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**The Media Coverage of the Civil Rights  
Movement during the 1960s  
Case Study: Selma Marches**

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Literature and Interdisciplinary Approaches**

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## ***Dedication***

*I dedicate this work to my dearest parents, who never stopped giving me everything I dreamt to have, and supported me to continue my studies.*

*To my sisters and brother*

*To all my beloved friends and classmates, who encouraged and supported me.*

*And a Special dedication to my teachers and professors*

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## **Abstract**

The African Americans previously suffered a lot from bad situations, segregation and discrimination. All these led to the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement between the 1950s and 1960s, which aimed to free the blacks and guarantee full rights and equality between the two races. This Movement depended more on the media, to publicize their demands and to make the whites in the North aware of what was happening to the blacks in the South. Hence, this research focuses on the period between the 1960s to examine the media coverage during the Civil Rights Movement and especially the Selma March. It aims to enhance the role technological communication has had on society, with an emphasis on the role played by television and newspapers on political and social changes. Indeed, the printed and visual media at that time were in fact the ones that were able to unite the minds of two races making people realize that America could be a country of solidarity where there would be neither white superiority nor black inferiority.

### **Key Words:**

- |                         |                          |            |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| - Civil Rights Movement | -Martin Luther King, Jr. | -Media     |
| - Birmingham Campaign   | -Selma Marches           | - Coverage |

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## List of Abbreviations

- **KKK:** Ku Klux Klan
- **NAACP:** The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People
- **SCLC:** Southern Christian Leadership Conference
- **CORE:** Congress of Racial Equality
- **SNCC:** Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
- **NLU:** National Urban League
- **WPC:** Women's Political Council
- **MIA:** Montgomery Improvement Association
- **ICC:** The Interstate Commerce Commission
- **NUL:** National Urban League
- **UAW:** United Auto Workers
- **AJC:** American Jewish Congress
- **DCVL:** Dallas County Voters League

## **General Introduction**

The American Civil War of 1861, led officially to the abolition of Slavery in the country, but did not end discrimination and violence toward the blacks. African-Americans were treated unfairly and confronted to all kinds of discrimination, yet, they never stopped struggling for equality between both races whites and blacks, in an attempt to improve their lives and have better life conditions. It was not until the 1960s that African-Americans started fighting for their rights, trying to eradicate the racism they were subjected to by using all means to reach their goal.

The present research attempts to assess the role of the Media, especially Television and Newspapers in the civil Rights Movement. During the 1960s blacks' demonstrations, protests and the white violence were all reported on TV channels and in Newspapers. Media, during the Civil Rights Movement, tackled issues like segregation and discrimination African-Americans were facing in the South. It was thanks to the Media coverage that the Civil Rights Movement received attention; people started to know what was taking place in the South, gained support and sympathy from white Americans and others from different parts of the world. As a reaction to that the U.S., government changed its attitude towards African Americans by giving them the right to vote thanks to the Selma Marches.

Thus, aim of this study is to shed light on Media Coverage during the Civil Rights Movement and to show the role of Television and Newspapers in changing the whites' opinions about the blacks and finally giving them privileges. To confirm that, we raised the following questions:

- How did the U.S. Media cover the Selma March? Also, was such coverage biased or fair to the blacks?

- To what extent could Media bring changes for the African-Americans and the struggle for the Civil Rights Movement?

It is hypothesized that without Media the attempts of African-Americans to gain their rights would not have succeeded or would have taken a long time to be noticed by Northerners and others.

This current study is divided into three chapters. The first one deals with the historical Background of the Civil Rights Movement, its reasons, evolution from slavery to World War two and the main black activist leaders at that time. The second chapter is devoted to examine the importance of media and its coverage during the Civil Rights Movement. Also, light will be shed on the strategies of non violence and the Birmingham Campaign. The last chapter is dedicated to have an overview of the Selma March to confirm the successful role that media had played.

# Chapter one

Historical Background of the Civil  
Rights Movement (1960s)

# **Chapter one Historical Background of the Civil Rights Movement (1960s)**

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Since the coming of Africans in the American soil in 1619, a century later they suffered from both discrimination and marginalization and Even though slavery was abolished, it did not end the oppression toward blacks in the United States, who were still seen inferior. Hence, this entails that first; one will tackle the topic by shedding a light on the concept of Civil Rights and the Civil Rights Movement, and the origin and evolution of this Movement from slavery to World War two. Then, one will shift to one the most famous examples of the racial discrimination in the U.S. namely a Brown vs. Board of education. Finally, emphasis will be put on the reason that led to the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement and its main leaders.

## **1.1. The Definition of Civil Rights**

For Merriam Webster the word Civil Rights is the nonpolitical rights of a citizen; especially: the rights of personal liberty guaranteed to U.S. citizens by the 13th and 14th amendments to the constitution and by acts of congress. (Merriam Webster)

Another definition of the civil rights by the Business Dictionary states:

It Is the personal right acquired by an individual by being a citizen or resident or automatic entitlements to certain freedoms conferred by law or customs.Certain civil rights (such as the rights to equality, freedom, good governance, justice, and due process of law) are inalienable like human rights and natural rights, whereas others (such as the right to hold a public office) depend on one's conduct and can be lost. (Business Dictionary)

Hence, civil right means the rights that every person should have rights such as the rights to be treated fairly by the government. These rights are protected by law and customs.

## **1.2. The Definition of the Civil Rights Movement in U.S.A**

African-American's have been searching for equality since the 1950s leading them together to be stronger so that their demands would be heard, people from different parts of America such as activists, writers, and even ordinary people, have always asked for recognition

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in a white superior society. Different definitions were suggested to the word Civil Rights Movement, according to Candace Roy; it “was an era dedicated to activism for equal rights and treatment of African- Americans in the United States. During this period, people rallied for social, legal, political and cultural change to prohibit discrimination and end segregation.” It was an era when African-Americans started demanding for their rights in all means of life and existence. Also, they aimed at better treatment by white (Roy.)

Another definition in Dictionary of American History states that:

The civil rights movement comprised efforts of grassroots activists and national leaders to obtain for African- Americans the basic rights guaranteed to American citizens in the constitution, including the rights to due process and “equal protection of the laws” ( Fourteenth Amendment) and the right to vote. Although the 1950s and 1960s represent the height of the mass civil rights movement of the twentieth century; activists had sought basic rights for African Americans since before the Civil War. (American History Dictionary)

The aim behind this movement was to guarantee all the rights in the constitution to be practiced and applied, to assure protection for African-Americans like the one whites were having, the right to vote also was a demand that they sought to accomplish, basic rights that they should have gained before the civil rights movement.

## **2. The Origin and Evolution of Civil Rights Movement (1916-1945)**

From the earliest beginning the conditions of blacks in American continent were differed from the white, because they were suffered a lot from the different kind of racism, such as slavery and Jim Crow Law.

### 2.1. Slavery (1619- 1860)

Slavery refers to conditions in which someone was owned by another person and forced to work hard. A slave was considered by law as a property and it was divided into two basic types, the house slaves and the field slaves. Slavery was practiced everywhere; in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas. It extended as trade and industry increased, this latter created a demand for labor force to produce lucrative goods for export. By the fifteen hundreds, Spain and Portugal had their American colonies that obliged the native Indians to work in big farms but later on most of them died from poor treatment. This led Spanish and Portuguese begin to bring people from West Africa. Then the other Europeans did the same thing in the American colonies. (Slave in American South, n.d)

The conditions of Africans on the American continent were not like the white servants'. At the beginning, Africans were considered strong workers than whites and provided more skillful help on plantations than the white ones. Many Africans were brought to America after 1619. At the end of the seventeenth century, there were more indentured black servants than the whites. At first, black and white had strong relations but when Europeans brought them to the colonies as slaves, poor white servants noticed that Africans were stealing their jobs. Because of this feeling, the planters started dividing black slaves from white servants. (Marcová, 7)

During the seventeenth century, racism emerged by whites toward blacks. It started in the colonial laws in 1639 and 1682. These laws began changing the place of blacks from servitude to racial slavery. In Addition, they forbade inter-marriages between two races and excluded African slaves from governmental protection. After this declaration the white servants gain much from their complexion and Africans slaves lost all hope of freedom and they were treated badly. (Ibid)

