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**The Civil Rights Movement in the United States of
America and the Impact of Media in the 1960s and 1970s**

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Dedication

To my husband,

To my son,

And to my lovely family.

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Abstract

The twentieth century in the United States of America witnessed the rise of the Civil Rights Movement. The 1960s and 1970s brought the climax of African American demands struggle into papers and screens. The present dissertation explores the role of newspapers and media in disseminating the messages of Civil Rights Movement. Through a chronological presentation of the major events happened during the 1960s and 1970s till the decision of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, the research attempts to highlight the forms of news coverage, activists' opinions and the aftermaths of some turning points in the history of the Movement. The work consists of two chapters. The first chapter provides a historical overview of the African American background in the US from Post-Reconstruction till the 1960s. The second chapter focuses on the events widely covered by newspapers and television during the 1960s and the 1970s, and shows the contribution of journalism to spreading the voice of the oppressed community nationally and internationally.

Keywords: Newspapers, media, the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans.

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List of Abbreviations

CRM: the Civil Rights Movement

KKK: the Ku Klux Klan

General Introduction

Throughout the 1960s, radios were in the high majority of homes in the US. If African Americans could create popular songs to get their message across, they would be played in radios for all to hear. Songs such as “Times they are a-changin” by Bob Dylan and “We shall overcome” by Pete Seeger became very popular and gained some awareness that a movement was happening in the US and it was in full effect.

Once the Civil Rights Movement (henceforth, CRM) began to pick up steam in the 1960s, news outlets began to cover some of its major events. With this new form of news coverage, many were aware of the common conflicts that were happening at that time. During the time of racial segregation, listening to songs then hearing news reports about marches, sit-ins and other demonstrations to support the movement were very easy to find. Instead of using radios or newspapers to spread updates and other information on the CRM, some of the most popular demonstrations against segregation were witnessed firsthand and stories from those witnesses spread by mouth.

In the light of what has been mentioned, the current dissertation attempts to highlight the role of media in delivering and covering the events of racial segregations in the US during the 1960s and 1970s. The objective of this study, thus, is to explore how could newspapers, television and available communication tools help the African Americans and the CRM leaders to spread their words and strengthen their calls for freedom and rights.

In order to achieve the study aims, the researcher raises the following questions:

- 1- How did the African Americans face racial segregation in the U.S. during the 1960s and 1970s?

- 2- To what extent were the press and media efficiently making a proper coverage of the CRM struggle in the 1960s and 1970s?

It is hypothesized that:

- 1- African Americans created some communities and groups in order to plan for protests to call for their rights. They also fought the segregation with no violence following the guides of their leaders.
- 2- The images and footages, taken by journalists and activists in several incidents and attacks, contributed to the spread of violence against the oppressed community in the US. The role of newspapers could reach the involvement of US presidents to take serious decisions.

This dissertation consists of two chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the background of the African Americans in the US from the Post Reconstruction till the 1960s. It deals with slavery times, the Civil War and Post Reconstruction Era. The chapter moves chronologically towards the Jim Crow Laws and ends with the status of the African Americans in the beginning of the 20th century. The chapter also lists the contributions of some major leaders and activists to the creation of the CRM during post World War II. The second chapter focuses on the major events in the 1960s and 1970s where the climax of the struggle was reported and filmed to the nation and to the world. It highlights the role of media in helping the movement and marches win their goals through each event.

Chapter One:

The Background of African Americans

in the US from Post-Reconstruction till the 1960s

Introduction

For much of the 19th century, African Americans were segregated. It was in the social system, the Americans' way of keeping them away from other communities. By custom and by law, most of them were servants, laborers, tenant farmers, went to separate poorer schools, lived in separate poorer housing. Segregation was the context for their lives throughout the country, but especially in the South -a complete environment where people were more socially and psychologically mistreated. This chapters starts with a background on the African American's history in the late 19th century. It also presents the major activists that prepared for the CRM and stood against segregation in the 20th century America.

1. Slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction

In 1776 the American Declaration of Independence granted citizens of the United States of America the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. However, hundreds of thousands of Africans were brought to America as slaves and their descendants were not counted as citizens. (Smith 567)

In all of America's history, no war has been as divisive as vitally fought or as costly as the American Civil War (April 1861 – April 1865). The question of slavery defined the conflict between the union North and confederate South. Through four long years, men fought and died to

determine the future of slavery. President Abraham Lincoln declared in 1863 that “all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.”¹

Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery everywhere but it marked a turning point of the war. Thereafter, every advance was a step towards union victory on April 9th 1865. The North won the Civil War and passed the 13th amendment outlawing slavery. Three years later, African Americans were granted US citizenship but still in economic servitude. (Smith 570-572)

2. African Americans in the Post-Reconstruction Times

Of all the people who journeyed to America from foreign lands, African Americans had the saddest, yet most inspiring story. They came as captives, sold into involuntary servitude by European slave traders. Lawson (13) narrates that, by 1890, the promise of freedom won during the Civil War had soured as new oppression took root. After reconstruction and the withdrawal of federal troops from the south, African Americans found themselves at the mercy of a hostile white population that subjected them to discrimination, mob violence, and left them with few economic alternatives. Voting laws were passed that effectively silenced them. At that time, prejudicial laws would extend into other realms, namely schools and public transportation. These combined policies were known as Jim Crow laws.

Fremon introduces the Jim Crow laws as a system that advocated a policy of maintaining separate but equal schools, transportation, and housing for the races. But in truth, conditions were

¹ Transcript of the Proclamation. Available on the National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation/transcript.html> Accessed on January, 12th 2020

not equal. It meant there was a school for African Americans and one for whites. The school for whites was better. It meant that African Americans could not use the library. Some places had colored libraries, but it wouldn't be as well-endowed as the white library. This would go on throughout life in southern society. (Fremon 21-22)

Jim Crow was tested in the historic case *Plessy vs. Ferguson*. arrested in 1896 for refusing to move from a whites-only compartment of the east Louisiana railroad line, Plessy challenged his conviction on the grounds that it violated his rights under the 14th amendment. The doctrine separate but equal was the philosophical underpinning of the Jim Crow laws, it really took on life as a result of the famous supreme court case *Plessy vs. Ferguson*. (Fremon 34-36)

After reconstruction, the first African American to rise to national prominence was Booker T. Washington. He was a son of a slave who saw education as the key to their success. He funded a network of educational institutions with the help of wealthy philanthropists He organized and dominated a national network of African American self-help organizations, businesses, and communities (Hacht and Hayes 1626). Washington was best known as the founder of Tuskegee institute, an industrial school located in Tuskegee, Alabama. He believed that African Americans needed to learn industrial skills in order for them to advance and survive in American society as free people. They were only free in the south from 1865-- that was 30 years-- and he believed that industrial training would be appropriate for the advancement of African Americans at that particular time. (Hacht and Hayes 1627).

Booker T. Washington faced his fiercest opposition from other African Americans, including a Harvard-educated intellectual named William Edward Burghardt du Bois. The latter was northern-born while Washington was southern-born (Lewis 11). They were both among the elite of the race, that is, they were middle-class African Americans in the truncated hierarchy of

their society. But they were as different as night and day in terms of social philosophy. Du Bois became Harvard's first African American Ph.D. In 1909, du Bois joined with leading white reformers to create the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization committed to the elimination of segregation and other forms of discrimination. (Lewis 16).

