

Exploring Why the Role of Self-Defence is Omitted from the Dominant  
Narrative of the Civil Rights Movement.

History Special Dissertation

8792 Words

## Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1: The Role of Self-Defence in the Civil Rights Movement	7
Chapter 2: Leadership in the Dominant Narrative	16
Chapter 3: Mass Media and the Development of the Dominant Narrative	25
Conclusion	34
Bibliography: Primary Sources	38
Bibliography: Secondary Sources	43

## Introduction

One night in 1957 a group of Klansmen prepared to attack Dr Albert E. Perry at his home in Monroe, North Carolina. Perry was a leading member of the local NAACP, which had recently initiated a campaign to integrate the town's public swimming pool. Just like in thousands of other Southern communities, local whites were willing to resort to terror tactics to maintain the racial order. As the Klansmen descended on Perry's house, however, a group of Black men led by Robert F. Williams, head of the Monroe NAACP, fired back at them. 'Since the city officials wouldn't stop the Klan,' Williams later wrote, 'we decided to stop the Klan ourselves.'<sup>1</sup> Williams is a leading example of the role that armed self-defence played in the civil rights movement. Six decades on, however, the public remains largely unaware of this aspect of the movement. This is because both Williams and the role of self-defence have been erased from the dominant narrative of the civil rights movement.

The dominant narrative is the primary framework through which the movement has been remembered since the 1970s. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall explains that the narrative portrays the movement as a series of nonviolent direct-action protests taking place in the American South between the Brown vs. Board decision in 1954 and the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, with the primary goal of ending Jim Crow segregation. The narrative defines the movement through the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the philosophy of nonviolence.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, Black self-defence is portrayed as an entirely separate entity, the domain of militant Black leaders like Malcolm X and the Black Power Movement that emerged in the wake of the civil rights movement. This depiction is inaccurate. Though

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert F. Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (New York: Marzani & Munsell, Inc., 1962) 54.

<sup>2</sup> Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1234. doi:10.2307/3660172.

nonviolence was extremely prominent in the movement, it was not ubiquitous. Thousands of participants chose to arm themselves as a precaution against the pervasive threat of white supremacist terror. The dominant narrative portrays the civil rights movement in a way that celebrates national identity and comforts white Americans. The movement is presented as a period in which peaceful Black protestors awoke the nation to the error of its ways, uniting with Northern whites to overcome the evils of Southern racism. As Crosby explains, many people find the ‘emphasis on nonviolence appealing and reassuring, as a story of the triumph of morality and high ideals.’<sup>3</sup> The reality that African Americans consistently relied on firearms for protection during the struggle provides a much more challenging, less celebratory account of how the movement provoked change.

Since the 1990s a significant amount of scholarship has been produced challenging the dominant narrative. Revisionists like Dowd Hall, Jeanne Theoharis, and Charles Payne have each highlighted the inadequacy of the narrative and attempted to provide a more accurate account of the movement. Others have tried to correct the narrative by focusing specifically on the role of self-defence within the movement. Christopher B. Strain and Simon Wendt have written overarching works dealing with self-defence and civil rights. Many others have focused on specific aspects of self-defence in the movement. Strain, Lance Hill, and Rickey Hill have each written about the Deacons for Defence and Justice, a Black self-defence organisation formed in Louisiana in 1964. Timothy Tyson has written extensively about Robert F. Williams and his role in the Black Freedom Struggle. Emilye J. Crosby and Akinyele O. Umoja have additionally published significant work on the topic of self-defence. Though much has been written about both the dominant narrative and self-defence in the civil

---

<sup>3</sup> Emilye Crosby, “‘It Wasn’t the Wild West’: Keeping Local Studies in Self-Defence Historiography,” in *Civil Rights History from the Ground Up*, ed. Emilye Crosby (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), 194.

rights movement, few scholars have specifically asked why the role of self-defence is omitted from the dominant narrative. In this essay, I aim to contribute to civil rights historiography by answering this question.