### 2.2. Naturalization Act 1790

In 1790 the congress passed the first law known as the "Naturalization Act" which restricted citizenship, then excluded indentured servants, free blacks and slaves, who were considered as a "property" and not "a person". It declared that black slaves were inferior and not equal human beings within the United States. According to Andrew Glass, when this law was passed, racism became legal because it stated that « a free white person ...shall be considered as a same citizen of the united states ». It means non-citizenship made it unable for black people to vote, to bring suit or testify in court. (Glass)

### 2.3. Civil War and Abolition of Slavery (1861-1865)

The southern part contained large farms and huge plantations that could not be managed without black slave labor because the absence of slaves would lead to the collapse of their economy. While, the northern part was differ from the southern. The plantations were limited but manufacturing and industry were established. Then, the northerners were against slavery for moral, economic and religious reasons. At that time, they began growing abolitionist sentiment in the north. In addition, the American anti-slavery society emerged. It was the first organization founded in 1833, in Philadelphia by white abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld. Then, it included Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown as "agents" for this society to talk about the brutality of slavery. Their goal was to abolish slavery. The country was divided into two sides, the first one Anti-slavery and the second one Pro-slavery. When Abraham Lincoln won the presidency in 1860, the southerners wanted to secede from the United States because they feared that the abolition of slavery would surely happen with Lincoln. All these events led to the bloodiest conflict in America « The Civil War », in 1861, due to tensions between the south confederacy and the north union army about slavery, states' rights and westward expansion.

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Firstly, it started for preserving the union, but later, it transformed into a struggle for the abolition of slavery which was brought by Abraham Lincoln in 1862. (Civil War, n.d)

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed all slaves in the rebellious states. The aim of it was to give hope for all slaves that better life would come after the civil war. After the war had ended, President Abraham suggested the thirteenth amendment to the United States constitution that outlawed the practice of slavery. The amendment was adopted on 6th of December, 1865. (Ibid)

### **2.4. Reconstruction and Black Codes (1866- 1877)**

The reconstruction followed the Civil War. It was applied by Congress in 1865-1877, which aimed to reorganize the southern states after the war and readmit them into the union. Andrew Johnson became President after the murder of Abraham Lincoln and his aim was to gain southern loyalty. As a result of Johnson's leniency, the southern states in 1865 and 1866 passed laws known as the « Black Codes ». They forced blacks to sign yearly labor contracts, to control the labor. After this action, the northerners rejected Johnson's policies in the congressional elections in late 1866. So, the United States Congress decided to pass the civil rights act that provided the full rights for all people. In addition, the Freedmen's Bureau was established. As a next step, congress introduced the 14th amendment to the constitution to confirm the full rights of citizenship for African -Americans. The southern states refused to accept the amendments, which compelled the north in March, 1867 to pass the Reconstruction. After Act 1867, racism toward black increased and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) emerged as a response to the changes of radical reconstruction. It was a group of political and social Terrorists; they used violence to attack the local republican leaders, white and black, and other African Americans. The goal of KKK was white supremacy and black inferiority. (Reconstruction, n.d)

### 2.5. Jim Crow Laws in the 19th

The end of the nineteenth century for blacks was represented by racial segregation and discrimination, which became notable by "Jim Crow Laws" used by southern states and were protected by the constitution. These laws segregated blacks in every aspect of public and social life, such as parks, hospitals, restrooms, theaters, restaurants, toilets and separate churches, public and private schools. Jim Crow was the name of minstrel routine beginning in 1828 by Thomas Dartmouth ("Daddy") Rice. Jim Crow Laws began to be effective after the end of Reconstruction. They were established to keep the black and white separated. According to Jim Crow etiquette,' blacks were not allowed to show feeling toward someone in public''. In addition, "blacks and whites were not supposed to eat together and whites did not use courtesy titles when referring to blacks". Between 1870 and 1884, eleven southern states legally outlawed interracial marriages. Another law was passed in 1935, Oklahoma prohibited blacks and whites from boating together. The passage of the 14th and 15th amendments to the constitution had granted blacks the same protection as whites but they became limited when Jim Crow Laws began. So, blacks were denied from the right to vote by grandfather clause<sup>1</sup>. Then, the U.S Supreme Court put its own imprimatur on segregation in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1898) decision. Louisiana, in 1890, had passed a law claiming separate railway cars for African American citizens of New Orleans. These laws made it to challenge the Fourteenth Amendment. At that time, the Supreme Court, voting seven to one, supported the laws. After that, *the Separate but Equal doctrine* became the law of land. (Marcová, 13)

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<sup>1</sup> Is a provision of several Southern States constitution to deprive African-American from voting  
<https://www.thoughtco.com>

### 2.6. The One-drop Rule (1910-1967)

So, the racial classification in U.S was resolved for African-Americans based on (hypodescent) or the “One Drop” rule. That appeared in the nineteenth century, and legalized in the twentieth in Tennessee in 1910 and subsequently under the Racial Integrity Act 1924, Virginia. According to Sola Rey, it is associated with the principle of “Invisible Blackness”, it is referring to decent of mixed races specially those of black and white. One- Drop rule is defined as legal and social measurements in the era of slavery that classified people according to their race, meaning that, any person who has even a drop of black blood would be considered black. This rule led to establishment the idea of racism, dual races and inferiority of blacks. It had five degrees at that time; Mulatto<sup>2</sup> (one half black), Quadroon<sup>3</sup> (one-fourth), Octoroon<sup>4</sup> (one-eighth), Quintroon<sup>5</sup> (one-fifteenth), Mustee<sup>6</sup> (one-sixteenth). (Rey)

Hypo descent rule was among the reason that pushed lighter skinned people, mulattos, pass for white secretly, they could pass easily because their physical features helped them. These laws were highly practiced to prevent any black person with light skin to pass as a white person. (Ibid)

One-drop rule was practiced in many countries, but spread and focused more in America, especially in the south. According to Sola Rey, colored people in the antebellum were classified on the basis of their color and community acceptance since at that time they did not have clear documentation about their ancestors. One example of miscegenation<sup>7</sup> includes the famous Booker T .Washington; he was born in 1856 of an unknown white father and black mother. Miscegenation made it difficult to decide if a person was white, black, or Native American. In

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<sup>2</sup> Is someone born of one black parent and one white parent <https://www.urbandictionary.com>

<sup>3</sup> someone who is one-quarter black and three quarter white <https://www.vocabulary.com>

<sup>4</sup> Someone having one-eighth black ancestry, with one black great-grandparent <https://www.dictionary.com>

<sup>5</sup> Someone who is by descent fifteenth-sixteenths white and one-sixteenth black <https://www.oxforddictionaries.com>

<sup>6</sup> Someone who is one- eighth black ancestry <https://www.merriam-webster.com>

<sup>7</sup> Miscegenation is mixture of different races especially marriage <https://www.merriam-webster.com>

1967 the one-drop rule was declared by the supreme court of the United States, unconstitutional.

(Ibid)

### 2.7. The Great Migration (1916-1970)

Before the Great Migration, the conditions of African-Americans who lived in southern states were much worse than those in the northern one. They were suffered from violence and harsh segregation laws, known as Jim Crow Laws. Beside were being treated unfairly. At that time, the system of sharecropping<sup>8</sup> that had increased in the south, so blacks worked in fields with no future. Between 1890 and 1910, most of sharecroppers escaped to the north, whereas the others returned to Africa. The Great Migration was the migrated six million African-Americans from the rural south to the cities of the North and Midwest from 1916 to 1970. The first migration settled in urban areas, like New York, Pittsburgh, Chicago and Detroit. Many blacks took advantage of the need for industrial workers, that aroused during the First World War and they found high paying jobs, available in homes. At this time, blacks were starting to make some progress toward racial equality. The Harlem Renaissance started the first real sense of African-American culture through Art, Jazz, dance, and literature. It was known as the Negro Movement firstly and the Harlem Renaissance later. So, the black experience during the Great Migration became an important theme. In addition, during this period there was a strong movement led by W.E.B Dubois that focused on educating blacks to create equality. (Femi)

To sum up, the great migration was very important for the later civil rights movement, because it led to increasing African-American political activism.