However, the march towards equality was viewed with suspicion by many southern whites. In anonymous white robes pointy caps brandishing pseudo Christian symbols, white supremacist organization, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). struck fear in the heart of African Americans by using tactics such as beatings and murder to intimidate those who call for civil rights (Guterl 62). The flaming cross became a terrifying symbol of intolerance. To further undermine racial equality, governments in the south enacted a series of infamous laws that mandated separate facilities for Americans and African Americans. Under these Jim Crow laws, the white facilities were always better and blacks remains second-class citizens. (Guterl 64)

Throughout the 1890s, African Americans were shot, burned, and lynched by racist whites at an alarming rate. Like the fugitive slaves of an earlier generation, African Americans fled north for safety, but in far greater numbers (Pegram 45). Groups like the KKK were attempting to take away the rights that had been gained by African Americans, and rather than continually deal with violence and abuse. In addition, many families decided to move and go someplace where they will not constantly worry. People moved for a better life, better opportunity. (Pegram 48)

African Americans were born into a system that was segregated, and denied their right to vote, and also denied women the right to vote. Segregation had its rules, and Southern African Americans knew that if they did not obey them, if they did not step aside to let a white man pass,

or if an African American looked too closely at a white woman, the system could be enforced by violence.

Groups like the KKK used terrorism to uphold white supremacy, and were an ever-present symbol of intimidation. But there were always African Americans who fought against segregation. Many ministers preached equality, and the unions and organizations of minorities like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) worked for it for decades through speeches, demonstrations, and court cases. (Guterl 69)

Fearful for their own jobs, some northern African Americans resented the new migrants and refused to admit them into fraternal organizations, churches, social clubs, and other community groups that could have eased their transition into city life. Instead, the new arrivals were forced to fend for themselves in an alien and often hostile environment. In time, the antagonism between established African Americans and newcomers diminished. (Pegram 62)

A turning point in unifying the diverse African American population came with World War I. By war's end, nearly 367,000 African Americans were called into service, many overseas. veterans returned home from the foxholes of France with a new outlook (Franklin and Higginbotham 361). Europeans often treated them equally, as Americans. soldiers had discovered that it was possible to live in a society free from racial discrimination. And when they came home after the war, after having given all that they could-- many having lost their lives-- they were not going to accept being treated as if they were less than first-class citizens. Many were wearing the American uniforms at their homes, and yet, they were challenged just by walking on the streets. They were insulted and degraded, and they fought back like they never did before. (Franklin and Higginbotham 362)

At this time, Marcus Mosiah Garvey began to capture the attention of African Americans. He believed whites would always be prejudiced against people of African descent. In 1914, Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) That later served as the base for his "Back to Africa" movement. The UNIA's message of political liberation and African nationalism struck a chord with African Americans. In its earliest days, the UNIA aimed not to relocate African Americans but to heighten their pride and to introduce a program of educational and economic opportunity. (Cronon 4-5)

Whereas segregation had been a negative, Garvey said, "it's the greatest thing that's happened "because in that separation and segregation, we can build our strength." (Cronon 8). Garvey took the argument of race farther than anyone else had, except perhaps some racist Southern governors, and made black not only beautiful but superior and then tacked on to it a concept of Zionism, out migration to Africa.

During World War II, approximately one million African American men and women served their country with distinction². Although they still faced discrimination, they did gain entry into more branches of the armed forces than ever before. At home, industrial plants joined the war effort by producing the supplies needed for American troops, but African American workers did not share in this new abundance and stood no chance of employment in defense plants controlled by white-dominated unions.

World War II had an enormous impact on the hopes for change. African Americans fought and died in a segregated US army, but they saw a larger unsegregated world. They saw their own power as they fought unto some were trained as officers and specialists and they came back with a

² African Americans in WWII. The National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/ww2-pictures> Accessed on Dec 19th 2019

new sense of themselves. The South they came back to was determined to resist change and most of the nation was not ready to hear their demands for justice. Then in the early 1950s after years of carefully planned litigation, the NAACP brought these demands to the Supreme Court, the test cases were set in schools. (Franklin and Higginbotham 369)

