Of Integration Leaders", *Abilene Reporter-News*, January 1964.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45175304/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- McKee, Don, "Peaceful March Held in Florida.", *Associated Press*, June 1964.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45513436/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- “Negroes Vow To 'Open' Grenada.” *Newspapers.com*, The *Abilene Reporter-New*, 12 July 1966.  
[www.newspapers.com/image/45262379/?terms=%22gave+warm+and+sympathetic+expressions+but+made+no+specific+commitments%22&match=1](http://www.newspapers.com/image/45262379/?terms=%22gave+warm+and+sympathetic+expressions+but+made+no+specific+commitments%22&match=1).
- “Rights Leader Shot at Hotel.” *Associated Press*, April 5, 1968. Accessed July 5, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/47446457/>
- "St. Augustine Violence Boils", *Associated Press*, June 1964.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45512868/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- Wills, Paul, “ Trouble Erupts at White Beach”, *Associated Press*, June 1964.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/45518046/?terms=Trouble%20Erupts%20at%20White%20Beach&match=1>
- “World Leaders Mourn King Assassination.” *Associated Press*, April 6, 1968. Accessed July 8, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/47447390/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- Tabor, Don. “Attorney General Warns ‘Non-Violent’ Marchers’.” *Abilene-Reporter News*, March 30, 1968. Accessed July 28, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/47444910/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>



Trohan, Walter. "Hubert In the Lead?" *Abilene-Reporter News*, April 17, 1968. Accessed July 16, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/47453045/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

Chicago Tribune (Chicago, IL):

"A Sunday with Martin Luther King." Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 9 Apr. 1966, [www.newspapers.com/image/376221183/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376221183/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1).

"Alabama Vote Drive Widens; 1,000 Arrested", United Press International, February 1965.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376378304/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>

Anderson, William, "Reds Try to Exploit Race, Hoover Says, January 1965.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376520992/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>

"Asks Why Powell Wasn't Called Upon", Associated Press, January 1964.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/374767107/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>

Beachman, Aldo, "Conviction of King Is Unheld." Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 12 June 1967. [www.newspapers.com/image/376651843/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376651843/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1)

"Chicago." Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 12 July 1966,  
[www.newspapers.com/image/372017339/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/372017339/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1).

"Court Bars King March In Memphis." *Chicago Tribune*, April 4, 1968. Accessed July 3, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376676847/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

"Daley Pays Tribute to Negro Leader." *Chicago Tribune*, April 5, 1968. Accessed July 3, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376681400/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

Dodd, Philip. "Pressure Increases for Quick House Action On Civil Rights." *Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1968. Accessed July 7, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376683777/?terms=pressure&match=1>

"Dr. King Issues a Warning on Dems' Parley." *Chicago Tribune*, February 6, 1968. Accessed June 23, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376627696/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

"Dr. King's Flat, Altho Painted, Is Very Dismal." Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 26 Feb. 1966.

[www.newspapers.com/image/376459842/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376459842/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1).

"Dr. King, Mate Live In Flat- For One Day." Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 27 Jan. 1966.  
[www.newspapers.com/image/376460840/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376460840/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1).

“Dr. King Takes Over Slum Building.” Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 24 Feb. 1966. [www.newspapers.com/image/376247007/?terms=%22Three+civil+rights+organizations%2C+led+by+the+Rev.+Martin+Luther+King%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376247007/?terms=%22Three+civil+rights+organizations%2C+led+by+the+Rev.+Martin+Luther+King%22&match=1).

Edwards, Willard. “Capitol Views.” *Chicago Tribune*, February 20, 1968. Accessed July 16, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376587898/?terms=capitol%20views&match=1>

Gardner, John W. “Plain Talk About Hatred and Violence.” *Chicago Tribune*, May 28, 1968. Accessed July 19, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376545615/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

Gray, Allan. “King Opened His Stormy Civil Rights Career from Pulpit.” *Chicago Tribune*, April 5, 1968. Accessed July 3, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376681677/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

“King Assails Ruling; He May Ignore It.” Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 20 Aug. 1966, [www.newspapers.com/image/376428892/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376428892/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1).

“King Briefs Police on Rights Campaign.” Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 28 Jan. 1966, [www.newspapers.com/image/376462792/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376462792/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1).