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<sup>8</sup> Sharecropping was a system of farming which a landowner permit a tenant to use the land in return for a portion of their crop <https://www.history.com>

### 2.8. The Great Depression (1929-1939)

The Great Depression from 1929 to 1939 was one of the most tragically economic phenomena that took place in the American history. It caused high unemployment; millions of People were out of work, crashed the markets and banks failed, although many people were dying, suffering from illnesses and hunger. Even though it was a hard time for all Americans, Africans-Americans faced more difficulties and challenges as compared to other minorities. Segregation and discrimination were still there. More than that, they were being jobless. (Klein)

During the great depression, the African-Americans were angry at president Hoover who failed in solving the economic crisis in the country. In addition to that, they supported President Franklin Roosevelt, who brought the new deal programs (Deferent programs and agencies created by the President Roosevelt Administration and the Congress), but most of new deal agencies and programs accommodated segregation rather than opposing it. (Ibid)

1930 was marked by the growth of African-American activism that presaged the Civil Rights Movement. Another contribution in 1935, Mary McLeod Bethune organized the National Council of Negro women, and the following year established the first meeting of the National Negro Congress that fought for anti-lunching legislation. Then, in 1937 the young African-Americans formed the Southern Negro Youth Congress that registered voters and organized boycotts. (Ibid)

### 2.9. World War II (1939 - 1945)

The World War II was a conflict between the Axis and Allied powers from 1939 to 1945. During this time, more than a million of African-Americans served in the armed forces of the United States but not equal with white. So, the doctrine of *separate but equal* still existed even in the army. Moreover, the navy segregated black, also the marines did not accept them. But when

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they were fighting, the segregation broke down because it was difficult to separate races when both attacked the same enemies. (MCDERMOTT)

African-Americans were disappointed at both the segregated military and the lack of employment opportunities. In 1941, Philip Randolph organized the March on Washington movement. The aim of it was to desegregate American army and eliminate discrimination in employment. President Franklin D. Roosevelt (was the U.S President who led the United States through the Great Depression and World War II) responded by establishing the Fair Employment Practice Committee that provided jobs for all Americans without discrimination. (Ibid)

World War II was helped the Africans- Americans to ask for their rights and encouraged them to move in places where they had more political influence. Then, it provided them with new skills and tactics that were used to gain their rights. In addition, most of African-American became Civil Rights activists. (Ibid)

### **3. Brown vs. Board of Education**

Brown versus Board of education of Topeka, Kansas was a landmark case that the U.S Supreme Court to take part in it. In 1950, a black third-grade girl called Linda Brown had to take a 5 mile bus drive and travel through dangerous railroad to attend her segregated school. However, there was a white elementary school less than seven blocks. So, Oliver tried to register Linda into a white elementary school, but the principal of the school rejected immediately. After that, Oliver went to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and asked for help. In 1951, all African-American parents who had the same thing, joined to help Mr. brown with the consolidation of NAACP and other schools in Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, and Washington D.C to eliminate segregation in public schools .The lawyers disagreed that the schools of white and black in Topeka were Separate but Equal, because of

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most of black schools lacked from basic things. In 1945, Thurgood Marshall (was an American lawyer) and the NAACP lawyers gained the case, after the decision concluded that the separate but equal has no, place in public education. « Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal ». This decision made the racial segregation of schools illegal in the United States. (Oyez, 16)

### **4. The Reasons that led to The Civil Rights Movement**

Despite the fact that slavery was abolished, African-Americans were still being treated unfairly. As a reaction to such discrimination black people started revolving in different ways seeking for equality and integration and those attempt carried the name of the Civil Rights Movement.

Emmett Till an African-American was born in 1941, and grew up in Chicago. His cousin's family was living in Mississippi in the Deep South. In August 1955, after he gets graduated from school, he eventually travelled to visit them but the visit ended in tragedy. (Till, n.d )

One hot day, Emmett and his friends wanted to buy some candy at Bryant's Grocery and Meat Market. As he left the shop, he said the white assistant "*bye, baby*". It was done on a dare. (Facing history, n.d). Emmett did not understand that he had broken the laws of Jim Crow south just three days later in Mississippi. (Ibid)

Four days later, Emmett was kidnapped by Roy Bryant, Carolyn's husband, and his half brother J.W.Milam who came at night to Moses Wright's house. Three days later, Emmett's body was found in the Tallahatchie River. After that, his mother decided to have an open-casket funeral with Till's body on display and lasted for five days. She wanted to show the world what happened for her son. (Ibid)

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To sum up, Emmett Till case was an important in African-American history, because it convinced the African Americans that it was time to change. In addition it attracted the attention of World.

Another incident was a main reason behind the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement, Rosa Louise McCauley, was an African-American activist, and she was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, on February 4, 1913. Then, she moved to Montgomery, Alabama at the age of 11. She married Raymond Parks, who was a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In the 1940s, Parks became active in the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP, worked as secretary and teaching young people about their rights in the United States. Rosa Parks has been called the "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement" because she helped eliminate the segregation buses. (Parks)

On the first of December, 1955, Rosa Parks was taking the bus home from work in Montgomery, Alabama, and get her seat in the back .When a white man got on and it was impossible to find a seat with whites, the bus driver demanded from Parks and three other black passengers to give up their seats, the other African-American riders accepted, but Rosa refused to get up. She was arrested by the Montgomery police and fined for breaking the law, because according to Alabama law at that time, white people sat in the front rows of a bus and black people sat in the back rows. When the black section was full they had to stand but when more white boarded the bus, the blacks had to get up and give their seats to the white. (Ibid)

To conclude, Rosa Park's action led to the other Montgomery bus boycott, and then it helped to bring most important leaders of the Civil Rights Movement such as, Martin Luther King, Jr.

### 5. Activists and Goals of the Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement was a political, social, and legal struggle in the United States led by African-Americans trying to achieve and gain citizenship rights. The most essential, the leaders of this movement included individuals, like Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, James Farmer, John Lewis, Whitney Young, Ruth Standish Baldwin, and Ella Baker. These leaders fought for enhancing the life of African-Americans, such as the end of segregation and discrimination, then the right to vote equally and take a position in the American political system.

Martin Luther King Jr. (Michael King, Jr.), was an American Baptist minister. And one of the most famous civil rights leaders and an important black voice during the civil rights Movement. Who led the civil rights movement from the 1950s until his assassination in 1968; He used nonviolent civil disobedience that included boycotts, sit-ins and speeches against unfair treatments of African-Americans. In 1964, King, because of the nonviolent strategies that he used to fight for civil rights, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. (Martin Luther King, n.d)

In 1955, Martin Luther King, Jr. was elected to lead the boycott that lasted 382 days, and where buses were racially segregated. The boycott led by Dr. King, and other civil rights activist succeeded to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in the 1950s. It was an organization differed from others, and it worked with local organizations and churches to build its membership. Then, SCLC was an organization that supported nonviolent tactics and aimed to help people in the south to obtain the full rights. (Ibid)

In the March on Washington for jobs and freedom, King delivered his famous speech "I Have a Dream"; one of the greatest speeches in American history. In this speech Dr. King spoke of his dream of people of the United States would be treated equally without the race problem.

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This action helped to pass the Civil Rights Act 1964 which led to outlaw the segregation in public places such as public schools; then ended segregation in businesses. (Ibid)

Another figure during the Civil Rights Movement was James Farmer (James Leonard Farmer), born in Marshall in 1920, he was most influential civil rights leader. Then, he was a founder of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); it was an interracial organization founded in Chicago in 1942. The congress of Racial Equality used the nonviolent tactics to help the African-Americans to secure equal rights with the whites, and eliminated segregation, and discrimination. In addition, this organization participated in national campaigns of the Civil Rights Movement, such as The March of Washington. (Bertsch, 151)

In 1960, Farmer worked for the National Association for the Advancement of colored people (NAACP), and later elected as national director of CORE. After that, he worked with other groups including the NAACP, SCLC, and SNCC against segregation, and they worked to expand economic and educational opportunities for African-Americans. James Farmer interested in Gandhi's nonviolent strategies, so he also organized the Freedom Rides in 1961, aimed to desegregating public transportation. (Ibid)

In addition to this, there is another important African-American leader Whitney Moor Young, Jr. He was a prominent figure during the Civil Rights Movement, who was born on July 31, 1921, in Lincoln Ridge, Kentucky. Young was elected president of Omaha chapter of the Nation Urban League in 1950. In 1954 he became the dean of the school of social work at Atlanta. (Britannica, n.d)

In 1961 to 1971, Whitney Young served as executive director of the National Urban League. It was founded in New York in 1910; and it was created in response to the great migration of African-Americans from the south to the north, when the U.S Supreme Court confirmed the concept of separate but equal. This civil rights organization "NLU" was provided

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education and increased employment opportunities in industry and health services for the African-Americans. When Young was elected as executive director, he was help to provide black workers with jobs previously reserved only for whites. Then, he greatly extended the National Urban League from 60 to 98 chapters. Young was a key organizer of the March on Washington in 1963. (Ibid)

The leaders, nonviolent protests, and organizations had an impact of the lives of African-Americans, and states of America. Because of these the Civil Rights Act 1964, was passed to eliminate discrimination against blacks in public places. In addition they led to pass the voting rights in 1965. After that the situation of African-Americans had improved from previously, the black earned a suitable and equal standard of living, and they took part in politics

As one can see the Civil Rights Movement were did not use overnight. It was actually after a long struggle of black Americans that a form of freedom though limited, was achieved. It was thanks to the civil rights movement the lives of African-Americans changed. In the next chapter, one would show how the leaders used the different strategies to gain the national Attention with the huge help from media.

