Letter from Birmingham Jail

16 April 1963

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:
While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here. I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self purification; and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation.

Then, last September, came the opportunity to talk with leaders of Birmingham's economic community. In the course of the negotiations, certain promises were made by the merchants — for example, to remove the stores' humiliating racial signs. On the basis of these promises, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to a moratorium on all demonstrations. As the weeks and months went by, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. A few signs, briefly removed, returned; the others remained.

As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?" We decided to schedule our direct action program for the Easter season, realizing that except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic-withdrawal program would be the by product of direct action, we felt that this would be the best time to bring pressure to bear on the merchants for the needed change.

Then it occurred to us that Birmingham's mayoral election was coming up in March, and we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that the Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, had piled up enough votes to be in the run off, we decided again to postpone action until the day after the run off so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues. Like many others, we waited to see Mr. Connor defeated, and to this end we endured postponement after postponement. Having aided in this community need, we felt that our direct action program could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

The purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely. Some have asked: "Why didn't you give the new city administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this query is that the new Birmingham administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one, before it will act. We are sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Albert Boutwell as mayor will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is a much more gentle person than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists, dedicated to maintenance of the status quo. I have hope that Mr. Boutwell will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their

unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"— then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.

I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust?
A just law is a man made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I it" relationship for an "I thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and sinful. Paul Tillich has

said that sin is separation. Is not segregation an existential expression of man's tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? Thus it is that I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court, for it is morally right; and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong.

Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal.

Let me give another explanation. A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout Alabama all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered. Can any law enacted under such circumstances be considered democratically structured?

Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I have been arrested on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong in having an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade. But such an ordinance becomes unjust when it is used to maintain segregation and to deny citizens the First-Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest.

I hope you are able to see the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience.

We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God consciousness and never ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence.
Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber.

I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning time in relation to the struggle for freedom. I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." Such an attitude stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I began thinking about the fact that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency, made up in part of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, are so drained of self respect and a sense of "somebodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation; and in part of a few middle-class Negroes who, because of a degree of academic and economic security and because in some ways they profit by segregation, have become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred, and it comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up across the nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement. Nourished by the Negro's frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination, this movement is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incorrigible "devil."

I have tried to stand between these two forces, saying that we need emulate neither the "do nothingism" of the complacent nor the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. For there is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I am grateful to God that, through the influence of the Negro church, the way of nonviolence became an integral part of our struggle.

If this philosophy had not emerged, by now many streets of the South would, I am convinced, be flowing with blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as "rabble rousers" and "outside agitators" those of us who employ nonviolent direct action, and if they refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes will, out of frustration and despair, seek solace and security in black nationalist ideologies — a development that would inevitably lead to a frightening racial nightmare.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides — and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist.

But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal . . ." So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime — the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

I had hoped that the white moderate would see this need. Perhaps I was too optimistic; perhaps I expected too much. I suppose I should have realized that few members of the oppressor race can understand the deep groans and passionate yearnings of the oppressed race, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers in the South have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still all too few in quantity, but they are big in quality. Some — such as Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden, James McBride Dabbs, Ann Braden and Sarah Patton Boyle — have written about our struggle in eloquent and prophetic terms. Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They have languished in filthy, roach infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of policemen who view them as "dirty nigger-lovers."

Unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, they have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation.

Let me take note of my other major disappointment. I have been so greatly disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Reverend Stallings, for your Christian stand on this past Sunday, in welcoming Negroes to your worship service on a nonsegregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Spring Hill College several years ago.

But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say this as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen.

When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could reach the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed.

I have heard numerous southern religious leaders admonish their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers declare: "Follow this decree because integration is morally right and because the Negro is your brother." In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churchmen stand on the sideline and mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say: "Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern." And I have watched many churches commit themselves to a completely other worldly religion which makes a strange, un-Biblical distinction between body and soul, between the sacred and the secular. I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the other southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at the South's beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlines of her massive religious education buildings. Over and over I have found myself asking: "What kind of people worship here? Who is their God? Where were their voices when the lips of Governor Barnett dripped with words of interposition and nullification? Where were they when Governor Wallace gave a clarion call for defiance and hatred? Where were their voices of support when bruised and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?"

Yes, these questions are still in my mind. In deep disappointment I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the church. How could I do otherwise? I am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson and the great grandson of preachers. Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and through fear of being nonconformists.

There was a time when the church was very powerful — in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society.

Whenever the early Christians entered a town, the people in power became disturbed and immediately sought to convict the Christians for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators."' But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven," called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." By their effort and example they brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contests.

Things are different now. So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an archdefender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent — and often even vocal — sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust.

Perhaps I have once again been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and the world? Perhaps I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual church, the church within the church, as the true ekklesia and the hope of the world. But again I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom. They have left their secure congregations and walked the streets of Albany, Georgia, with us. They have gone down the highways of the South on tortuous rides for freedom. Yes, they have gone to jail with us. Some have been dismissed from their churches, have lost the support of their bishops and fellow ministers. But they have acted in the faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. Their witness has been the spiritual salt that has preserved the true meaning of the gospel in these troubled times. They have carved a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment.

I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are at present misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny. Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence across the pages of history, we were here. For more than two centuries our forebears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross injustice and shameful humiliation — and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

Before closing I feel impelled to mention one other point in your statement that has troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping "order" and "preventing violence." I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I cannot join you in your praise of the Birmingham police department.

It is true that the police have exercised a degree of discipline in handling the demonstrators. In this sense they have conducted themselves rather "nonviolently" in public. But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of

segregation. Over the past few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. Perhaps Mr. Connor and his policemen have been rather nonviolent in public, as was Chief Pritchett in Albany, Georgia, but they have used the moral means of nonviolence to maintain the immoral end of racial injustice. As T. S. Eliot has said: "The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason."

I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths, with the noble sense of purpose that enables them to face jeering and hostile mobs, and with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. They will be old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy two year old woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride segregated buses, and who responded with ungrammatical profundity to one who inquired about her weariness: "My feets is tired, but my soul is at rest." They will be the young high school and college students, the young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience's sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judaeo Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Never before have I written so long a letter. I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil-rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood,
Martin Luther King, Jr.

A Call for Unity

April 12, 1963

We the undersigned clergymen are among those who, in January, issued "an appeal for law and order and common sense," in dealing with racial problems in Alabama. We expressed understanding that honest convictions in racial matters could properly be pursued in the courts, but urged that decisions of those courts should in the meantime be peacefully obeyed.

Since that time there had been some evidence of increased forbearance and a willingness to face facts. Responsible citizens have undertaken to work on various problems which cause racial friction and unrest. In Birmingham, recent public events have given indication that we all have opportunity for a new constructive and realistic approach to racial problems.

However, we are now confronted by a series of demonstrations by some of our Negro citizens, directed and led in part by outsiders. We recognize the natural impatience of people who feel that their hopes are slow in being realized. But we are convinced that these demonstrations are unwise and untimely.