On May 17, 1954 the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in *Brown versus Board of Education* that segregated schools were unconstitutional (McCloskey and Levinson 144). It called into question the whole system of segregation. However, the South resisted desegregation with legal and illegal delays. It would take years before the Supreme Court's decision would be implemented in any meaningful way, but it had one immediate effect on the African American community as the Supreme Court emboldened their communities around the country to move forward to secure their own rights. (McCloskey and Levinson 145)

The change began slowly especially in rural areas. African Americans knew they could still lose their livelihood or their lives if they pushed whites too fast. However, step by step the change began. First, with small acts of personal courage. In September 1955, an old man named Mose Wright took that remarkable first step. His story starts at the Tallahatchie River in Money Mississippi where the body of Emmett Till was found way down in the waters. Two local white men were arrested and charged with the murder. (Tyson and Price 221)

By that time, everyone in Money knew what had happened. Emmett Till had broken one of segregation rules. The start was when he talked fresh to a white woman in a store. He was only 14 years old (Tyson and Price 220). Later, Mose Wright identified his body which was shipped home back north to Chicago where Mamie Till Bradley – Emmett's mother- insisted on an open casket

funeral so all the world can see what they did to her boy. After such an event, movements started to fight for their rights.³

3. African American Leaders in the Fights for Rights

Franklin and Higginbotham narrate that the last century's first prominent leadership was by the foundation of NAACP⁴. However, most African Americans were still victims of poverty discrimination and racial hatred in many states. Laws kept them from the housing, schools, jobs and voting rights that were available to fight. The Association was founded on a daring notion that full integration of the races was a necessary and desirable goal. Through the many years of hardship in the struggle for racial equality, the NAACP has maintained its dedication to the theory of integration. (260-262)

In 1941, a. Philip Randolph, the organizer and president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), decided to combat this racist policy. He spread news of a planned march on the nation's capital. President Franklin Roosevelt met several times with Randolph, who agreed to cancel the march if Roosevelt guaranteed to end the discrimination against African Americans in the defense industry (Chateauvert 21). On June 25, 1941, Roosevelt made good on his promise by issuing executive order 8802, a landmark document in African American history.(Jeffries 147)

The order stated that "there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin."⁵

³ The Washington Post <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/07/12/emmett-tills-mother-opened-his-casket-and-sparked-the-civil-rights-movement/> Accessed on Jan 19th 2020

⁴ That was in 1909 half a century after the Civil War ended slavery.

⁵ Roosevelt, F. Executive Order 8802. <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/od8802t.html> Accessed on Jan 3rd 2020

African-American leaders next decided to challenge the principle of segregation. They focused their attack on the public schools of the south, which cheated African American children of an opportunity to receive an education comparable to that of white students. In 1951, Thurgood Marshall, the head of the NAACP's legal defense fund, began to develop a case challenging the legality of school segregation-- Oliver Brown versus the board of education of Topeka, Kansas. Marshall won, and the supreme court invalidated segregation, paving the way to equal rights for all Americans. (McCloskey and Levinson 151)

Mostly, Marshall's contribution was to encourage people. He was able to communicate the sense that they were moving with history and that despite the fact that current conditions might be terrible; in the end, the African American community was going to prevail. He was the kind of lawyer who, with other civil rights lawyers, traveled the back roads of the south and who, when they got back to their offices in New York or Washington, were very proud of their victories. (Guterl 99)

In December 1955, Rosa Parks, an African American seamstress living in Montgomery, Alabama, refused to yield her seat on a bus to a white man. The bus driver summoned a police officer and had arrested her⁶. Eventually, E.D. Nixon, head of the local branch of the NAACP, in which Rosa Parks was an active member, saw her arrest as a golden opportunity to challenge the city's Jim Crow bus laws. They demanded that the city integrate its buses and hire more African American drivers. (Franklin and Higginbotham 378).