# Chapter Two

The Media and The Civil Rights  
Movement

During the Civil Rights Movement black activists suffered a lot from being beaten, arrested and abused. Most of them risked their lives and their families'. They continued with the nonviolent direct actions that would later force the federal government to change their status. It would also lead them to gain support from white Americans and mass media. This chapter is designed to deal at first with the evolution of nonviolent actions, such as sit-ins, freedom rides, Birmingham campaign and the marches. Then it will tackle with how media covered the civil rights movement, and illustrate white's coverage of the Birmingham campaign.

## **1. The Evolution of Nonviolent Strategies (1955s-1960s)**

Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement chose the tactics of the nonviolent strategies as a tool to break down racial segregation, discrimination and inequality they faced almost all the time. Indeed, Martin Luther King, Jr. became an inspiration for many blacks who decided to take the same path for gaining rights.

### **1.1. The Bus Boycott in Montgomery (1955-1956)**

Boycott in Montgomery is an action that black people used to break white supremacy, segregation as well as to improve their social status. So, the Montgomery; Alabama segregation laws were mainly about public transportation.

Before the boycott in Montgomery, there were differences between the life of blacks and whites because of Jim Crow Laws. One of these laws was enacted to force segregation between the two races. It was according to Luther King:

The law forced Negroes to stand over empty seats reserved for whites only. Even if the bus had no white passengers, and Negroes were packed throughout, they were prohibited from sitting in the first four seats, but the practice went further. If white passengers were already occupying all of their reserved seats and additional white people boarded the bus, Negroes sitting in the unreserved section immediately behind the whites

were asked to stand so that the whites could be seated. If the Negroes refused to stand and move back, they were arrested. (King, 9)

Previously, there were some organizations in Montgomery such as Women's Political Council (WPC) founded in 1946 led by Jo Ann Robinson to improve conditions of blacks on buses. In addition to that, the local part of the Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) connected to Edgar Daniel Nixon and Rosa Parks as a secretary (Eldridge, n.d.)

On December 1, 1955 the boycott started to take place in Montgomery. It started when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white rider. After the arrest of Mrs. Parks, the local leaders of Montgomery like Jo Ann Robinson and Edgar Daniel Nixon Started preparing for the boycott. At first, Nixon called Ralph Abernathy the minister of the first Baptist church. Then he called Luther King and convinced him that it was time for this boycott in order to limit the unfair treatment of blacks in Montgomery. When all these local Civil Rights leaders agreed to participate, they immediately organized a meeting at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Kings church, to plan the boycott (Kaul and King 10.)

On Monday morning, December 5, 1955, most of African-Americans refused to ride buses; they preferred walking to work or school. At that time a new organization was created to lead the boycott "The Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)" and King became its president. MIA played a vital role to fight segregation in the city and guides the bus boycott. Montgomery bus boycott made king the most known leader of the Civil Rights Movement (Lutha.)

Despite that King's house was bombed. Many boycotters were fired from their jobs and faced dangerous situations. African Americans continued their resistance until the federal court in Montgomery ruled in Browder vs. Gayle that Alabama's segregation laws in both City and State were unconstitutional on November 13, 1956. MIA members voted to end the boycott on December 20, 1956. This victory of the bus boycott in Montgomery pushed King and other

Southern preachers and activists to create the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) (Burns, Williams.)

## 1.2. The Sit-in Movement in Greensboro (1960)

The Greensboro was the location of sit-in nonviolent protests in Greensboro, South Carolina. It started from February 1, 1960 to July 25, 1960. The Greensboro sit-in was the first notable sit-in in the Civil Rights Movement. These protests pushed the Woolworth department store chain to end its policy of racial segregation in its stores.

On February 1, 1960, the four young blacks: Ezell Blair, Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeill and David Richmond; were students at North Carolina and agricultural and Technical College. The four sat down at the lunch counter inside the Woolworth store and ordered to serve them. They knew the waitress would not serve them because they were black and the lunch counter reserved only for whites. They sat and waited to be served without violence but the whites reacted by pouring ketchup and throwing food on them. This led to attract attention. On the second day the Media covered the action that resulted to spread the sit-in movement in other parts such as Nashville, Tennessee, Atlanta, Georgia; and Virginia. As a result, the Greensboro Woolworth's served the black at its lunch counter on July 25, 1960 (Momodu.)

These actions attracted white northerners who began to encourage equal civil rights for all American citizens. It also led the protesters to search for other segregated public facilities and attempt to desegregate them. For example *kneel-ins* in churches, *sleep-ins* in Hotel, *swim-ins* in pools, *wade-ins* on beaches, *read-ins* in public libraries, and *play-ins* in parks.

As the sit-in of students became more successful, they felt the need to form their own organization, such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) established in 1960 (Hohenstein.)

### 1.3. Freedom Rides (1961)

The Freedom Rides began in spring of 1960. The Congress of Racial Equality started the Freedom Rides to desegregate public transportation throughout the South by sitting on the front seats of buses.

In 1960 with the case of Boynton V. Virginia, the United States supreme court declared that the segregation in interstate buses, restrooms, and waiting rooms were unconstitutional. But the high court's ruling did not stop segregation on interstate in the South. This pushed the Freedom Rides to start (Nittle.) The first freedom ride took place on May 4, 1961 where seven blacks and six whites left Washington, D.C., on two public buses in the heart of Deep South to test the Supreme Court's decision. At the beginning, the riders faced little trouble and hostility from the white supremacist. When they reached the Deep South, they met violent opposition waiting for them in each stop. Outside Anniston, Alabama; the members of white supremacist (KKK) set the bus on fire. In Birmingham several whites attacked the riders. At the same time, the U.S justice department intervened and most of black Freedom Riders were vacate from Birmingham, Alabama to New Orleans (Williams.)

After that, some Congress leaders of Racial Equality wanted to stop the violence by putting an end to Freedom rides. But the SNCC students and other volunteers decided to continue the rides as a refusal. The group travelled from Birmingham to Montgomery without incident. However on their arrival in Montgomery, they were attacked by more than 1000 mob whites. Whites' violent attitude helped the riders to gain national support and it obliged President Kennedy (May 29, 1917 to November 22, 1963) to end the violence (Williams.)

The rides lasted for several days until the end of the summer. As a result, rides had spread to train stations and airports throughout the south. In November, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) issued laws prohibiting segregated transportation facilities (Williams.)

## 1.4. Marches

Another means African-Americans followed to confront the U.S Government was the marches. Indeed, hundreds of people often marched peacefully day after another around the South expressing discontent and trying to desegregate all public facilities.

### 1.4.1. The Birmingham March (1963)

Before the 1960s, Birmingham, Alabama was a very segregated city in the United States. This meant that black and white people had not the same opportunities; for they had different schools, different restaurants, and different other public facilities. In order to bring these differences in Birmingham to the other nations, African American leaders such as Luther King, Wyatt Tee Walker (Pastor, theologian and civil rights activists), and Fred Shuttlesworth (head of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights) decided to organize a massive protest by using sit-ins, boycotts and most importantly “marches.” This latter led to attract the attention of others in all America (Ken.)