We agree rather with certain local Negro leadership which has called for honest and open negotiation of racial issues in our area. And we believe this kind of facing of issues can best be accomplished by citizens of our own metropolitan area, white and Negro, meeting with their knowledge and experience of the local situation. All of us need to face that responsibility and find proper channels for its accomplishment.

Just as we formerly pointed out that "hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political traditions," we also point out that such actions as incite to hatred and violence, however technically peaceful those actions may be, have not contributed to the resolution of our local problems. We do not believe that these days of new hope are days when extreme measures are justified in Birmingham.

We commend the community as a whole, and the local news media and law enforcement officials in particular, on the calm manner in which these demonstrations have been handled. We urge the public to continue to show restraint should the demonstrations continue, and the law enforcement officials to remain calm and continue to protect our city from violence.

We further strongly urge our own Negro community to withdraw support from these demonstrations, and to unite locally in working peacefully for a better Birmingham. When rights are consistently denied, a cause should be pressed in the courts and in negotiations among local leaders, and not in the streets. We appeal to both our white and Negro citizenry to observe the principles of law and order and common sense.

Signed by:
C. C. J. Carpenter, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of Alabama
Joseph A. Durick, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham
Rabbi Milton L. Grafman, Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham, Alabama
Bishop Paul Hardin, Bishop of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the Methodist Church
Bishop Nolan B. Harmon, Bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the Methodist Church
George M. Murray, D.D., LL.D., Bishop Coadjutor, Episcopal Diocese of Alabama
Edward V. Ramage, Moderator, Synod of the Alabama Presbyterian Church in the United States
Earl Stallings, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama

Name:
Date:

NEWSEUM ED

Making a Change Gallery Guide

Visit the News Corporation News History Gallery (Level 5).
Find the display cases called “Too Long Have Others Spoken for Us.” Then find the panel with the title “Using Media for Social Change.”

1. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Who were they? _____

What social issue did they seek to change? _____

What publication promoted their ideas? _____

2. “Double V” Campaign

What did “Double V” mean? _____

What social issue did it seek to change? _____

What publication promoted this campaign? _____

3. Randy Shilts

Who was he? _____

What social issue did he seek to change? _____

What publication spread his ideas? _____

4. Ida B. Wells

Who was she? _____

What social issue did she seek to change? _____

What publication spread her ideas? _____

5. Rubén Salazar

Who was he? _____

What social issue did he seek to change? _____

What publication spread his ideas? _____

Name:
Date:

NEWSEUM ED

6. Campaign Comparison

Which of these causes were accomplished? Explain. _____

_____

_____

Which of these causes weren't accomplished? Explain. _____

_____

_____

Now visit the Make Some Noise gallery (Level 4).

1. Look at the replica of the Birmingham jail cell door that held Martin Luther King Jr. How did King use freedom of speech to circumvent his imprisonment?

_____

_____

_____

2. Next, read about the work of college students during Freedom Summer. What were they trying to achieve? Why was freedom of assembly important to their cause?

_____

_____

_____

3. Did newspaper and TV coverage help or hurt the college students? How do you know?

_____

_____

_____

European Press Sees Riots As Test Of Kennedy Strength

LONDON — (UPI) — American's allies in Europe picture the racial crisis in Alabama as "President Kennedy's domestic trial of strength,"—a trial that will affect the future of Washington's African policy.

Communist news media agreed, but in stronger language that referred to "fascist race agitators," "race pogrom in Alabama" and "worst examples of savagery."

Most reaction was from news papers, since government officials refused to comment on an American domestic problem.

In Portugal, newspapers criticized the U. S. for its anti-Portuguese vote in the UN while being unable to smash racial barriers at home.

One paper said the riots were "the Savageness of white responding . . . to the black savageness of wild beasts on the loose in Angola."

NO RIGHT

The London Daily Express said America has no right to comment on Britain's troubles in Rhodesia.

said the riots and Alabama's

In Tunisia, the Daily As Abah defiance of Kennedy "are odious and prejudicial to U. S. prestige in Africa, which includes millions of Negroes among its people."

But the angriest outcry came from Berlin, where both western and Communist publications viewed the Montgomery crisis as a manifestation of the racism that brought Hitler to power.

CHASED LIKE BEASTS

"People are chased like wild beasts," said the pro-American B.ZM" they are spit upon and bloodily beaten only because they are colored.

"Where? In the U. S. of America, in the heart of the free world. That's a glaring contradiction.

"This affects us, too," it said, "for one reason: the policy of the U. S. in Asia and Africa becomes incredible, when it can't stop race agitators at home.

"This is Kennedy's domestic trial of strength. He has to master these problems, not only for America's sake, but for ours, too."

The communist East German news service ADN said that "since Abraham Lincoln, Washington hasn't made a serious attempt really to solve the racial problem and curb the Ku Klux Klan and race agitators. . ."

In Paris, correspondent Jean Pierre Cornet of combat said that "either the American government will put its integration program energetically into execution, whether Montgomery wants it or not, or the prestige of the U. S., delivered into the hands of the racists, will suffer another decisive blow that will compromise the future of its African policy."

In Copenhagen, the newspaper information wondered what America's allies could do to "demonstrate there are some American states we don't like to be allied to."

Chang Praised

Ousted South Korean Premier John M. Chang would have "done a good job" had he been allowed to stay in power, says School Superintendent Dr. LeRoy Brown, who knew Chang in Korea. See Page 11-B.

The Anniston Star

Member ABC and NEA | "Your Home Newspaper Since 1882" | AP and UPI News

News Day, Night

From 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., ABC, UPI and local news is flashed over Station WHMA. The Star's final edition is presented each weekday at 4 p.m. The Star arrives Sunday morning long before breakfast time.

VOL. 80, NO. 240 | FOUR SECTIONS | ANNISTON, ALABAMA, SUNDAY, MAY 21, 1961 | ★ | 45c a WEEK by CARRIER

Bloody Violence Wracks Montgomery; U. S. Rushes Agents Into Alabama

Editorial

Mobs In Alabama To Cost Millions

Regardless of who is primarily to blame for the onrush of hoodlumism yesterday at Montgomery, the Capital City of the State, the thinking people of Alabama must needs come to the realization that, in addition to our humiliation, the collapse of law and order will cost us millions, if not billions, in years to come.

We have stated previously that if we allow the lowest common denominator to take over the government of Alabama, as we seem to have done, we might just as well disband our Chambers of Commerce and cease to bring new industry, or new citizens individually, to our state.

It is a matter of record that the State of Arkansas, Little Rock in particular, is still feeling the effects of the race rioting there; and here in Alabama the disgrace is worse, as law and order went into collapse in three of our largest industrial centers.

And in the case of Birmingham the libelous stories about that great metropolis that were carried in *The New York Times* piled Ossa on Pelion, or distress compounded. And as if that were not enough, that "doctored" "Birmingham Story" that ran on television a few nights ago was enough to finish the felony.

We have an editorial elsewhere in this paper today in regard to the apparent breakdown of law and order in this city and in Birmingham, but those two instances were relatively minor, although Sylacauga has done better, as related to the supreme authority in the state.

