
Role of The Birmingham Campaign in the Fight Against African American Discrimination

The Birmingham Campaign was led on April 1963 by Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. It took place in Birmingham, Alabama. The sole purpose of this movement was to expose the bad treatment towards African Americans and end segregation of their rights. The two parties joined Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and his group the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights to the nonviolent protest. Their goal was to get the public's attention on the various segregation systems by pressuring Birmingham's merchants during the Easter season. Hence, at the time a mayoral election was going on between two runners, Albert Boutwell and Eugene "Bull" Connor. Boutwell takes the election home. The protests continued in April and on the 10th they were given an order by the court banning these protests. King knew he would be at risk of being arrested if he continued, so he didn't stop. King was arrested on Friday, April 12, 1963. King was arrested for going against the court order and continuing to publicly protest with the people.

Police commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor was the one to arrest King. He was put in an isolated containment for 9 days. In his time in jail he wrote his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail" defending his decision to eight clergymen who published a negative statement of the protests. It wasn't until April 20th, 1963 he was set free on bail. During the 1960's also known as the Civil Rights Era, African Americans suffered harshly from segregation. In the South they were denied the right to vote, they weren't allowed to certain public facilities, they were prejudiced for the color of their skin. The courts were not just towards them and they faced hateful slurs said to them and hate crimes. In the North, they faced racial discrimination when it came to employment, education, housing, and transportation. There was police brutality against African Americans.

Although, the South remained to show strong segregation towards African Americans. A lot of the protests took place in cities where there were high cases of injustices to the African American communities. Many civil rights leaders were killed for non-violent protests. This caused for more protests and to gain public attention of what was happening. There was a difference in pay wage for them versus what the minimum wage was. African Americans were excluded from living their lives freely by having restrictions put on them. They couldn't walk down a white neighborhood because the police would be called on them or they were at risk of getting beat up. During this time the Civil Rights Movement was going strong continuing to fight for justice. There were times when good outcomes came out of this movement. For one, the civil rights act of 1964, which gave equal employment to everyone and enforce that all public facilities are for everyone. The following year the voting rights act of 1965 was passed and it made prevented racial discrimination against voting. Both laws were passed during LBJ's presidency.

The Letter from Birmingham Jail was brilliantly written by King in response to a group of white clergymen who had published an article attacking his actions for justice. King attempted to clarify that his actions were non-violent, and to justify that he was doing the right thing. The clergymen's article criticized King's approach of protest and found him to be "untimely" at Birmingham due to the election that was happening. This upset King which moved him to write a

lengthy letter defending his associations and the right to be at Birmingham, Alabama. King wanted to get the message out that times of unity will soon come, and that people are setting themselves blind to what is really going on. Dr. King accomplishes to clarify and give examples of the injustice going on and to respond the difference between a just and unjust law. When King mentions, “nonviolent direct action” he is trying to infer that by doing so it will push for a crisis in the community that will unsettle the people and get them to agree on something. Being a man of faith, he believed that protesting nonviolently would set the message stronger opposed to there being pain and violence. These actions create a tension that unsettles the people, so they can come to terms that there is a problem going that cannot be pushed aside. This tension causes for a negotiation to happen in the community, so an agreement is given. The Civil Rights movement is pushing forth for an agreement to be done, so segregation can be abolished completely.

The protests and speeches they give are pushing to expose the injustice that is happening even though the people are completely aware of it. What King means about “hidden tension that is already alive”, is that the tension is there but no one wants to do anything about it. The people aren’t happy about a change that will better the lives for everyone. The tension is alive throughout the United States and was trying to be passed on as if it were dead. This movement of nonviolent direct action used this tactic because as the saying goes, “kill them with kindness” always wins. They’re strategy was to overflow the people with the message that injustice is happening across the country. If the community is reminded everyday about this, action will soon have to be taken. King’s letter was precise and beautifully executed, he simply clarified that his actions were to bring social and justice equality between white and black communities.