The Southern Christian Leadership lead by Martin Luther King developed a plan against racism and racial segregation in Birmingham city that started on April 3, 1963 with protesters launching sit-ins at lunch counter, and marches to city hall. On April 6, Dr King led a prayer March downtown Birmingham which polarized a great number of peoples, police officers with their dogs. Dr King and other Activists marched without in use of violence even when the police arrest or hit them. During this time, the marches were broadcasted by television across the United States.

On April 10, 1963, Birmingham officials gave an injunction to stop the protestors. King and the rest of the SCLC decided to violate the court order, and continued with the protest and marches. On April 12, King and other activists were arrested for breaking the law. During the

time of imprisonment, King wrote his Letter from Birmingham jail as a defense and response to the announcement by some clergymen that appeared in the Birmingham news. The clergymen criticized the protests as absurd and not justified. He wrote a letter to justify why he chose the non violent protest and appeared on the margins of a newspaper (Momodu.)

On May 2, 1963, over a thousand black children; some of them were only six years old. They marched from the church on City Hall where many of them were arrested. The next day; the same situation was to be repeated with the pressure of the Connor Public Safety Commissioner which ordered the police and the Fire Department to use violence with the demonstrators. Unfortunately, children and adults were badly hurt, but at the same time police violence helped in the success of these marches and attracted media attention, then forced Kennedy intervention (Momodu.)

Kennedy's intervention convinced African-Americans to negotiate with the city leaders to bring a limit to the protest. On May10, 1963, King and Fred Shuttlesworth declared an agreement with the Birmingham city to desegregate public water fountains and bathrooms; lunch counters downtown, release prisoners, give working opportunities for blacks in clerical and sales positions within 60 days. He also asked for the establishment of permanent communication between black and white leaders (AACRM, n.d.)

However, the victory of African-Americans was met by violence despite the fact that Birmingham was considered as one of the most successful campaigns during the Civil Rights Movement (Lane, 9-16.)

### 1.4.2. The March on Washington (1963)

The March on Washington had many precedents before it took place in 1963. During the summer of 1941 A. Philip Randolph; head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and older leader of the Civil Rights Movement, had planned large marches in Washington to reject the exclusion of blacks from positions in the national defense during World War two and New Deal Programs. But Randolph repealed these marches after President Roosevelt and President Truman signed the Executive Order 8802 that prohibited discrimination in the defense industry, and 9981 that desegregated the armed forces. (Encyclopedia, National Park Service n.d.)

On July 2, 1963, the big six leaders of the Civil Rights Movement such as, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Whitney Young of the National Urban League (NUL), Martin Luther King, Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), James Farmer of Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), and John Lewis of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) planned the march on Washington for job and freedom. Later on they included Walter Reuther of the United Auto Workers (UAW), Joachim Prinz of the American Jewish Congress (AJC), Eugene Carson Blake of the Commission on Religion and Race of the National Council of Churches, and Matthew Ahmann of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, In addition, Dorothy Height of the National Council of Negro Women also took part. All these leaders aimed that Washington's March would end racial segregation and discrimination, and guarantee that Americans of all races would be equal in all aspects of life. However, the most important goal was to pass the Civil Rights Law (National Park Service, n.d.)

On August 28, 1963, about 200,000 blacks, whites and soldiers from all over the country including the well known musician<sup>9</sup> marched peacefully from Washington to the Lincoln memorial where they listened to the leaders of the march when they presented their speeches. (Encyclopedia n.d.) At that time, the last speech was given by Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream”; it was considered one of the most memorable speeches. Especially when he said: “ I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character” ( Martin Luther King Speech.)

The purpose of Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech is to show the American public the injustice of racial equality and to convince them to limit discrimination, then alert people to his dream.

After the march, King and other civil rights leaders such as President Kennedy and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson met in the White House for the Passing of the Rights Act. Such act was finally passed after the assassination of the President Kennedy. (Encyclopedia n.d.)

## **2. Media Coverage of the Civil Rights Movement**

Media played a great role in peoples’ lives and public opinion till it started to be called the Fourth Estate<sup>10</sup>. Media helped to educate people about their rights and duties; it made them aware of everything and provided people with authentic news and pictures for all important events.

During the 1950s and 1960s newspapers, magazines and television helped more to the success of the Civil Rights Movement. Because this latter depended on the media to publicize

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<sup>9</sup>Mahalia Jackson, Joan Baez, James Garner, Bob Dylan

[realclearpolitics.com/articles/2013/08/29/hollywood\\_whos\\_who\\_marched\\_with\\_king\\_in\\_63\\_119762.html](http://realclearpolitics.com/articles/2013/08/29/hollywood_whos_who_marched_with_king_in_63_119762.html)

<sup>10</sup> Refers to the press and news media, it is the “Fourth Estate” because it serves as watchdog over the three others: Executive, Legislative and Judiciary

[oura.com/why\\_is\\_the\\_media\\_termed\\_as\\_the\\_fourth\\_estate\\_and\\_what\\_are\\_the\\_other\\_three\\_estates](http://oura.com/why_is_the_media_termed_as_the_fourth_estate_and_what_are_the_other_three_estates)

their demands, such as equality between the two races, then to make the white see the way that blacks were being treated and the most important one was to gather the sympathy of whites and support for African Americans.(Samuel, n.d.)

In the beginning of 1950s most American households received their news through radio, newspapers and magazines. Besides radio, Journalism started to spread in different parts of America since it provided readers with touching and effective pictures. Though it was not in the hand of every one, but journals were playing an important role in the coverage of the Civil Rights Movement.

At first, there was only white press such as the Boston News –Letter, the New York Times, the Birmingham News and the Jackson Sun. White journalists like Evelyn Cunningham, Roy Peter Clark and Howell Raines covered many events taking place especially in the South such as the murder of Emmett Till. A noticeable difference was apparent in the way some journalists used to represent the events. Blacks were deprived from having a chance to work with whites. It was until 1827 when the first newspaper owned by blacks appeared “The Freedom’s Journals” It was established by two freed black men in New York, Presbyterian Minister Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm, Its main objective was to fight slavery, lunching (John P, n.d.) After that, black journalists were integrated in white’s Newspaper, but they were not given much space to write in.

Blacks decided to own another newspaper due to many problems they encountered. Those journals were mainly named: the New York Amsterdam news, the Pittsburg Courier, the Chicago Defender, The Tri-State Defender that aimed to defend their case, then to show the brutality and racist actions toward the nonviolence actions. Black journalists like Dorothy Butler Gilliam, Alice Allison Dunnigan and Frank Bolden risked their lives to highlight the violence that black faced it in the South.

But during 1960s another type of media that was used for the coverage of the Civil Rights Movement is “Television”. Leaders with their policy of nonviolence focused more on Television to gain national support. John Lewis once said about that “without Television news coverage, the Civil Rights Movement would have been like a bird without wings, or a choir without a song” (n.d.)

Throughout the 1960’s a growing demand for Television sets appeared. It was meant to promote the Civil Rights Movement. At the beginning, not all people could afford to buy a TV; only white people and highly paid workers were able to have a television, but the situation changed over time. TV sets became an influential item by which both black and white people received news. People were no longer interested in news delivered by radio because for them it was less expressive unlike images that were more effective for the civil rights coverage (Lograsso.) This new item did not just inform locals of what was taking place in different places of the U.S but it also informed others from the outside and that would later make blacks gain allies and supporters.

The civil rights coverage according to Rian Lograsso consisted of three phases. The first one gave more attention to segregation in schools, Montgomery bus boycott and also focused on the activist Martin Luther King. In the second phase events like lunch counter sit-ins of the 1961 and demonstrations of the 1963 led by King were highly covered. While in the third phase, the Civil Rights leaders worked for economic and political equality for African Americans. In this phase, African-Americans became more aware of the news delivered by whites. So, it would be possible that they would mislead viewers since the phases were witnessed differently (n.d.)

People for the first time were able to see the events taking place in all states of America; they were able to give opinions, critics, and actually see what was happening in Birmingham and

Selma. News reports finally made both black and white people see how peaceful demonstrators were treated and humiliated.

### **3. White Coverage of the Birmingham Campaign (1963)**

Racism was a big problem that the nation had to face; unfortunately, it took roots in the United States. African-Americans had been fighting racial discrimination and inequality for centuries. Above all, racism in the 1950s took place in some white Southern newspapers which ignored the black or segregated them from the white news.