Governor Patterson had warning to the effect that "freedom riders," who got such a disastrous reception in Anniston and the Magic City, would come back and invade Montgomery. He promised to see that full protection would be furnished the bus riders, unworthy as they were.

But the Governor came to the rescue with too little, too late. He should have had the National Guard or all the Highway Patrol on hand to protect the good name of the state. But instead we shall have Little Rock all over, with Uncle Sam calling the tune.

NEGRO ATTACKED—Several white men attack a Negro student above shortly after he arrived in Montgomery at the [illegible] Negroes, sending many to Montgomery hospitals for treatment. One of the victims was an aide to President John F. [illegible] (UPI Telephoto)

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times.

LATE CITY EDITION
U. S. Weather Bureau Report (Page 78) forecasts: Mostly fair today and tonight. Cloudy tomorrow. Temp. range: 65—50; yesterday: 66—56.

VOL. CX..No. 37,740. NEW YORK, TUESDAY, MAY 23, 1961. 10 cents beyond 50-mile zone from New York City except on Long Island. Higher in air delivery cities. FIVE CENTS

Montgomery Tension High After Threats of Bombing

By CLAUDE SITTON
Special to The New York Times.

MONTGOMERY, Ala., Tuesday, May 23—National Guardsmen are enforcing an uneasy truce here under martial law following renewed racial violence. Bomb threats, two attempted house-burnings and minor incidents kept tension high in this first capital of the Old Confederacy in the wake of efforts to end segregation on interstate buses and in waiting rooms.

Associated Press
James McShane, who is in command of U. S. marshals on duty in Montgomery, Ala.

Some 1,800 pupils were evacuated from two junior high schools after telephoned bomb threats. Similar threats were received at the Greyhound bus station and Radio Station WAPX.

The police and firemen found no explosives.

Flaming "Molotov cocktails," bottles of gasoline stoppered with rags, were tossed at two homes yesterday but neither was damaged. One house was occupied by Negroes and the other by a white restaurant operator who was acquitted recently in the shotgun slaying of a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

White-helmeted troops in green fatigues rolled through the streets in jeeps. Others with slung rifles stood watch at bus, train and airport terminals.

One hundred additional National Guardsmen were called to the Greyhound Bus Terminal late last night. It was feared there might be trouble, with several buses scheduled to arrive close together. There was no incident, and the men were ordered to return to their posts.

A spokesman at the terminal reported that business was being conducted as usual.

Some 550 deputy Federal marshals were held in readiness at Maxwell Air Force Base within the city. Two hundred more were rushing here on orders from Robert F. Kennedy, the Attorney General.

The local police and the state highway patrol were also on the alert. Concern was expressed over reports that Negro and white "Freedom Riders" would renew their efforts to carry the anti-segregation drive on across Alabama and into Mississippi and Louisiana.

Judge Walter B. Jones has ordered the demonstrators to show cause today in Montgomery's Circuit Court why they should not be found in contempt. He had earlier issued an injunction against them forbidding a continuation of their activities.

Some observers said this might lead to a showdown between state and Federal authorities. The Justice Department has said that it would protect the rights of bus passengers.

State officials have contended that the demonstrators violated Alabama's segregation laws. Whites and Negroes among them have shared seats on buses and have sought service in terminal restaurants restricted to either white or Negro passengers.

The Supreme Court has ruled that a state cannot enforce segregation in transportation. This is so whether bus, plane or train is used or whether the journey crosses a state border. The court has also found that interstate waiting rooms in terminals may not be segregated. In a ruling this term, it decided also that a private restaurant in an interstate terminal designed to serve interstate passengers could not be segregated.

Gov. John Patterson, who imposed martial law here last night, is expected to address a joint session of the Legislature at noon today on the controversy.

In a statement yesterday, he reiterated his contention that "the Federal Government has no business or legal authority to interfere in our internal problems."

He continued:

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times.

LATE CITY EDITION
U. S. Weather Bureau Report (Page 78) forecasts: Mostly fair today and tonight. Cloudy tomorrow. Temp. range: 65—50; yesterday: 66—56.

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Montgomery Tension High After Threats of Bombing

"I am saddened by the recent incidents in Alabama calculatedly provoked by a group of irresponsible outsiders. I say again that Alabama will enforce the law diligently and fearlessly. State authorities together with the Alabama National Guard are fully able and will control the local situation."

The statement came in response to telegrams from some other Southern governors endorsing his position.

A Bus Was Burned

The demonstration on wheels began in Washington under the sponsorship of the Congress of Racial Equality. Angry whites attacked one group last week in Anniston, Ala., and then put the torch to a bus on which another group was riding.

When the riders reached Birmingham, a bloody riot ensued. The demonstrators discontinued their efforts and left the state by plane.

But other demonstrators from the Nashville, Tenn., Student Nonviolent Committee boarded a bus in Birmingham last Saturday and reached Montgomery.

A second riot broke out here upon their arrival and a third came Sunday when they gathered at a Negro mass meeting in the First Baptist Church.

Federal marshals, and, later, the city police and highway patrolmen, held a mob of whites at bay with tear gas and night sticks. An automobile was overturned and burned and a number of persons were injured.

The 1,500 Negroes at the mass meeting spent the night in the church at the request of officials. At one point tear gas filtered into the church and caused a slight panic. As dawn arrived, the guardsmen began escorting the participants home in small groups, while mobile units patrolled the area.

James Farmer, national director of the Congress of Racial Equality, said Monday that five Freedom Riders would make an attempt to resume the demonstration here, probably today.

Meantime, James Bevel, chairman of the Nashville group and a student at the American Baptist Theological Seminary there, said in Nashville that the group there also planned to go ahead with the drive.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. of Atlanta, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and other Negro leaders met here late yesterday to plan other anti-segregation activities.

Meanwhile, interstate buses entering the state were stopped for Alabama highway patrolmen to read the state court order barring more persons seeking to end segregation. Officials said this was done to put riders "on notice" so that violators of the injunction could receive contempt citations.

Byron R. White, Deputy Attorney General and the top Justice Department official on the scene, discounted last night the likelihood of any conflict between states forces and the deputy marshals. He emphasized that the marshals had been brought in only to preserve order.

Mr. White said that if the marshals were needed again they would be brought in after consultation with Maj. Gen. Henry V. Graham, the state adjutant general. The two conferred this morning.

"We told him we were available to protect Federal rights here," said the Deputy Attorney General. "He indicated there might be occasions on which we could help and we indicated that we were ready to do so. We will remain here for a few days not only in the event of disturbances in Montgomery but wherever they might develop."

Mr. White conceded that the department had no solution to the problem posed by the Freedom Riders. "We think they have a right to travel freely and safely in interstate commerce," he said.

After comment on the threat to the bi-racial group posed by Judge Jones' action, he pointed out that they could file a court test of any penalties imposed on them.

He also said the Justice Department was investigating the violent outbreaks here, in Birmingham and in Anniston. He said arrests would be made if evidence of Federal violations was found.