Despite the vast amount of scholarship that has been published over the past three decades challenging the dominant narrative, it ultimately persists as the primary mode through which the public remembers the movement. At the core of this issue, I argue, is the separation between history and collective memory. Hasian and Frank write that while histories are ‘punctuations of time that have been accepted by the majority of intellectual communities as an authentic record of past events,’ collective memories ‘are the public acceptances or ratifications of these histories on the part of broader audiences.’<sup>4</sup> Therefore, trends in historical scholarship are not necessarily reflected in popular understandings of history. The dominant narrative, I argue, is a collective memory of the civil rights movement. Collective memories play an important role in civic life, particularly because politicians frequently evoke them for strategic purposes.<sup>5</sup> The dominant narrative, for example, has been used by neoconservative politicians for insidious goals such as dismantling reforms targeting racial discrimination. Furthermore, in recent years, Theoharis writes that the narrative has been used to demonise the Black Lives Matter movement, portraying it as a betrayal of the legacy of the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King.<sup>6</sup> By providing a narrow impression of how the movement provoked change, the narrative limits the lessons and conclusions that can

---

<sup>4</sup> Marouf Hasian Jr. and Robert E. Frank, “Rhetoric, History and Collective Memory: Decoding the Goldhagen Debates,” *Western Journal of Communication* 63 (1999): 98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570319909374630>

<sup>5</sup> Denise M. Bostdorff and Steven R. Goldzwig, “History, Collective Memory, and the Appropriation of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Reagan’s Rhetorical Legacy,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005): 664. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27552723>.

<sup>6</sup> Jeanne Theoharis, *A More Beautiful and Terrible History: The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018) xv.

be gained from it. As such, attempts to dismantle the narrative and highlight the full scope of Black protest are incredibly valuable today.

In this essay I aim to show how and why the narrative obscures the role of self-defence in the movement. In the opening chapter I will establish the role that self-defence played in the civil rights movement, providing the necessary context required to understand the inaccuracy of the dominant narrative. The second chapter will examine the role of leadership in the dominant narrative. The narrative provides a top-down perspective of the movement, defining it by its leaders. I seek to show how the narrative's portrayal of civil rights leaders obscures the role of self-defence in the movement. In the final chapter I will discuss the role of mass media. The dominant narrative is heavily influenced by the contemporary media portrayal of the civil rights movement. By examining the media portrayal, I thus aim to showcase how it has contributed to the omittance of self-defence from the narrative. Having displayed why self-defence is left out of the dominant narrative, I seek to show how it adheres to a historical racial double standard concerning the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment and discuss how the narrative inhibits modern protest movements.

## Chapter 1: The Role of Self-Defence in the Civil Rights Movement

### Robert F. Williams and Self-Defence as a Black Tradition

To explore why it is left out of the dominant narrative it will first be necessary to examine the role that armed self-defence played within the civil rights movement. Throughout the course of the movement Black Southerners consistently showed a willingness to take up arms to protect themselves, their communities, and their fellow activists. One such figure, Robert F. Williams, showcases many of the recurring themes associated with self-defence in the movement. Like countless others who embraced self-defence, Williams was a veteran. Thousands of Black veterans returned from service in WW2 and Korea with a zeal for activism and a discipline and proficiency with firearms that left them poised to comprise the core of self-defence advocates in the movement. In 1956 Williams was elected president of the local branch of the NAACP in his hometown of Monroe, North Carolina, a position he held until he was suspended by the national office in 1961. His association with the NAACP highlights that self-defence was utilised both within and alongside mainstream civil rights organisations. As president, Williams led the local branch in nonviolent direct-action protests to integrate the town's public facilities.<sup>7</sup> Always aware of the possibility of violence, however, Williams remained armed while conducting these protests. The utilisation of self-defence alongside nonviolent protests reveals the complementary nature of self-defence in the movement. Contrary to the pervasive assumption that they're opposing concepts, self-defence was consistently used to support nonviolent protests throughout the South. Williams, like many others, recognised nonviolence as a useful strategy, but was unwilling to surrender entirely in the face of white terror and violence. He later remarked that the Monroe sit-ins,

---

<sup>7</sup> Marcellus C. Barksdale, "Robert F. Williams and the Indigenous Civil Rights Movement in Monroe, North Carolina, 1961," *The Journal of Negro History* 69, no. 2 (1984): 74. doi:10.2307/2717599.

which he claimed faced the least violence of those anywhere in the South, ‘proved that self-defence and nonviolence could be successfully combined.’<sup>8</sup>