Birmingham campaign; the most known event of the Civil Rights Movement thanks to The Media Coverage by television and different Journals such as The New York Times. According to Martin Luther King Birmingham was considered as the most Racist city in the south. Besides television and Radio, Journals also contributed much in covering what was accuring in Birmingham some in details, others briefly; this would reflect nothing but how editors were biased specially the local ones like Birmingham News and Birmingham Post Herald. In May 1963: "The police officer Bull Connor has pulled out the dogs and hoses against children's crusade and Dr. King's and Rev. Shutlsworth's team of demonstrators, the Birmingham Post Herald and the Birmingham News both committed to not putting those stories on page one (NRP)" (Figure1). (Klibanoff)

Birmingham News, owned by the New House Company, was a dominant newspaper in Birmingham City. On May 4, 1963, the Birmingham News ignored the most important event that happened in the same city. At that time, if one take a look at the Birmingham News. He will see on the front page a story about Carol Burnett marrying her producer, Sophia Lauren and other white news only, which means there was no mention for blacks' news on the front page, it was briefly mentioned on page two or three with the headline "Fire Hoses, Police Dogs used to Hunt Down Negro Demonstrations", and the headlines were illustrated with a very stenographic reporting (Klibanoff.)

Birmingham newspaper was criticized by people for not using the first page to cover the most important news, because the event was happening just few blocks away from the journals. Editors justified that they did not want to cause more violence and riots. So, why the Birmingham news chose not to do extensive coverage? And when it claimed that did not want to provoke violence, is it true? (Klibanoff.)

Whereas, The same day and the same events were headlines on the front page of the National journals “ The New York Times” with attractive headline “Violence Explodes at Racial Protest in Alabama” with powerful photos of a young demonstrator attacked by a police dog, activists sprayed with fire hoses and a black man dragged by police officers (Figure 2). The New York Times used three photographs from a single incident on the first page. Such way of coverage entails for how bias journals were. The above images are of the two journals; New York Times and Birmingham News’ headlines on the same day (Klibanoff.)

The Direct actions; Sit-ins, Boycotts and the Marches were highly effective during the Civil Rights Movement, particularly because of the extensive News media coverage of the nonviolent protestors were attacked by violent police; white mob and other groups who were against the civil rights Movement. In the final chapter with the case of Selma, one will see how visual media pushed to white to change their perception toward blacks.

# Chapter Three

The Selma March Coverage

All the nonviolent direct actions were helped for the advancement of the civil rights movement, but the most effective one was the Marches, especially the Selma Marches 1965. Because, Selma marches were not limited to one place, then it led to attract the attention of the local and national media. In Addition, this later were helped the African-Americans to gain their rights and get sympathy of white people. This chapter contains the Selma to Montgomery Marches and how the media contributed in the coverage of Selma marches. Then, one deals with the impact of the media coverage on the Civil Rights Movement.

## 1. The Selma to Montgomery Marches

In 1960s, Selma was the most segregated city in Alabama. So, this place pushed the black leaders to aware and understood that the key to equal rights between the two races was the political enfranchisements.

In 1870s, the Fifteenth amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits the Federal government and each state from denying the rights to vote based on "race, colour, or previous conditions servitude", but after the reconstruction era, the democratic leaders in the southern part were given complicated provisions to disfranchised the African-Americans; Means the voters were able to read, write, or interpret a section of the U.S. constitution. So, the county registrars selected the passages if the previous skills were met, unfortunately, few blacks were registered. In addition, prohibited non-whites from joining the Democratic Party or participating in its primary elections. (Holly, 48)

In Smith vs. All wright (1944)<sup>11</sup>, the court ruled that it was unconstitutional to prohibit African-Americans from voting in the Democratic primary. This decision by the Supreme Court was opened the door for blacks to register to vote. Till 1946, the Alabama electorate responded

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<sup>11</sup>[Academy/lesson/smith-v-allwright-summary-significance.html](https://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/trials/smith-v-allwright/summary-significance.html)

by establishing the Boswell Amendment<sup>12</sup>, it was designed to prevent the African-Americans from registering to vote. However, this amendment had short-lived to the Alabama Constitution; also it was declared unconstitutional in 1949. Even after passed away of the Boswell Amendment, many African-Americans were deprived from the rights to vote. So, when the Boswell was rejected by the Supreme Court, the Black belt state senators were introduced a new legislation in 1951; that demanded a Literacy Test. In this test blacks who attempted to register faced harassment, violence firstly, and secondly, registrars were asked difficult questions, if they did not succeed in the test; they were forbade from the vote and fired from their jobs. In 1952, voter registration through African-Americans in the Southern part averaged about 20% of the black population, but in Alabama only 5% of blacks registered to vote. (Ibid)

In the mid-1920, the African-American lawyer Charles J. Adams founded the local organization” Dallas County Voters League “(DCVL) to support the blacks for voter registration. When he left, Sam Boynton replaced him as a president for DCVL and a NAACP leader for Selma and later it revived by eight-member; Amelia Boynton, Ulysses S. Blackmon, James E. Gildersleeve, Frederick D. Reese, Rev, John D. Hunter, Rev. Henry Shannon, Ernest Doyle, and Marie Foster. Sam Boynton saw that, economic advancement was the key to defeat the discrimination but this progress could not happen without the voting rights. During his presidency helped more the African-Americans, firstly, he opened an Insurance Agency to protect the black voters and secondly, helped to attract the attention of “sympathetic forces.” This later was led the Federal Government to pass two laws, the Civil Rights Act 1957 and 1960, to reduce the voter registration discrimination.(Holly, 51)

In 1950s, Amelia Boynton<sup>13</sup> began a leadership of the Voters’ League, after the death of her husband. In the first, he was started contacting a few civil rights organizations. In November,

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<sup>12</sup> Encyclopedia of alabama.org/article/h-3085

<sup>13</sup> Thehistorymakers.org/biography/Amelia-boynton-robinson-14

1962, the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council sent a group from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to Selma to determine if a project would be successful in Selma. In result, Bernard Lafayette, like others SNCC workers, brought something new to Selma “Courageousness”. When he met with a racist Sheriff Jim Clark<sup>14</sup>, Dallas County’s, he thought that Selma was a best place for a registration drive. Hence, in February 1963, he began the voting registration with his wife Colia. (Ibid)

All these efforts, but the blacks continued to be rejected by registrars. In January 1964, the voter qualification became difficult than before, because the Supreme Court brought new conditions to the registration test that forced candidates to answer questions about the U.S Constitution. This test was raised the whites registration and reduced the blacks. (Holly, 53)

Many Black leaders wanted the SCLC to take role in Selma to solve the voter registration problems. The SCLC accepted without any hesitation. So, In December, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. met with the President Lyndon Johnson and talked about Voting Rights Act. Johnson explain that he was worked to pass this act but until 1966, but king refused and told him that people could not wait a long time. (Holly, 56)

On January 2, 1965, thousands of people get together at the mass meeting at Brown’s Chapel (the first Baptist church that allowed organizing meeting for Selma campaign). King proclaimed that in January 18, the demonstration would start because it was a deadline to the Supreme Court for integrating public accommodations. In the next two weeks, the SNCC, SCLC, and the DCVL all gathered to organize the protest and united the black and white community to participate in this protest. (Ibid)

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<sup>14</sup> He was one of the officials responsible for the violence in Selma, Alabama  
[nbcnews.com/id/19075321/ns/us\\_news-life/t/sheriff-jim-clark-segregationist-icon-dies](http://nbcnews.com/id/19075321/ns/us_news-life/t/sheriff-jim-clark-segregationist-icon-dies)

On Monday, January 18, King with John Lewis led four hundred protesters to the courthouse for voting registration. A people of white supremacists and Neo-Nazi groups joined Clark and his posse in the courthouse to frighten the protesters. In the first day there were no confrontation and also no registration. (*Ibid*)

In the next day, when Clark ordered the protestors to remove, they were refused. The posse began pushed the marchers and arrested many of them, then, Clark himself caught Amelia Boynton and arrested her, and pushed her into Police car. The courthouse demonstration continued and the publicity of the march was spread. On Friday, one hundred teachers marched to the courthouse. (*Holy*, 57)

The arrests continued and raised all the time even after Judge Thomas ordered Clark to stop. Later, he was arrested five hundred schoolchildren outside the courthouse. As the situation spread more, Judge Thomas ruled that the voting qualification test was unconstitutional; this was a victory for African-Americans and failure for Clark. With the successes of protesters, Clark forced one hundred and sixty young people to march for two miles in February 10; he was poking them with electric cattle prods over the way. (*Ibid*)