In another news conference, the deputy in charge of the marshals at the riot last night said they had moved in only after a state investigator had requested them to do so. The deputy is William D. Behen, the assistant supervisor of the Federal Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Unit in Florida.

The force of marshals is under the command of James P. McShane, United States Marshal for the District of Columbia.

The Chamber of Commerce unanimously adopted a resolution calling on President Kennedy to "recall and remove the Federal marshals and other law enforcement officers from the City of Montgomery forthwith and without delay."

Chamber members said they "abhorred" violence but that the continued presence of the deputy marshals "may well provoke further breaches of the peace." They also said "the situation is well in hand at this time."

The force of marshals here is under James P. McShane, the United States Marshal for the District of Columbia.

The Montgomery Advertiser criticized Governor Patterson for his role in the controversy. In an editorial for tomorrow's edition, Grover C. Hall Jr., editor, declared:

"Patterson is not the exclusive author of Montgomery's troubles by any means, but his is the supreme responsibility as chief guardian against disorder.

"The measure of the errors is this. These 'Freedom Rider' incendiaries passed through every state from Washington to Alabama. But only Alabama among these states now has a problem because of it.

"This kind of jungle life could make Montgomery a depressed area. The Lord alone knows what the derelictions in law enforcement have and will cost Montgomery economically.

"There is naught to do but recognize the damage and the intolerable condition that exist and set ourselves to trudging the road back.

"There is only one road. The people have got to understand that leaving matters to mobs is calamity. The people have got to demand that their officials collar and jail mobsters as routinely as they give parking tickets."

The New York Times.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, MAY 23, 1961. L+ 27

Voice of America Is Sending Full Reports Overseas on the Rioting in Alabama

FACTUAL ACCOUNT GIVEN TO WORLD

Information Agency Devotes About a Fourth of News File to the Incidents

By CABELL PHILLIPS
Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, May 22—News of the race riots in Alabama is going out to the world through the regular radio and press services of the United States Information Agency, officials said today.

"We can't risk our reputation for credibility by tampering with news that happens to be unfavorable to the United States," an official of the Voice of America, the radio arm of the agency, said.

"After all," he said, "most of the people of the world have access to other news sources—including those of the Communist powers—and if we tried to slant or suppress such a story as this, the country would lose a good deal more in prestige than it might gain."

A review of the Voice of America news file for the last four days shows that the agency has handled the news of the treatment of the bi-racial "Freedom Riders" in Birmingham and Montgomery in factual, reportorial style.

There is less emphasis on the details of the violence, such as eye-witness accounts and quotes from participants, than have appeared in many domestic newspapers and broadcasts. There is no apparent tendency, however, to conceal the facts of lawlessness and brutality from the overseas listeners and readers.

Coverage Increased

Bulletins and brief accounts of the racial flare-up have been carried on the regular Voice of America newscasts. As the violence increased during the last week-end, the story received proportionately more attention.

Thus, in one broadcast this morning, the Voice gave its listeners in most parts of the world the following account of the event:

"A few hours ago, a new racial disturbance broke out in Montgomery, the capital of the Southern state of Alabama. It was quelled—at least for the time being—by Federal marshals aided by local police.

"Alabama Governor John Patterson has declared martial law in the city. In Washington, Attorney General Robert Kennedy appealed for a return to reason on the part of all concerned.

Associated Press Wirephoto

UNDER MARTIAL LAW: National Guardsmen patrol street in Montgomery in front of Greyhound bus station.

The New York Times.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, MAY 23, 1961. L+ 27

Voice of America Is Sending Full Reports Overseas on the Rioting in Alabama

"The new incident began when a mob of white supremacists tried to storm a meeting of Negroes inside a Baptist Church. * * * Federal marshals and Montgomery police drove the mob away from the church with fire hoses and tear gas.

"Here was the situation that led up to the latest incident.

"Federal courts have outlawed segregation on motor buses which travel from state to state. * * * To test whether the law was being upheld, a group of whites and Negroes rode a bus into Montgomery this week-end. They were set upon by a mob of white extremists and at least twenty persons were hurt. * * *

Tells of Klan Role

"A Federal judge in Montgomery blamed the Ku Klux Klan—a militant organization of white supremacists—for the riot. * * *"

A news commentary that went out over the air tonight attempted to put the story into perspective in this manner:

"The developments of last week brought into sharp focus the issues at stake.

"The most obvious issue, of course, is the question of equal treatment for all citizens, regardless of race. The position of the National Government on this question is clear beyond any doubt. A majority of the states which make up the Federal union are far advanced on the road to wiping out racial inequities.

"The second issue is that of law and order. If Americans elsewhere in the country were appalled by this lawlessness, so were citizens of Alabama itself.

"A third issue is the joint responsibility of the national and state governments for the protection of citizens and their legal rights.

"As seen generally in this country, the violence at Montgomery is not a crisis for the forces working against discrimination.

Lawlessness Assailed

"It is rather a crisis for those who are ready to pose lawlessness against law in the adjustments of a democratic community."

Such news stories and commentaries, officials said, have made up about a fourth of the total content of radio news programs beamed to Africa during the last four days.

The voice devotes eight hours daily to English language broadcasts to Africa, 6½ hours in Arabic, an hour in Hindi and thirty minutes in French. In the English language broadcasts, fifteen minutes of each hour is devoted to news.

In addition to radio, the information agency has also told the Alabama story through its wireless file for local newspaper consumption around the world. This material is transmitted by radio teletype to ninety countries, and there made available to local publishers.

Over the last week-end it filed about 3,000 words on the riots, including a summary of editorial comment from United States newspapers, full texts of statements by the President and the Attorney General, and a 1,000-word background story relating the Alabama incident to the general civil rights controversy in this country.

Name:
Date:

Freedom Rides

Read the four newspaper articles about the events of May 1961 in Alabama. Then, write short paragraphs answering the reporter's questions (5 W's and H). Answering these questions will help you assess the four newspapers' coverage of the events.

WHAT

What were the Freedom Rides?
What court decision prompted the Freedom Rides?
What laws were challenged in Southern states by the Freedom Rides and Freedom Riders?
What happened when the Freedom Riders entered Alabama?

WHO

Who was involved in the Freedom Rides?
Who was involved in trying to stop the Freedom Rides?
Who was involved in enabling the Freedom Rides to safely occur?

WHERE

Where were the Freedom Rides?
Where did they start? Where did they end?
Where did the Freedom Riders encounter problems?

Name:
Date:

WHEN
When did the Freedom Rides occur?
When did they start? When did they end?

WHY
Why did the Freedom Rides happen?
Why were some people angered by the Freedom Rides?

HOW
How did the Freedom Riders further the civil rights movement?
How were Freedom Riders treated in the South?

Name:
Date:

Civil Rights Movement Research

Below are some key events, court cases and people involved in the civil rights movement. **Pick one, circle it and learn** the who, what, where, when, why and how of your topic by answering the questions below in complete sentences.