“King’s Death Stuns Chicago.” *Chicago Tribune*, April 5, 1968. Accessed July 5, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376681306/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

“King Gets Blame”, *Associated Press*, May 1965. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376458131/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>

“King Lists Objectives In St. Augustine”, *Associated Press*, June 1964. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/374674562/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>

“Negroes Vow To 'Open' Grenada.” Newspapers.com, The Abilene Reporter-New, 12 July 1966, [www.newspapers.com/image/45262379/?terms=%22gave+warm+and+sympathetic+expressions+but+made+no+specific+commitments%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/45262379/?terms=%22gave+warm+and+sympathetic+expressions+but+made+no+specific+commitments%22&match=1).

“King Orders New March Held Today (Also Plans Trip to the Suburbs).” Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 21 Aug. 1966, [www.newspapers.com/image/376431360/?terms=%22%22Civil+rights+demonstrators+will+March+into+the+southeastern%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376431360/?terms=%22%22Civil+rights+demonstrators+will+March+into+the+southeastern%22&match=1).

King To Direct Job Campaign at Food Firms.” Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 19 Feb. 1966, [www.newspapers.com/image/376235540/?terms=%22He+said+the+food+companies+will+be+investigated+to+determine+whether+Negroes+are+being+barred+from+key+jobs%22](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376235540/?terms=%22He+said+the+food+companies+will+be+investigated+to+determine+whether+Negroes+are+being+barred+from+key+jobs%22).

“King To Speak To Strikers In Memphis.” *Associated Press*, March 17, 1968. Accessed June 29, 1968. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376708906/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

“King Will Move Tomorrow To West Side Flat.” Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 25 Jan. 1966. [www.newspapers.com/image/376458785/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376458785/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1).

Kling, William. “King Persists On D.C. March.” *Chicago Tribune*, April 1, 1968. Accessed July 2, 1968. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376669728/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

Maxwell, W.D., and Wood Howard J. "A Sad Day for Northwestern." *Chicago Tribune*, May 6, 1968. Accessed July 19, 2021.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376665304/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

Maxwell, W.D., and Wood Howard J. "A Sensible Approach." *Chicago Tribune*, March 29, 1968. Accessed July 2, 2021.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376552223/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

Maxwell, W.D., and Wood Howard J. "Haters of America." *Chicago Tribune*, March 22, 1968. Accessed July 16, 2021.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376646253/?terms=haters%20of%20america&match=1>

Maxwell, W.D., and Wood Howard J. "His Finest Hour." *Chicago Tribune*, August 2, 1968. Accessed July 22, 2021.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376631370/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

Maxwell, W.D., "Home Truths", October 1965.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376320650/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>

Maxwell, W.D., and Wood Howard J. "Liability in Riots." *Chicago Tribune*, January 21, 1968.

Accessed July 16, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376575941/?terms=riots&match=1>

Maxwell, W.D., and Wood Howard J. "More 'Nonviolence' ." *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 1968. Accessed July 16, 2021.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376556108/?terms=more%20nonviolence&match=1>

Maxwell, W.D., "New Threats from Negro Leaders", *Chicago Tribune*, May 1964.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/386574440/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>

Maxwell, W.D., and Wood Howard J. "Nobody's Going To Tear Chicago Apart." *Chicago Tribune*, April 1, 1968. Accessed July 16, 2021.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376669585/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

Maxwell, W.D., and Wood Howard J. "Ten Days to Shake America." *Chicago Tribune*, April 1, 1968. Accessed July 16, 2021.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376669728/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

Maxwell, W.D., and Wood Howard J. "The American Mission." *Chicago Tribune*, March 15, 1968. Accessed July 16, 2021.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376692901/?terms=american%20mission&match=1>

"Memphis Acts to Speed Trial of James Ray." *Associated Press*, June 9, 1968. Accessed July 20, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376635507/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

"Men of All Faiths Mourn King." *Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1968. Accessed July 6, 2021.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376683632/?terms=men%20of%20all%20faiths&match=1>

"National." *Chicago Tribune*, January 13, 1965. Accessed July 26, 2021.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376613450/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