After a month of protest in Selma, on February 18, a lot of protestors travelled to Marion, Perry County to participate in a march. SCLC members Albert Turner and James Dobynes of the Perry County Voters League led a peaceful night march, it attended by five hundred marchers, and members of press, suddenly, the marchers were attacked by the state troopers and local law enforcement, including Clark's men, were began violently beat the protestors, reporters and broke the media cameras. This violence treatment resulted many injured, including Jimmie Lee Jackson, who was tried to protect his mother and eighty –two old grandfathers from being beaten by the troopers. After a week, Jimmie becoming the first African-Americans martyr for the Voting Rights Movement. (*Harris*, 33-34)

In response to the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson<sup>15</sup>, the SNCC and SCLC organized three marchers from Selma to the State Capitol of Montgomery. The first one “Bloody Sunday” began on Sunday, March 7, 1965, in this march six hundred protestors gathered at Brown’s Chapel, six blocks from the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The protestors marched in pair’s line, John Lewis and Hosea Williams headed the line and followed by other activists. While they were crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge, in the one side, they were met with a ninety State Troopers, like John Cloud, and posse men, many of them on horseback. And in the other side, the reporters and photographers also took a place to report this event. The brutality started when John Cloud ordered the protestors to stop the march, and then go back to their church, but Lewis refused to disperse, he suggested to Williams that they kneel and pray. As the marchers kneeled, Clark giving a signal to the officers to use the violence with the marchers; so the officers eventually, began threw tear gas and the Police beaten everyone, including women, reporters and even the children without mercy by using the bull whips and Billy clubs. At that time, Lewis was the first protestors who getting whacked on the head. In the end, the marchers returned to Brown’s Chapel, where the nurses and doctors were treated them. (Harris, 36-37)

The second march “Turnaround March” was began only two days after the Bloody Sunday, on March 9, 1965. Martin Luther King, Jr. led about two thousand people on a march to the Bridge, including the religious men and whites. As the protestors walked away, the Troopers and possemen moved out of the way for them and kept them continue their marches on to Montgomery; however King knelt in prayer with the marchers because he was made a deal with the federal officials to hold a “Symbolic” march. This march was ended peacefully till the night a group of Klansmen attacked three white ministers, such as Rev. James Reeb; he was died two days later and his death inspired more white people to come to Selma. (Holly, 62)

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<sup>15</sup> Was a Civil Rights Activists and church deacon who was killed by Alabama State Trooper James Bonard Fowler during the Selma march onthisday.com/people/jimmie-lee-jackson

The SCLC leaders immediately began organize for the third march, fifty-four mile march to Montgomery, in this march all people were shared from everywhere, including local women, ministers, nurses, doctors and the most importantly President Johnson, who sent four thousand Alabama National Guardsmen, U.S army troops, FBI agents and U.S marshals to provide safety for protestors. On Sunday, March 21, 1965, more than three thousand protesters were attended the march toward the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Dr. King and other National activists were heading the first row. Next were the local people and followed by hundreds of ordinary people men, women, children and thousands of people from all over the country, black, whites, Asian, Native Americans, even the celebrities all walked with the African-Americans. (Holly, 61- 62)

Despite the bad weather in Selma but the number of people increased, by Thursday, March 25, the crowd had grown into twenty-five thousands for the last day of the journey to Montgomery. The Governor Wallace did not welcome the marchers, so in this time several leaders spoke to the marchers. Above all this, Martin Luther King, Jr. gave one of the memorable speeches "How Long? Not Long" speech, the aimed behind it, was letting the protestors known that the time for passing the Voting Rights Act. (Holly, 65)

I know you are asking today." How long will it take? ...How long will prejudice blind the visions of men, darken their understanding, and drive bright-eyed wisdom from her sacred throne?"

...How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever.

How long? Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice". (King Speech Holly, 65)

### **2. Media Coverage of the Selma March**

The Selma marches to the State Capitol 1965 received and attracted much more media attention than the previous marches; as long as it was considered a big story for the press. During this time, media such as, newspapers, magazines and the television had a huge impact on the

public opinion. Also these later opened up everyone's eyes for what happened in the South, especially in Selma and put this event in the national spotlight.

Firstly, the newspapers suchlike, the New York Times and the Washington Post, played a crucial role in the Selma marches; it represented the voice of the African-American community and showed the brutality against them by the whites' segregationist. In the first, the front page of the both newspapers "New York Times and Washington Post" described the confrontation between the Troopers and demonstrators, and then showed the pictures of Clark hitting the two women; Annie Cooper and C.T. Vivian.

After that, the journalists were run to describe the three marches; especially the "Bloody Sunday"; for example the New York Times was covered the first march very precisely, it opened the article by "Alabama Police Use Gas and Clubs to Rout Negroes", in this article Roy Reed told what happened that day in Selma and how the protesters were beaten with clubs, gases. (Reed 1), another article by the New York Times newspaper that described the situation of the marchers when they were ordered by the State Troopers to disperse but they refused, the troopers used the violence with them "Those still on their feet retreated. The Troopers continued pushing, using the force of their bodies and the prodding of their nightsticks". (New York Times 1), similarly, the Washington Post headlined "Tear Gas Routs Selma Marchers"; it was depicted how the officers began beating the marchers without mercy or discretion; Lewis was the first victims hit on the head with a trooper's club. (Washington Post newspaper,1.) Then another coverage titled "Tear, Clubs, Clubs Halt 600 in Alabama" (figure 3).

In addition to these newspapers, another type of media was specifically covered the Selma March and illustrated it with vividly photos" the magazines". The Newsweek magazine was gave an article in March, 1965, entitled "An American Tragedy" (figure 4); this article described the Tear-gas and clubs that the Police used it against the demonstrators. So, the article used the

aggressive language to describe the Bloody Sunday event, and from time to time, used a quotations to highlighted the racist language that used by the Officers. (Colleen 19, 20), A second article appeared by the Time's magazine in March 19, 1965 that opened by "The American Negro is still often denied the most basic right of citizenship under constitutional government "the right to vote", also this article talked about the violence that occurred beside the Edmund Pettus Bridge and linked the article with strong photograph by Charles Moore, this image shed a light on the police brutality against the demonstrators. (Colleen, 16-17.) A third article on March 19, 1965, by the Life magazine; it was wrote a nine-page article on the march at Selma, the cover photograph showed a long line of marchers. This image aimed to show the peaceful protest, when the readers viewed in high of the title "The Savage Season Begins" (Figure 5), they were understood many things behind this title. (Colleen, 20)

The final kind of media that changed the minds of all Americans and led them to join with the African-Americans was "Television" because it provided more realistic data. The Selma march began a major television event during 1965; in this time the ABC, CBS and NBC was the most television network. So, the television cameras presented on the Edmund Bridge and captured the beating and sufferance of the voting rights demonstrators. This brutality footage generated more support, volunteers from every part of the country for the Civil Rights Movement. The ABC reported directly the violence that happened during the march; for fifteen minutes the ABC viewers saw the Alabama Troopers and Clark's posse attracted the protestors and fitted them with the gas and other forms of violence when they were crossed the Bridge. After this dramatic news report, the ABC broadcast the "Judgment at Nuremberg" movie; it returned its viewers by shifted picture about the German guilt in the brutalization and mass murder of Europe's Jews. (Bodroghkozy, 116)

Whereas, the CBS evening news with Newscaster Walter Cronkite, presented the Selma Campaign in general, but others was focused on the coverage of the Campaign's of three

martyrs; Jimmie Lee Jackson, Rev. James Reeb and Viola Luizzo. For the first case, Bill Plante described the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson by a State Troopers shortly by opening the report “Racism killed other brothers”. Also, the Reeb case was covered by opening an interview firstly, with the two clergymen who had been with him when he shouted, and secondly with Rev. Reeb’s widow. While Viola Luizzo a white women was murdered by Ku Klux Klan because she was supported the Selma marches. His murder was the most effective, the reporters covered this case by “The peaceful Luizzo home was thrown into shock, disbelief, and sorrow by shattering news of Mrs. Luizzo’s Murder”. (Bodroghkozy, 132-133)