Bloody Sunday in Selma, Ala.
Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka
Children's Crusade
Civil Rights Act of 1968
Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Housing Act)
Emmett Till
Freedom Riders
James Meredith at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss)
Jim Crow laws
Little Rock Nine
Lunch counter sit-ins
March on Washington
Medgar Evers
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)
Rosa Parks
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
Voting Rights Act of 1965

WHO
Who was this person? Who was involved in this event? Were many people involved or just a few? Who was affected?

_____

_____

_____

_____

WHAT
What did this person do? What happened during this event or court case? What was decided? What changed?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name:
Date:

WHERE
Where did this occur? One city? One state? One region? Nationally? Where were the effects of this action felt?

WHEN
When did this person live? When did this case get decided? When did this event happen?

WHY
Why did this person or group of people do what they did? Why was this court case decided for the prosecution or defense? Why was this bill written?

HOW
How was this event or person influential in the civil rights movement?

Interview: Marilyn Thompson discusses her decision to apologize for the *Lexington Herald-Leader*'s failure to cover the civil rights movement in the 1960s

July 5, 2004, from "All Things Considered"

MICHELE NORRIS, host: From NPR News, this is ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. I'm Michele Norris.

The Sunday edition of the *Lexington Herald-Leader* in Kentucky carried the following front-page clarification yesterday: "It has come to the editor's attention that the *Herald-Leader* neglected to cover the civil rights movement. We regret the omission."

Until the 1960s, life in Lexington, as throughout much of the South, was highly segregated. Blacks and whites lived in separate neighborhoods, attended separate churches and schools and used separate restaurants, bathrooms and drinking fountains. When blacks challenged that system with sit-ins and protests, the stories were ignored or downplayed in the paper. Marilyn Thompson is the editor of the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, and she joins us now.

Marilyn, why did the paper decide to run this clarification, and why now?

Ms. MARILYN THOMPSON: Well, we actually took up a challenge that was thrown down by a former editor of this newspaper, John Carroll. He mentioned the fact that while at the *Herald-Leader*, basically the paper had not written about civil rights and had not done so dating back to the early years of the movement. And he made this very public statement, "We regret the error."

We decided that that called for a very vigorous reporting project in which we did an audit going back to 1959, actually, to look at how this paper dealt with the civil rights marches and one of the most important stories of our time.

NORRIS: And what'd you learn?

Ms. THOMPSON: We learned that we had performed abysmally. It was a fairly stunning level of ignoring the story, all in the hopes, it turned out, by the then-editor of the paper that it would suppress some of the emotions surrounding these events and keep things calm.

NORRIS: And the irony, to some degree, is that in this case, the general manager and the publisher of the paper actually supported desegregation, but decided to pursue this strategy of trying to play down the civil rights movement.

Ms. THOMPSON: Yes, that's exactly right.

NORRIS: Well, if he actually supported the aims of the civil rights movement, if he actually supported desegregation, why did he play down these stories?

Ms. THOMPSON: Well, I think it was part of the hysteria of the times. You know, it was frightening to much of the white leadership in the South to see blacks vocally and vociferously protesting their lack of civil rights.

NORRIS: What was the goal of the paper? Why do this? What were you hoping to accomplish?

Ms. THOMPSON: It's — you know, in the fashion of great accountability journalism, it was an effort to go back, take the challenge as laid out by John Carroll and test its validity. It's something that I wish newspapers would do more often. I've never seen a project of this type, to be quite honest. It's archival research that's rarely done in American journalism. But because John Carroll gave us this very compelling challenge, we were able to produce something that I think is very memorable reading for our readers.

NORRIS: It should be noted, Marilyn, that you are now the editor of the Lexington paper, the *Herald- Leader*. But in your previous role as a reporter for *The Washington Post* — and, I guess, going back to times when you were a young reporter, or younger reporter, in South Carolina, you had spent a lot of time working on a story, which brought you quite a bit of attention last year, tracking down the family lineage of Essie Mae Washington-Williams...

Ms. THOMPSON: Right.

NORRIS: ...the daughter of Strom Thurmond. You seem to be trying to get the South to acknowledge and atone for its past. Why is that important?

Ms. THOMPSON: I'm a white Southerner, and I guess I live every day with some element of guilt that comes from having grown up in a culture of segregation and knowing that I was essentially powerless at the time to do anything about it. I finally reached a point in my life where I'm not powerless to at least make this known to the American public.

NORRIS: Marilyn Thompson is the editor of the *Lexington Herald-Leader*. Thanks so much for speaking to us, Marilyn.

Ms. THOMPSON: Thank you, Michele.

Paper Apologizes for Civil Rights Coverage

Associated Press
Monday, July 5, 2004

LEXINGTON, Ky. — The *Lexington Herald-Leader* featured a prominent clarification on its front page yesterday, apologizing for the newspaper's failures in covering the 1960s civil rights movement.

The notice accompanied a series of stories titled "Front-page news, back-page coverage" and decades- old black-and-white pictures taken by an independent photographer.

"It has come to the editor's attention that the *Herald-Leader* neglected to cover the civil rights movement," the clarification read. "We regret the omission."

The report comes as the nation observes the 40th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Beneath the clarification were photographs of a Main Street march and a lunch counter sit-in taken by Calvert McCann, now 62.

Many of his pictures were undeveloped until last year, when University of Kentucky historian Gerald L. Smith was researching a book.

"If it had not been for Calvert, we wouldn't have a visual record of this moment in Lexington's history," Smith told the newspaper.

Lexington's newspapers at the time, the *Herald* and the *Leader*, occasionally published short stories about the local civil rights movement; photographs rarely appeared.

The papers merged in 1983 and the *Herald-Leader* is now owned by Knight Ridder.

"The people in charge of recording the 'first rough draft of history,' as journalism is sometimes called, ignored sit-ins and marches, or relegated them to small notices in the back pages," *Herald-Leader* reporters Linda B. Blackford and Linda Minch wrote.

McCann, who is black, became interested in the civil rights movement while working at Michael's Photography store, where he was a janitor and film processor.

"I just wanted to document it and tell the story for me and my friends," McCann told the newspaper.

"During the summer, they would hire white high school students to work on the counter, but they never let me up there," he said. "I always resented it because I knew more about the business than anyone else."

The *Louisville Defender*, a black newspaper, and the *Courier-Journal* of Louisville covered the civil rights movement in the state. The *Herald* and the *Leader* shelved

most news about blacks in a column called "Colored Notes."

It was compiled by the newsroom's only black employee, Gertrude Morbley, until 1969.

"That was really all the news we had," said Audrey Grevious, a former leader in Lexington's chapter of the NAACP.

"Without that, we wouldn't have known anything that was going on."

Former newspaper employees said management tried to downplay what happened locally.

"The rare march or protest that made front-page news usually involved arrests of demonstrators and was described in the terse, clipped tones of a police report," wrote Blackford and Minch.

Robert Horine, a *Leader* reporter starting in 1958, recalled going to one of the first sit-ins.