In the opposing article, King is referred to as an “outsider”, but he responds that anyone living within the country is not a stranger to any different state. He defends his bravery and tactics to show that the clergymen are defending what is wrong, inequality. He gives a fair warning as well that eventually violence will happen if his strategy of doing things is detained by the courts. The letter expresses his disappointment of what has been happening through out the movement. In his letter he defines a just law to be one that respects human rights. He writes that just laws are a moral responsibility to follow and live up too. He refers a just law to be of good morals and a law of God. He explains that an unjust law is in no agreement with just laws. He uses philosophers, St. Augustine to refer to a just law and St. Thomas Aquinas to refer to an unjust law. An unjust law degrades the human being and makes them feel excluded. It damages the persons being and mindset. King goes more in depth giving examples between the two laws to make his point that segregation is an unjust law. King mentions, “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.” (King 1963). He contrasts by saying that a just law will be followed. He closes his distinction by complementing that an unjust law takes away from their First Amendments rights. He uses his arrest as an example of how he was unjustly taken to jail for peacefully expressing himself to the public.

The media played a crucial part in the Civil Rights Movement. It helped protesters expose the injustice going on and help spread their message for equality. With the media beginning to come out during that time it began to get popular and everyone was able to begin seeing the police brutality during the protests. Many African Americans began to see the segregation aired on television and how they weren’t given proper representation. The media would soon become an advantage to them to spread the difference. Activists saw the power television had that could help them to surface their campaigns of civil rights, attacks, and boycotts. The U.S

being divided, saw how bad segregation was in the South and brought concern and outrage with the movement. Awareness began to rise for this movement bringing sympathy and action to take place. Activists made sure to have the media around for when the protests were happening. One of them being Dr. King who was one to plan marches for where the media was going to be. The media was their vessel to show the violent oppression happening in the movement and how protesters were given police brutality for expressing themselves peacefully.

Today I can say that media is vital in our daily lives. We are surrounded by many forms of media. Now a days someone just has to pull out their phone and record injustice happening. In this century many movements have risen and expressed their voice against racial, sexual, and gender discrimination. The media has begun to give full coverage on every protest, march, and speech given about the issues. The media has gone full frenzy to any movement happening around the states, and I believe this is to show how slowly inequality is creeping back into America. The media is the most powerful resource to expose violence and lies about social and equality issues. Without the media, not many of the movements would be given importance and laws wouldn't be passed to just fully defend the people behind these groups. No media pretty much implies there is no movement to be aware about. I myself have watch the news at times and see marches happening in downtown Los Angeles, or rally's happening in different states about immigration, sexual assault, and education. Not only has the media impacted largely, but so has social media.

Today I can just hop onto my Instagram account and see a cellphone video recording a protest happening in New York City. I'd say there is a big difference how the media worked back then compared to today. Now it's more advance and resourceful to benefit the activists of today's America. I believe the Civil Rights Movement continues to influence the way people protest which have been nonviolent most of the time. The movement continues to live on by the way people push for justice to be done and how desperately the need for unity must come back. If the movement back then was not given the attention from the media the way it had, we would be protesting and fighting for justice very differently. The media will forever be the vessel to spread a message across and bring action to it.

To conclude, I never in my life had read the famous letter of the genius Martin Luther King Jr. As I read each line precisely sometimes going back to comprehend what he wanted to propose, I loved his response to the ignorant men. It would have been a dream to meet this amazing leader who impacted the lives of so many back then and mines as well. The letter had so many components that briefly expressed his passion, sadness, and anger of what needed to be changed for equality. He wrote about many things that flowed and connected together making sense that injustice was right in front of the faces of the people. Even though he apologized for writing so much, I thought it was perfectly executed and a historic piece of history that should be used as reference for today's injustice inequality. Of the topics King spoke about in his letter, I can see a glimpse of similarity happening today. I believe that today's civil rights are being taken for granted from the community. I have seen so many issues being given light and its astounding to see that our rights are being attacked and nothing is happening.

There is racial discrimination that has grown immensely. There is a small drift happening between whites and blacks, where the cops have to be called at times and it reminds me of times like the 1960's. Women are exposing the sexual abuse that happens in their daily lives and how they have been taken for granted by men who seem to have the power to ruin their careers or dreams. The dreamers of America are being taken away the chance at a better life

just because at some point their parents crossed the border illegally and that is awful. Another struggle is the discrimination in the LGBTQT movement. Many of the people of that community have gone through discrimination and exclusion from society. Some of their rights have been taken away because of their sex or gender. The civil rights of today have grown and spread in the limelight like a wildfire. Just as King fought for justice I too hope that times like these will change. That negotiations will take place to stop the blatant racism and discrimination between each other. Writing this paper has brought me much pleasure and given me a new perspective of how important it is to be knowledgeable of the impact in politics and how our civil rights must be protected fully.

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