Nixon chose a young minister, Martin Luther King, Jr., to lead a proposed boycott of the buses. the boycott lasted more than a year, as African American citizens chose to walk rather than

⁶ Rosa Parks - Life, Bus Boycott, Mother of Civil Rights <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/rosa-parks>
Accessed on Jan 13th 2020

ride the buses (Branch 24). The economic drain on the city was so great that city leaders finally caved in and agreed to compromise. The federal courts intervened and struck down the city's Jim Crow transportation laws. The boycott ended in complete victory, and its leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., was elevated to national prominence at the age of 26. (Branch 25-27)

King spoke that “It is a position in which we can well map out the strategy for the future of integration”⁷. His “We shall overcome” was more than a song. It was a faith and a feeling that African Americans did not have to accept anything as it was. He was a phenomenal orator. The impact of his words probably had as much to do with his significant role as the impact of his deeds in the CRM. King's studies in Boston had introduced him to the teachings of Mohandas Gandhi, a politician and spiritual leader in India. King admired Gandhi's doctrine of nonviolent resistance to oppression as a means of opposing social injustice. (Frady 19)

In 1960, King began to put his principles into action. He left Montgomery for a pulpit in Atlanta, Georgia, and during that year founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization dedicated to nonviolent protest against segregation. Soon, the African American community began staging peaceful acts of civil disobedience, both in conjunction with King and independently. (Frady 23-24)

After planning all night in a college dorm room, four African American students in Greensboro, North Carolina, sat down at a white-only lunch counter in a Woolworth's department store. They sat all day until the store closed, and then the next. Soon, they were joined by dozens

⁷ Address to MIA Mass Meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/address-mia-mass-meeting-holt-street-baptist-church> Accessed on Jan 3rd 2020

of others, including some whites. They encountered violence and insult and attracted national attention. Their sit-in resulted in the eventual desegregation of Greensboro's public facilities.

Conclusion

Some goals of the African American struggle for civil rights have been partially achieved. The right to vote, the right to equal education and employment, and an end to legal segregation in public places. Because the law of segregation has been defeated, many Americans are tempted to think racism still exists, but it is not so clear-cut and easy to target. Problems of poverty, violence, and poor education would require new strategies, bold leadership, and universal participation. The CRM was a sum total of all of these leaders' efforts and whatever a segregated generation came up with.

Throughout their fights for rights, African Americans during the 60s and 70s had been projected by media and public opinions. The following part of the study will shed light on how newspapers, television and other tools and spaces of public opinions shared the rights of African Americans. Particularly, the Civil Rights Movement will be scrutinized in terms of calling for freedom through by all means.

Chapter Two:

Media and the Civil Rights Movement (the 1960s-1970s)

Introduction

Starting from the 1960s, the racial tensions became higher and African Americans were determined to spread the word about a change that had to be made. The challenge was how would this word be spread with a movement of such massive importance. Spreading the message by word of mouth would be inefficient and most likely unsuccessful. Indeed, it is obvious during that time African Americans were without powerful tools of technology and communication like the ones available today. So, they had to come up with creative ways to gain awareness of the CRM.

In this chapter, the factors that helped the CRM spread their words will be highlighted. Media, including radio, television and written press, was the helping hand or the righteous weapon of the movement to gain the nation awareness about their status in the US. The chapter sheds light on the major events in the 1970s covered by media, as it focuses on the roles played by media in the creation of a fair status for the African Americans in the following decades.

1. Fighting Press

Before the major events that brought the racial segregation to the surface, Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff reported in their book *The Race Beat* (2007) that “Negro newspapers drew such little notice from their white counterparts that even when they clearly had the inside track on a story of national importance, the white press tended to ignore it” (37). Afro-American press

accounted all statements by A. Philip Randolph, yet the white press ignored specific ones like when he warned that “a wave of bitter resentment, disillusionment and desperation was sweeping over the Negro masses.” (Finkle 96)

Every time Randolph announces or decries something, the press gets more attentive. Later, Randolph spoke about the defense industry and how African Americans still lacked employment. Then, he warned that such ignorance of African Americans would trigger the march on Washington. However, he always noted that protests would be guided by a Gandhian commitment to nonviolence. It was that what made him get little coverage in the white press. (Finkle 97)