"I talked to several of the people seated at the counter, and I had a story for Sunday's paper," he told the newspaper. "When I got back, the editors said, 'Absolutely not.' "

The orders came from then-general manager and publisher Fred Wachs Sr., who died in 1974. Fred Wachs Jr. said his father supported desegregation but favored a cautious approach. "He didn't like the idea of some of these rabble-rousers coming in and causing trouble," Wachs told the newspaper. "He tried to keep that off the pages."

However, the papers published national stories about the civil rights movement, such as the 1965 march in Selma, Ala., and the 1963 church bombings in Birmingham, Ala.

Thomas Peoples, a former NAACP leader, said the decisions were intended to retain readers.

"They catered to the white citizenry, and the white community just prayed that rumors and reports would be swept under the rug and just go away," Peoples told the *Herald-Leader*.

Smith said he found evidence of Lexington sit-ins around July 1959, a year ahead of ones in other states that received publicity. Most of the city's public places were desegregated by 1964.

(Part of a retrospective series published in October 2000 on the 40th anniversary of Jackson, Tenn., civil rights movement. http://orig.jacksonsun.com/civilrights)

The Invisible Press

White establishment owners of Jackson Sun largely ignored rising tide of civil rights movement

By DYLAN T. LOVAN
The Jackson Sun

A cool and cloudy West Tennessee day, Nov. 8, 1960.

Voters are casting their ballots for John F. Kennedy or Richard Nixon in a close presidential race. The Jackson Sun publishes front page stories that afternoon about the expected heavy voter turnout, a Jackson veterans program and a local banker's promotion.

The Commercial Appeal ran this photo following the arrest of 144 black people, mostly Lane College students, on Nov. 8, 1960, which was election day. The two unidentified students in the photo were among a group marching to downtown Jackson in protest of voting rights abuses in Haywood and Fayette counties. The Jackson Sun refused to run photos of protests and demonstrations during the civil rights movement.

Across town on the Lane College campus, a mild insurrection is brewing.

Taking a cue from Election Day protests across the South, 150 students from the area's only black college mount a march on court square.

Jutting signs into the air that call for voting fairness for blacks in Haywood and Fayette counties, the students add ranks from Merry High School.

The first group is arrested at Cumberland and Main streets, two blocks from the courthouse. The second group makes it to Liberty and Main, near Woolworth's, where some of the same students had been participating in lunch counter sit-ins. The last group makes it to the courthouse.

Police arrest 144 for disorderly conduct, filling the city jail with misdemeanor offenders, including 10 teen-agers and 66 women.

Three blocks away, at The Jackson Sun, editors reluctantly send John Parish to get the story. Parish, a 37-year-old reporter in his fourth year at The Sun, and a photographer go to the jail. The photographer takes pictures and Parish faithfully writes a 22-paragraph story.

Parish's story would be buried on Page 11 the next day, near the back of a 16-page edition, with the headline "Negro Students Are Jailed Here After Parade." The photographs would never make it into print.

The downplaying of such news, which would be splashed across the front page in today's newspapers, was the order of the day in the 1960s. The Jackson Sun, like many small Southern newspapers, largely ignored the civil rights movement as it occurred in its backyard. The Sun never ran stories on local civil rights actions on its front page and never took an editorial position in 1960, despite a bus boycott, marches, arrests, weeks of sit-ins at lunch counters and a downtown business boycott.

Trumpeted across the front page of The Jackson Sun the day after the arrests was Kennedy's election as president, followed by a Parish story saying Nixon won Madison County. A story about a local woodworking company's $90,000 payroll made the bottom of page one.

Readers that day had to wade through stories about the Trenton book club and a church meeting in Adamsville - not to mention the entire sports section - before they came to the civil rights story.

Largely ignored by Jackson Sun

Down the road in Memphis, The Commercial Appeal handled things a bit differently. After the Jackson protest, that paper ran a large photo of the students in the Jackson jail and a page 10 story under the headline: "Jackson Jails Nearly 200 in Negro Protest Parade." During the early 1960s, The Commercial Appeal - and the now-defunct Press Scimitar - ran stories on West Tennessee civil rights actions, sometimes with photographs that showed protests or rural living conditions.

In the state capital, The Tennessean went even further. When 1960 arrived, the paper had already editorially endorsed school integration. When sit-ins began, The Tennessean jumped on the story and regularly splashed news of civil disobedience across its front pages, along with searing reports from such writers as David Halberstam, who recently wrote "The Children," a book about the Nashville civil rights movement.

The Tennessee sit-in movement had started in Nashville in February 1960 when 124 black people left a downtown church and planted themselves at segregated lunch counters.

"A revolution was under way," said John Seigenthaler, editor and publisher of The Tennessean during most of the 1960s.

The Tennessean and a few other newspapers recognized that revolution and seized on the significance of the civil rights movement, both locally and nationally. Why, then, did The Jackson Sun, like many smaller Southern papers, handle things differently?

Editorial policy was clear

In the heat of the civil rights era, The Jackson Sun was owned by Sally Pigford, who had inherited ownership from her husband in 1945. The Pigfords were staunch conservatives with deep ties to the rulers of Jackson. They had ignored news in the black community for decades.

Pigford controlled The Sun as its president in 1960. The company was run by a board of its 13 shareholders. All were white. That year, The Sun employed only two blacks, a press worker and a chauffeur.

Pigford was rarely involved in day-to-day operations. She would show up once a month for board meetings, though her racial agenda - and the board's - was clear.

The news media in Jackson - newspapers and radio - had a silent agreement to downplay civil rights news, some of Pigford's former employees remember.

"They just wouldn't print any of it," recalled Cecil Flowers, who retired as a vice president at The Sun in 1988.

In fact, the newspaper Pigford inherited was non-controversial as a rule.

"It was rare for them to take an editorial position on any local issue," said Delores Ballard, a Sun reporter in the late '60s and '70s.

Editorials generally discussed community "good news," such as Union University's growth or the observance of local veterans. A November 1960 editorial shortly after the elections discussed the importance of storm sewer gratings.

Pigford and her top executive in 1960, General Manager Albert Stone Sr., were "ultra conservatives" who preferred to maintain their small city's status quo, said Jim Shearin, a photographer at the time.

Stone, lauded by many former Sun employees for his managerial ability and leadership, had one simple job, Parish said.

"His main goal in life was to keep Mrs. Pigford happy," Parish wrote in a book he is working on about his life experiences. "He had fairly good newspaper instincts, but in most cases he chose the path of least resistance and wasn't interested in muddying waters at his age."

Stone, who joined The Sun in 1919, ran the paper with a bellowing voice and shrewd business practices as publisher for nearly 30 years. He retired in 1973.

Most of Stone's former employees looked fondly upon the man who once told Kennedy at a White House junket that the young president needed to "balance the budget."

Stone's head man in the newsroom in 1960 was Harris Brown, who was nine years older than Stone and shared his boss's conservative views.

Brown's favorite topics for the paper were the local Rotary Club and "anything related to one of the three railroads that served Jackson," Parish remembered.

"There was an old clique here in Jackson" in the 1960s, Flowers said. "They didn't want anything to change."