- “Negro Editor Backs Barry for President”, Associated Press, August 1964.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376234863/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- “Negroes Vow To 'Open' Grenada.” Newspapers.com, The Abilene Reporter-New, 12 July 1966,  
[www.newspapers.com/image/45262379/?terms=%22gave+warm+and+sympathetic+expressions+but+made+no+specific+commitments%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/45262379/?terms=%22gave+warm+and+sympathetic+expressions+but+made+no+specific+commitments%22&match=1).
- “New Chicago Civil Rights Group Forms”, Associated Press, September 1965.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376514483/?terms=%22Martin%20Luther%20King%22&match=1>
- “Nixon Calls It Tragedy for Nation.” *Chicago Tribune*, April 5, 1968. Accessed July 3, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376681677/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- “Orders Brooks to List Expenses.” *Chicago Tribune*, February 8, 1968. Accessed June 23, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376547220/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- Strong, James. “Wirtz Sees Three Big Issues.” *Chicago Tribune*, September 11, 1968. Accessed July 23, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376617036/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- “Swedes Treat Belafonte and King as Heroes.” Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 2 Apr. 1966.  
[www.newspapers.com/image/376343668/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376343668/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1).
- Trohan, Walter. “Report from Washington.” *Chicago Tribune*, April 12, 1968. Accessed July 15, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376697340/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- Trohan, Walter. “U.S ‘Purveyor of Violence,’ King Asserts” Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 5 Apr. 1967,  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376604716/?terms=%22escalating%22&match=1>
- “The Editor's Digest of Today's News.” Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 24 Mar. 1967,  
[www.newspapers.com/image/376615275/?terms=%22Martin+luther+king%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376615275/?terms=%22Martin+luther+king%22&match=1).
- “Unit of House Delays Action On Rights Bill.” *Chicago Tribune*, March 20, 1968. Accessed July 16, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376642055/?terms=mollify%20king&match=1>
- “Useful Work for the Rev. Martin Luther.” Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 15 Feb. 1966,  
[www.newspapers.com/image/376293519/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1](https://www.newspapers.com/image/376293519/?terms=%22martin+luther+king%22&match=1).
- “Violence Hits Nation’s Major Cities.” *Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1968. Accessed July 7, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376683527/?terms=violence%20hits&match=1>
- Warden, Philip. “Cancel King’s March in D.C., Senators Ask.” *Chicago Tribune*, March 30 1968. Accessed July 2, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376556019/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>
- Warden, Philip. “Senate Gives King Eulogies; Riots Nearby.” *Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1968. Accessed July 7, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376683701/?terms=senate&match=1>

Wiedrich, Robert. "Genesis of A Riot: Police Recount Its Escalation." *Chicago Tribune*, April 14, 1968. Accessed July 15, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376664936/?terms=genesis&match=1>

"Wilkins Raps King Viet View." Newspapers.com, The Chicago Tribune, 20 Apr. 1967,  
[www.newspapers.com/image/376604250/?terms=%22wilkins%22&match=1](http://www.newspapers.com/image/376604250/?terms=%22wilkins%22&match=1).

Yuenger, James. "Capital Girds for Dr. King Protest." *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1968. Accessed June 28, 2021.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/376650193/?terms=martin%20luther%20king&match=1>

Yuenger, James. "LBJ Pleads for Racial Peace." *Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1968. Accessed July 6, 2021. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376683506/?terms=pleads&match=1>

### Books:

Carson, Clayborne and King, Martin L. "The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr." *Warner Books*, 2001.

### Websites:

Bernice King, Twitter post, January 2021, 3:49 a.m.,  
<https://twitter.com/BerniceKing/status/1351089397584846849>

Coleman, Colette. "How the Sanitation Workers' Strike Expanded the Civil Rights Struggle." *History*, July 21, 2020. Accessed July 31, 2021. <https://www.history.com/news/sanitation-workers-strike-memphis>

Douglas Massey, L. "The Legacy of the 1968 Fair Housing Act." *Sociological Forum Vol. 30, No. SI*, (2015). pp. 571-588. Accessed July 28, 2021.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4808815/>

Newport, Frank. "Martin Luther King Jr. : Revered More After Death Than Before." *GALLUP*, January 16, 2006. Accessed August 18, 2021. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/20920/martin-luther-king-jr-revered-more-after-death-than-before.aspx>

Proctor, Clare and Schuba, Tom. "Richard J. Daley a 'horribly racist mayor,' great-grandson says in letter." *Chicago Sun Times*, November 15, 2020. Accessed August 5, 2021.  
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2020/11/15/21565497/richard-j-daley-letter-racism-bobby-vanecko-daley-family>

### Documentaries:

Bertelsen, Phil and Dretzin, Rachel. "Hope & Fury: MLK, The Movement and the Media." *NBC News*. 2018. Accessed July 30, 2021. <https://www.nbcnews.com/video/hope-fury-mlk-the-movement-and-the-media-84873285973>