With no justifications and with no reasons, the Afro-American press obviously knew what the audience wanted. Racial inequities were already noted and denounced in African American newspaper (Emery, Emery and Roberts 174). The Afro-American and white press were advocating and pleading the legacy of protest. However, while the white newspapers were covering general news, their Afro-American counterparts kept their voices loud as instruments of protest. (Roberts and Klibanoff 38)

Mostly, Afro-American newspapers did not live for so long. The racial fight brought some papers up then the support by White press made them disappear again. By the 1970s, the US witnessed a new sense of national press. Despite that, many of the stories of the CRM announced on Southern newspapers differ from those printed in many Northern -or other- newspapers. Roberts and Klibanoff highlighted that Southern papers reported mostly how criminal acts were happening as they tended to ignore the CRM. But other newspapers like in the North, they reported the civil rights challenges and stories with references to the racial issues in the South. (38-40)

2. The Movement in the Eyes of Media

In the deep south, few years after the World War II ended, segregation was enforced by state and local law in the US. African American citizens did not receive equal treatment in every aspect of life, even the press obeyed the color line. In this respect, the major events covered by press and media need to be presented in details.

Media kept covering the happening events in the south. The spotted event was the sit-ins. Four college freshmen, all African Americans, were refused service at a Greensboro North Carolina lunch counter and the civil rights sit-in was born. The date was February, 1st 1960, the students' refusal to leave the counter launched an era of activism. The next day, 25 men and four women joined the sit-in. After few days, hundreds of students joined the protest. Newspapers covered it widely.

Claude Sitton¹ reported most of the Sit-ins event. He claimed in an interview that: "I covered the 1960 Greensboro North Carolina sit-in movement. That was the one that caught fire and spread across the whole south." Television pictures of students mauled by mobs and manhandled by police stirred campus feelings from one end of the country to the other. (McGill and Logue 79)

Shirlene Mercer -a former activist in SNCC- declared: "the sit-ins to me was an exercise in democracy. We were expressing our rights under the Constitution of the United States to protest and be against something" (McGill and Logue 81). Throughout the sit-ins, students faced abusive taunts and non-violence classics and the number of young people willing to stand up for equal

¹ A newspaper reporter and editor. He worked for The New York Times during the 1950s and 1960s,

rights was growing. Activists played their roles in reporting their views and opinions to journalists of different newspapers, as they could make televised meetings.

Synchronously, in April 1960, Ella Baker working with King got together a group of young black college students known as “the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee” SNCC. Sitton described them as “the most idealist brave devil-may-care group that you'd ever want to meet” In Spring of 1961, the snick kids joined the Congress of Racial Equality or “CORE” and took the sit-ins on the road (they became known as freedom Riders). These integrated groups challenged segregation laws across the south.

John Lewis spoke about media and the sit-ins: “we never staged anything for the sake of the media but if we were going to sit-in, we were going to want Freedom Ride, we would know we were going to be arrested, we would inform the press to be there, to see it, to record it.”²

May 14th 1961, it was Mother’s Day, angry white men stopped Greyhound bus carrying many passengers among which African Americans. The way through rural Alabama witnessed attackers who pelted the bus with rocks, broke windows and threw a firebomb in. The bus was filled with smoke and flames, and the door then was barricaded with the mob. The passengers were Freedom Riders, among many volunteers who traveled throughout the South on regularly scheduled buses for seven months in 1961 to test a 1960 Supreme Court decision that declared segregated facilities for interstate passengers illegal. (Roberts and Klibanoff 291)

Again, photographs spread in the country. The story of the attack and burning bus had been widely and attentively reported. One bus was firebombed near Anniston Alabama; the other was

² John Lewis Extended Interview. PBS. 2004. Available at: <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2004/01/16/january-16-2004-john-lewis-extended-interview/2897/> Accessed on May 11th 2020.