### **3. The Impact of the Media Coverage on Civil Rights Movement**

The printed and visual media were affected more on American people, it's changed The opinions of whites toward African-Americans, in addition it pushed the government to look for important pieces “The Voting Rights Act” in the American history. The Civil Rights Act gained more from Selma marches, especially the Bloody Sunday because the more violence, more publicized, more sympathy. So, the Bloody Sunday coverage helped to join many whites' people from different parts in the country and this later led to spread the Civil Rights Movement. Another impact of media coverage was pushed the President Lyndon B. Johnson to go on national television and addressed the historic speech along with Congressmen, Senators, Supreme Court justices, and members of the cabinet; in it he was announced his support to the Selma protests and informed the African-Americans that he was introduced this act in Congress. (Bodroghkozy, 134)

Johnson delivered his speech to millions of Americans that night, in it he said, “Many of the issues of Civil Rights are very complex and most difficult. But about this there can excuse the denial of that right; there is no duty which weighs more heavily on us than the duty we have to insure that right”. (Johnson Said n.d.) Johnson concludes his speech with a famous song of the

protest and by identifying himself with the demonstrators "...Their cause must be our cause too. Because it is not just Negros; but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome" (Johnson Said, n.d)

In 6, August 1965, the congress passed the voting right act, which guaranteed the right to vote for African-Americans and outlawed the state laws that deprived African-Americans from this right. After passing this act, the African-Americans registrations were increased and they were participated in politics and government. (Selma to Montgomery March, n.d)

As a conclusion, despite the different obstacles and barriers, African-American challenged these hurdles and blocks. In the Selma case, they proved that all Americans were equal and there was no place for superiority or inferiority under the Voting Rights Act. So, media coverage, in a way or another, led to the passing of these rights and to some extent paved the way for integration between the blacks and whites.

## **General Conclusion**

In the past time, African-Americans suffered a lot from slavery and discrimination they were confronted to from the side of their masters, the whites. Even after slavery was abolished, blacks faced another problem which was the segregation imposed by whites to maintain their superiority over blacks. There was a total separation between the two races to preserve the purity of the whites.

Though African-Americans were emancipated and given the right to equality and citizenship on papers, it was still fake promises. Blacks were deprived from their least rights, such as the voting right. Conditions did not change, that is why African-Americans stood up to challenge segregation laws and asked for their rights using different ways such as Nonviolent Direct Action to attract the local and national media at the beginning of the 1960's

This research paper aims at highlighting the Media Coverage during the Civil Rights Movement and to show the role of the printed and visual media in changing white Americans' point of view towards Blacks.

It is hypothesized that without media coverage the voice of African-Americans would have taken a long time to be heard. The Selma Marches confirmed that media had a great role during the nonviolent direct action because, it had Newspapers, Magazines and the most importantly Television not covered the events, the Selma marches and all the following events would have been buried underground.

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## Appendix 1



The birmingham News Covered the Birmingham News. Front Page

Genderraceclassblog.wordpress.com/popular-culture  
/how-the\_media-covered-the-civil-rights-movement.

## Appendix 2



The New York Times Covered the Birmingham Campaign 1963. Front Page

Genderraceclassblog.wordpress.com/popular-culture  
/how-the\_media-covered-the-civil-rights-movement.

## Appendix 3

**The Weather**  
Today—Partly cloudy, high in the low 50's. Tonight—Low around 30. Tuesday—Fair, with 50°. Wednesday—Tempers 40°. Thursday—High 50°, low 30°. Friday—High 50°, low 30°. Saturday—High 50°, low 30°. Sunday—High 50°, low 30°.

**The Washington Post**

**Editorial Staff**

**Executive Decision**  
That's the title of our new 32-page monthly compilation of editorials of business men. Also it features legal, today and Tomorrow 2, and 3, all of which are frequently quoted by state officials.

**88th Year No. 93 Phone RE 7-1234 Monday, March 8, 1965 WFOOTY 99 Radio (158) TRN CES**

**Marines in Viet-Nam Will Shoot Back if Attacked, Rusk Says**

**Bonn Offers Recognition To Israel**

**Amb's Reaction To Surprise Move Still Uncertain**

**Principles of Policy**

**The Issues Underlying U.S. Role in Viet-Nam**

**Air Base Security Is Called Main Aim Of Two Battalions**

**Secretary of State Dean Rusk Said Today That If Clear Order Day for the South Vietnamese Marines Were Being Sent to South Viet-Nam, They Would Fight If They Are Attacked by the Crag Gang Villains.**

**Blacks, Too, Are Urged Not to Run Away, But They Should Be on Their Best Behavior.**

**South Viet-Nam, However, Is Separating Itself Under the Geneva Agreement, the U.S. Proceeded to Help It Because It Was in France's Interest to Prevent Hanoi's Goals.**

**U.S. Will Supply Arms Only to Southern Stanley of South Viet-Nam, Not to North Viet-Nam, and Therefore It Cannot Win Viet-Nam.**

**Moving of the South Vietnamese were to be done by the government, the Defense Department, the State Department, and the White House.**

**U.S. Announces It Is Preparing to Evacuate South Vietnamese and American Forces from Saigon, but Right Now the White House Is Ready to Act on Its Own.**

**U.S. Announces It Is Preparing to Evacuate South Vietnamese and American Forces from Saigon, but Right Now the White House Is Ready to Act on Its Own.**

**U.S. Announces It Is Preparing to Evacuate South Vietnamese and American Forces from Saigon, but Right Now the White House Is Ready to Act on Its Own.**

**Tear Gas, Clubs Halt 600 in Selma March**

**State Troopers Beat and Injure Many Negroes**

**Associated Press**  
Alabama state troopers, wearing helmets and gas masks, break up a demonstrator gathering. Other children on Page A2.

« Tear Gas, Clubs, Clubs Halt 600 in Alabama ». Bloody Sunday. Front page

[www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

## Appendix 4

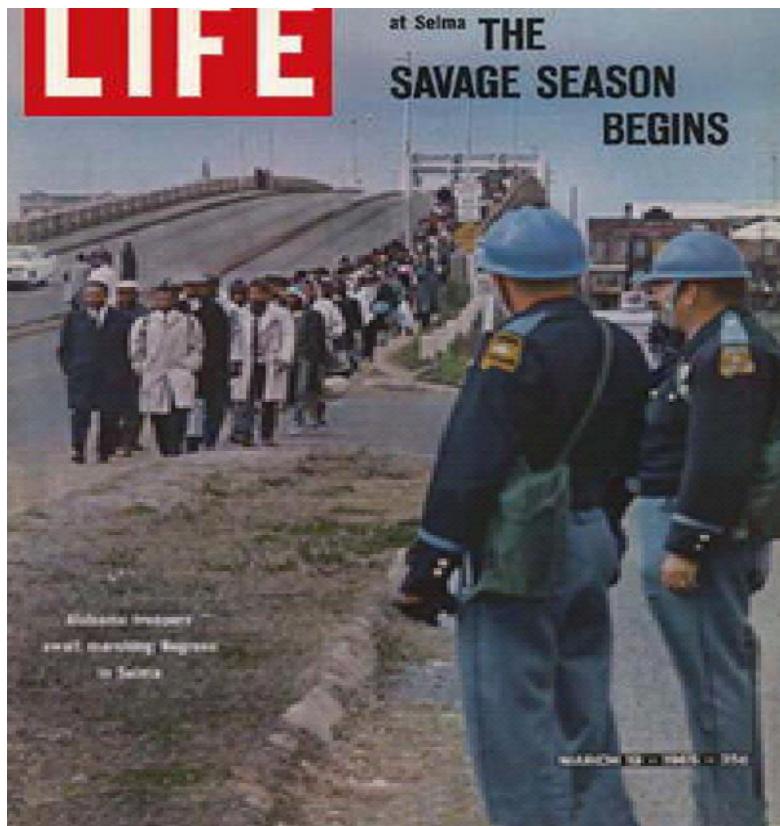


« An American Tragedy. » Newsweek. March 22, 1963

McNamara- Palmer Agency

[Newsweek.com/An-AMERican-tragedy](http://Newsweek.com/An-AMERican-tragedy)

## Appendix 5



« The Savage Season Begins. » Life.  
March 19, 1965, Cover. Charles Moore

[Time.com/3720555/Selma-bloody-Sunday/](http://Time.com/3720555/Selma-bloody-Sunday/)