Among the things the paper didn't want to change was its interaction with the black community. The Sun - like many papers in the South - had been practicing racial discrimination in its hiring and its news coverage for years.

At the time, blacks were seldom named in the paper, but were instead labeled simply "a Negro." Photos of blacks were rarely published.

Black people were not included in the society page listings of weddings, engagements and births. Black obituaries ran under smaller headlines than whites. Murders in the black community received less attention than those in the white community. "Just another Saturday night knifin'," former staffer Johnny Malone remembers editors saying.

Under Stone's leadership - and his urging to Pigford - The Sun would change its editorial policies toward blacks in the late 1960s. Sun executives met with black leaders who threatened a boycott if coverage and employment practices toward blacks weren't changed.

The Sun conceded, and Stone agreed to make new hires for front-office clerical jobs and enlist Lane Professor Horace Savage part-time to write about Jackson's black community.

The Sun would not hire a full-time black reporter until 1973. That reporter, Michael Mercer, says that even though it can be wrongheaded to look at history with modern sensibilities, the paper's lack of coverage of the civil rights movement was wrong.

"It was unethical to suppress the news," said Mercer, who teaches journalism at Auburn University. "There were a significant number of people who were taking the paper who couldn't see themselves in the paper. But nobody cared then."

Avoid disruption at all costs

Many who worked at The Jackson Sun at the time say the suppression of black news was deliberate when the paper was confronted with the civil rights movement in 1960.

They say the paper downplayed or ignored the sit-ins and protests because its owners endorsed the white establishment's strategy: avoid disruptions of the peace at all costs. And some defend the paper's stance, saying the owners wanted to do their part to avoid violent confrontations and the like that were beginning to occur in other cities.

Looking through The Sun's archives proves that point. Like the Election Day march story, a string of stories about downtown lunch counter sit-ins were placed in the back of the paper.

When Lane Professor Preston E. Stewart was fined $15 in City Court for snapping a photo of a sign on a Coke machine in a sporting goods store that said "White Customers Only," the story went on page 12.

Some civil rights stories did run on The Sun's front page, but they never included news of the local bus boycott, lunch counter sit-ins, the mass arrests or the business boycott. One story played very large on the front page trumpeted Southern legislators' defiance of civil rights.

The only front page item that related directly to Jackson was an Associated Press story about a Vanderbilt student who was expelled for being a leader in the Jackson lunch counter sit-ins. Later, the paper ran front-page wire stories on the voting rights struggle in Haywood and Fayette counties, where national attention was drawn to the creation of a Tent City for displaced black sharecroppers.

"The thinking seemed to be that if we published 'all that trash about Martin Luther King Jr. and the Selma protests, the blacks in Jackson might become uppity and restive,'" said Malone, who worked as a Sun copy editor and news editor from 1963 to 1999.

"The result: When I laid out The Sun's front page, the Vietnam War always got the lead position. Associated Press wire copy about the Alabama marches was relegated to the bottom desk drawer. It didn't make the newspaper."

Some black activists accept the premise that The Sun's owners and managers didn't want to shake up the town's sleepy status quo. And some said they didn't expect much more from The Sun.

That's "just the way life was," says Frank Walker, an early civil rights activist in Jackson.

"The media here was The Jackson Sun and radio stations WTJS, WDXI and WJAK," explains Wesley McClure, a civil rights activist who is now president of Lane College. "All were basically silent about the local civil rights movement. I did not then, and do not to this day, fault the media, and specifically The Jackson Sun, for covering

things the way they did. ... That was the way of life back then. One wouldn't have expected much coverage of incidents of this nature." McClure said.

In a column he wrote about the paper, Malone mused that whites throughout Jackson often commended The Sun's civil rights-era owners "for helping keep blacks from stirring up trouble here."

The paper also downplayed news of white reaction to the civil rights protests. It ran a story on the local Federation for Constitutional Government, the Tennessee version of the White Citizens Councils that formed to defend segregation, on page 16. That story detailed how local leaders, including a circuit judge, a local sheriff and the Madison County district attorney, met to hear speeches calling for fighting for "the Southern way of life ... to the bitter end."

Downplaying race relations kept the civil rights movement from boiling over in Jackson, said Parish, who left The Sun in 1979 to become press secretary for Gov. Lamar Alexander.

"I think the proof of the pudding is that Jackson was a lot more peaceful and solved all of these problems as much as they did," Parish said in an interview at his Franklin, Tenn., home.

"Anybody can look back on it any time they want to and say that was the wrong way to do it, but I still think it had a big role in the transition being as smooth as it was," he said. "It wasn't easy and it wasn't pleasant at the time, and it wasn't nice and like every place else in the South, Jackson had a long way to come, but I think they made some strides."

Parish, now 77, said the way the paper suppressed protest news made school integration easier. "I think it helped that we didn't fan anything on either side."

Shearin, retired after 34 years as a photographer and photo editor at The Commercial Appeal, is an affable man and a part-time gun range instructor. He spoke at his home in the south Memphis suburbs about his experiences at The Sun, where he worked from 1948 to 1962.

He called the sit-ins and other protests in 1960 "not a big deal to the paper," because there was never any serious violence here.

Nevertheless, Shearin, 66, said he was often sent downtown to Woolworth's where Lane students conducted sit-ins at the segregated lunch counters.

"Every time the police went, I went." But none of his sit-in photos made it into the paper.

Shearin confesses that at his young age - 26 in 1960 - he didn't appreciate the importance of the civil rights movement. The Sun, he said, was just a small-town newspaper that tried to avoid stepping on any toes.

"By the same yardstick that you would use for other newspapers of that size and that pay, I'd say (coverage) was probably about average," he said. "Now, that's not to say they were or weren't fair. They went in the mainstream of a smaller town."

McClure, the civil rights activist and Lane president, agrees.

"The Jackson Sun was consistent with what other newspapers in the region were doing."

Other papers taking notice

For large newspapers - and even a few that were smaller than The Jackson Sun - the protests brewing in the South were a major story, one of civil disobedience and a toppling of the old order.

Along with Tennessee's major metropolitan newspapers - The Tennessean in Nashville and The Commercial Appeal in Memphis - most major dailies throughout the country heaped attention on the civil rights story.

"It was well known that certain papers, The Tennessean and The (Louisville) Courier-Journal, had a reputation for giving balanced coverage," said Merv Aubespin, an associate editor at The Courier-Journal and the paper's first black reporter.

Attention to civil rights by the mainstream white media started to open up in 1955 after the killing of Emmett Till in Mississippi, according to Gene Roberts, a Southerner who covered civil rights for the New York Times and later served as editor of the Philadelphia Inquirer. Till, a 14-year-old boy, was brutally murdered by whites after he allegedly whistled at a white woman.

Even so, the nation's attention was not exactly riveted by news and pictures of blacks being arrested, even brutalized, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Roberts said in a recent Freedom Forum panel on the civil rights movement. It was not until 1963, when Bull Connor turned the fire hoses on black children in Birmingham that the whole world decided to watch, Roberts said.