ambushed inside the Birmingham terminal. Six days later, there was yet another ambush at the State Capital, Montgomery. The Freedom Riders were promised protection by the governor then abandoned by local police and beaten by the KKK. (Brimmer 17)

James Peck, in his book *Freedom Ride*, presented the views of some leaders during the event. For instance, Martin Luther King was well aware that violence by whites and non-violence by Blacks was a workable combination. It was very dramatic to him to keep the peaceful and non-violent strategies in the face of attacks and crimes committed by whites (114). The CRM leaders wanted then more dramatic actions to express their call for desegregations.

Going for campaigns and marches was already planned. In May 1963, Martin Luther King made the controversial decision to use high-school students in his demonstrations. The nation watched in stunned horror as Bull Connor, Birmingham, Alabama's commissioner of public safety, turned fire hoses and unleashed dogs on thousands of black teen-age protest marchers. The news footage of the dogs tearing at the demonstrators; young people being swept away by the torrent of water shocked and moved white Americans.

The result then was arresting over a thousand. High-pressure water hoses and police attack dogs were the weapons against the non-violent demonstrating children and adult bystanders. Brave journalists who could take some images and footages on those days spread them widely in newspapers, news and magazines. Therefore, King and his brothers were consolidated.

The *Washington Post* reported:

The spectacle in Birmingham ... must excite the sympathy of the rest of the country for the decent, just, and reasonable citizens of the community, who have so recently demonstrated at the polls their lack of support for the very policies that have

produced the Birmingham riots. The authorities who tried, by these brutal means, to stop the freedom marchers do not speak or act in the name of the enlightened people of the city.³

James Forman, the SNCC leader, documented the police and dog attacks with a camera. Another SNCC secretary took the camera before Forman was arrested. Later on, Forman later noticed his photos distributed worldwide (Roberts and Klibanoff 363). Many other shots and footages were taken for newspapers and television.

A remarkable reaction to the images of Birmingham campaign was the President's. J.F. Kennedy said the pictures made him sick. Negotiations with embarrassed white leaders brought a promise to desegregate public facilities, and the campaign ended in victory. However, activists thoughts events like marches could have more protestants and more impacts than campaigns.

In the same year (1963), one of the largest and most impactful events of the civil rights era was the march on Washington with over 250,000 people from different backgrounds flooding into Washington to spectate Martin Luther King Jr, A Philip Randolph, John Lewis and many others speak about the racial tension in America. A quarter of a million Americans from many different racial backgrounds marched on the nation's capital to demand an end to racial segregation legislation, to ensure racial equality and protection for civil rights workers from police brutality. At the center of the crowd was Martin Luther King an Alabama pastor who delivered the speech of his life and focused the world's attention on America's struggle for racial equality. Feelings ran strongly within the African American community, but King opposed violence and made churches the forefront of the struggle through the SCLC.

³ The Washington Post. (May 5th 1963)

Roberts and Klibanoff presented how the TV channels -like NBC and ABC- devoted much time to the coverage of the Washington March. *The New York Times* called the march “the greatest assembly for a redress of grievances that this capital has ever seen” (413). The federal government recognized the powerful mood for change and the following year President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that outlawed segregation; but in the racist South, white supremacists continued to murder African Americans with impunity. (McGill and Logue 210)

Moreover, a second influential march happened in Selma, Alabama. On March 7th 1965, it was the police beating demonstrators in Selma. Once again, images from television news moved a president to take action. Law enforcement beat the activist Amelia Boynton unconscious, and the media publicized worldwide a picture of her lying wounded (Hardy and Hardy 264). Imagery of police dogs and firehoses being used against peaceful demonstrators sparked outrage at the same time as ensuring that racism became associated with Southern bigotry.

On March 15th, President Lyndon Johnson spoke: “what happened in Selma is part of the far larger movement. Their cause must be our cause too. Because it's not just Negroes but really, it's all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice, and we shall overcome.”⁴ Again, Martin Luther King spoke in Montgomery, and then was his “how long? Not long” speech. Media and newspapers kept an eye on his acts and views for almost two decades. Thus, he worked his way to do all what he planned under the eyes of the world.

All is all, the journey from a lunch counter in Greensboro to passage of the Voting Rights Act ended with a victorious signing ceremony on August 6th 1965. President Johnson, the Congress

⁴ History Matters. “We Shall Overcome”. President Johnson Speech. Available at <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6336/> Accessed on May 24th 2020

and CRM leaders removed barriers that stood between African Americans and the ballot box for ninety-five years.

The reporters and photographers who covered the CRM showed the value and importance of a free press to the American democracy. John Lewis valued the media role by stating: “the media played a major role. Without the American press, the CRM would have been like a bird without wings.” (Roberts and Klibanoff 414)

The CRM struggles were shown in real images by the press. The latter had its role for that it gathered public support for the movement. Moreover, the images and news prompted three U.S. presidents (Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson) to get directly involved. The movement needed the press to gather momentum.

Conclusion

The current chapter attempted to highlight the role of media and newspapers in disseminating the messages of the CRM during the 1970s. The chapter presented brief shots from the major events that brought de-segregation decisions. In an interview, John Lewis addresses those who oppressed his community by saying “if you're going to beat us, let somebody else see it. Don't beat us in the dark of the night, beat us while other people watching so they can see it.” For the CRM leaders, it was not easy to win in a few years or even decades. However, many of the leaders and activists pointed to media and journalism as a weapon that could assist their calls and demands for freedom.

General Conclusion

Although powerful media like today's were not available for the CRM activists trying to call for racial equality. African Americans and the leaders of the CRM did their job of advancing awareness of what was going on at the time using relatively new concepts of communications such as radio and television and combining those with older concepts of communication like using flyers and word-of-mouth as a combination of ways. Despite all their weak ways, they could create attract and rally a group of large people towards their demands.

Since its existence in the late 19th century, news media had its role in the race relations in the US. African American press kept showing their rejections to social inequality as they represented the marginalized community. Nonetheless, such press also witnessed marginalization and became invisible in mainstream journalism. However, by the 1950s and 1960s, all media spotlights started to live and give life to the African Americans.

For that media would make all voices of inequities heard nationally and internationally, there had been several ways for the White and Afro-American press in order to cover the racial struggle. The least that was made by media for the movement and freedom callers is that it defined and introduced the nature and chronology of racial struggle and relations in the US. There would have been no popular understanding or memorials for some incidents without the press or media roles.

Despite the long history of resistance to oppression be it individual and organized, the time of the CRM struggle influenced how historians and activists analyzed or interpreted the racial segregation in the US and the world. In recent years, several researchers have shown their appreciation of and interest in the value of publicity (media and press) in gaining support for the

struggle for African Americans' freedom, and how well-shaped was the organizing of the movement throughout decades of challenges

Indeed, modern journalism perspective and evolution were determined by the ways of covering the race issues in the US. Even with its development and newest electronic iteration, televisions, blogs and online news sources have surely learnt from the events in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, the powerful era of African Americans was well-painted by the parts played by brave and fair reporters to bring up a tragic coda to the civil rights story. The dream of Martin Luther King was chased by such reporters, yet lost to militancy. Although African American activists and figures decried how negative their portrayals in the press were, yet the press and media coverage were essential to the creation of their image, the deliverance of their voices, and the dissemination of their message.

After decades, and in the era of social media, racial segregation events are still presented and widely this time. What is happening in the US in the months of May and June 2020 triggers activists and researchers to keep questioning whether the coming movements would maintain a protesting action against any sort of oppression against African Americans. At this point, one might ask again about the roles of media and social media in uncovering facts about continuous inequalities in the US, and whether such tools would contribute to a better future for all communities in America.

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