As the civil rights movement took hold in Nashville in 1960, The Tennessean made sure it was there, publishing stories that included the protesters' perspectives. It published photographs of movement leaders as soon as the first sit-in occurred in February.

U.S. Rep. John Lewis of Georgia was among the black college students who launched the sit-ins in Nashville in 1960. Lewis, a prominent student leader in the civil rights movement who would give a keynote address at the March on Washington in 1963, said the media's role in publicizing the movement was crucial.

"The coverage of the movement by the media played a major role because the media took the message of the protest to the people," Lewis said. "People could feel it, they could see it. ... They saw these well-dressed, well-behaved students sitting down at the lunch counter. Sitting down and trying to order something to eat, something to drink.

"Without the media, the movement would have been like a bird without wings," he said.

The Tennessean's coverage was directed by Seigenthaler, who would serve 15 months as an assistant to U.S. Attorney General Bobby Kennedy on civil rights issues. Acting as an emissary for President John F. Kennedy during the Freedom Rides across Alabama, Seigenthaler was clubbed unconscious by a white mob as he tried to help a rider to safety.

Nashville city leaders commanded that the paper stop giving front-page coverage to riots that occurred during the sit-ins, because they were hurting the downtown economy.

Then-Chamber of Commerce president Ed Shea accused Seigenthaler of killing "the goose that laid the golden egg for Nashville," Seigenthaler remembers. Just 32 at the time, Seigenthaler left a meeting with city officials saying his paper couldn't comply with Shea's request.

Throughout circulation and advertising sales dips the paper remained steady with civil rights coverage, Seigenthaler said.

"It was not a pleasant position to take," he said. "But we did it anyway."

The Sun, on the other hand, decided to shrink from the story. The owners thought, "If you write it, you will encourage it," said Mercer, the paper's first black reporter.

That pattern was repeated across the South, as local papers downplayed civil rights stories and larger papers brought the story to the nation.

But one tiny Southern newspaper provided even-handed coverage.

The Delta Democrat-Times, in Greenville, Miss., under the leadership of Hodding Carter II and later his son, Hodding Carter III, advocated fairness and equal rights deep in the Mississippi Delta.

Carter II, a Louisiana native, moved to Greenville in 1936 to start a paper, which eventually merged with another to become the Democrat-Times.

In 1946, the paper won the Pulitzer Prize for Carter's editorials about racial and economic intolerance toward Japanese immigrants.

The Greenville paper frequently opined on racial integration in the 1960s, although Carter's son, Hodding III, said his dad didn't consider himself an integrationist.

"We were not a liberal paper," Carter III recently told The Sun. Carter III, an Emmy-winning journalist, served as an assistant secretary of state under President Carter and is the president of the Miami-based Knight Foundation, a charity.

Still, his father's stance on discrimination and voters' rights wasn't a popular one in the Mississippi Delta. The elder Carter often likened discrimination to "moral sickness," and argued that subjugating blacks damaged the white community.

"Dad thought there ought to be a level of decency," Carter III said. "He believed Southern blacks, even under the absurd voting laws, should be able to vote."

The paper passed into Carter III's hands in the mid-1960s, and he and the staff became "100 percenters" against segregation.

Carter III said the same kind of paper - outspoken against the white establishment - might not have thrived in Jackson. "There was a broader sense of the world in Greenville" because many Greenville merchants were Catholic, Jewish and Lebanese descendants who weren't terribly offended by the paper's stance.

"They weren't 100 percent Southerners themselves," Carter III said.

Will Campbell, who was forced out as chaplain at the University of Mississippi for his integrationist views and is now a nationally known author, says Carter's stand was more brave than Carter III describes.

"The Greenville Delta Democrat-Times was enlightened under the leadership of Hodding Carter," Campbell said. "The Charlotte Observer gave some leadership on integration. The Raleigh News and Observer also stepped out. But for the most part, the Southern press didn't have much to be proud of."

Campbell said papers were pressured by white leaders - and white money - to downplay civil rights.

"The Arkansas Democrat was a very conservative newspaper. Editorially, they supported (Gov. Orval) Faubus and opposed integration to the very last. The Arkansas Gazette was just the opposite. But the Gazette lost, lost, lost circulation, and it lost, lost, lost advertisers during that time. Today, the two are one newspaper. Guess which one it is."

Segregationists forced P.D. East and his Petal Paper of Petal, Miss., to close because East actively promoted integration.

"They just ran poor P.D. out of business," Campbell said. Later, with outside financial help, East would publish the Petal Paper into the 1970s as an instrument of civil rights activism. Even then, he was forced to move from town to town.

Black newspapers had more latitude to pursue civil rights stories, and some did tremendous work exposing racism and chronicling the movement. In some cases, the white community even paid attention.

In Memphis, L. Alex Wilson, editor of the black-run Tri-State Defender, published his views on the movement and sent reporters - and himself - to Birmingham, Little Rock and other cities.

Wilson's influence in the black community was so sweeping that a Memphis city official once told him they wouldn't open a meeting without having a copy of The Defender on hand.

He lived for the big, "important" civil rights stories, his widow, Emogene Wilson, said in an interview at her Memphis home. Wielding a more powerful editorial voice that the neighboring black newspaper, The Memphis World, The Defender would follow breaking civil rights news throughout the South under Wilson's guidance.

"He did everything he could to make this paper speak to the ills of this community," Wilson said.

Campbell and Carter both said that most white-run small newspapers in the South in the 1960s wanted to keep things the way they were, and never - or rarely - exposed wrongs.

Carter, who used to read The Jackson Sun occasionally, said The Sun - like the majority of small Southern newspapers - clearly fell into that category. He remembers The Sun as a dry paper.

"It just bored me into a coma," Carter said. The Sun's owners "were probably less than ardent supporters of desegregation."

Carter is correct in his assessment of the owners' views, but many white and many black Jackson residents, as well as many Sun staffers, say the paper's overriding concern was to publish a paper that avoided any local controversy.

Alex Leech, a white man who has been Madison County's mayor for 17 years and started Jackson's first black-format radio station, said The Jackson Sun simply stayed away from anything controversial in 1960.

"Times were just different then. We tried to keep trouble down."

Sun reporter Todd Kleffman contributed to this story.

Name:
Date:

NEWSEUM ED

Coverage Now of Coverage Then

Read the articles about the *Lexington Herald-Leader* and *The Jackson Sun*'s reports on their historical coverage of the civil rights movement. Then, answer the following questions.

1. What are some of the reasons that these two newspapers failed to cover newsworthy events involving civil rights issues in the 1950s and 1960s?

2. *The Jackson Sun* chose to run a series of articles about the civil rights movement and create an online resource. The *Lexington Herald-Leader* chose to issue an apology for "neglecting to cover the civil rights" movement and analyzed the newspaper's lack of coverage. Which do you think was a better approach? Why?

3. If you were the editor of a paper that had "neglected to cover the civil rights movement," would you issue an apology? Create an online resource? Something else? Explain.

4. How do you think the lack of coverage by these papers may have affected events in their cities? What is the effect of newsworthy events not being covered by the local newspaper?