Much like in the rest of the South, the desegregation efforts in Monroe faced white backlash in the form of a terror campaign orchestrated by the local Ku Klux Klan. To protect Monroe’s Black community, Williams formed the Black Armed Guard, a self-defence group comprised mostly of fellow working-class Black veterans.<sup>9</sup> The Guard was one of the many self-defence groups established by Black Southerners during the movement that varied from informal bands of locals who protected activists, to legitimate organisations like the Deacons for Defence and Justice. Williams invoked a justification of self-defence that was commonplace among its advocates. In the face of sustained terror and violence, Southern Blacks could rarely rely on protection from local law enforcement, who were often apathetic at best, and at worst, complicit. Federal officials were similarly unhelpful, frequently reluctant to interfere in what they perceived as local issues. Williams condemned this state of affairs when writing that ‘there is a breakdown of law’ in the South.<sup>10</sup> If the movement was to have a chance at success, he along with many others concluded that they would have to protect themselves.

The entrenched association of self-defence with the Black Power movement obscures not only the role it played in the civil rights movement, but also the long tradition of armed self-defence among African Americans in the South. Williams’ vocal advocacy of self-defence places him within the legacy of militant Black figures like the late-19<sup>th</sup> century anti-lynching

---

<sup>8</sup> Williams, *Negroes with Guns*, 68.

<sup>9</sup> Tommy J. Curry and Max Kelleher, “Robert F. Williams and Militant Civil Rights: The Legacy and Philosophy of Pre-emptive Self-Defence,” *Radical Philosophy Review* 18, no. 1 (2015): 50.

<sup>10</sup> Robert F. Williams, ‘Is Violence Necessary to Combat Injustice? For the Positive: Williams Says “We Must Fight Back,”’ *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*, ed. Clayborne Carson et al. (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 110.



crusader Ida B. Wells-Barnett. Wells-Barnett's declaration that 'a Winchester rifle should have a place of honour in every Black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give' mirrors Williams' proclamation that self-defence was necessary due to the breakdown of law and order in the South.<sup>11</sup> Williams' ties to the tradition were also personal. The rifle that his grandfather used to protect his family from white vigilantes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century served as a powerful symbol of the militant tradition within his own family.<sup>12</sup> Williams was one of a number of his contemporaries who were inspired by the militancy of previous generations in their families. In *My Story*, Rosa Parks recalls her grandfather sitting up at night with a double-barrelled shotgun to protect his family from Klansmen. Parks states that though she came to see 'that the tactic could be useful,' much like Williams she was never 'an absolute supporter of nonviolence in all situations.'<sup>13</sup> The adoption of nonviolence as a useful strategy but not as a philosophical way of life became increasingly common in the movement throughout the early-1960s.

### Self-Defence and the Grassroots Movement

Armed self-defence was most prevalent in the grassroots movement, particularly the community organising work conducted by SNCC and CORE in the rural Deep South. The ties between self-defence and Black activism in the region were well entrenched. In Mississippi, NAACP leaders such as Medgar Evers and Amzie Moore were frequently armed and periodically relied on the protection of armed guards while working throughout the state in the 1950s.<sup>14</sup> Such measures were deemed necessary due to the dangerous nature of the

---

<sup>11</sup> Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster (Boston: Bedford, 1997), 70.

<sup>12</sup> Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 16, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Jim Haskins and Rosa Parks, *My Story*, (New York: Puffin Books, 1992), 30-32, 195-96.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Payne, "Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Trenches," in *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), 122-3; Crosby, *It Wasn't*

work. More than just a defensive precaution however, the tradition of armed self-defence ran deep for Blacks living in rural communities in the Deep South. As Bob Moses attested, ‘to the farmers in Mississippi, carrying a gun, protecting your home, was a way of life.’<sup>15</sup> As a result, activists who came to work in these communities often found that their nonviolent rhetoric didn’t resonate with locals.

The nature of the community organising work conducted in these areas left activists in a difficult position. Those from SNCC in particular, imbued with Ella Baker’s philosophy of group-centred leadership, could hardly enter rural Southern communities and attempt to impose a nonviolent philosophy that was ultimately foreign to the locals. Moreover, activists working in the rural Deep South quickly found themselves in a dangerous environment with little help from law enforcement. Though the Kennedy administration established the Voter Education Project in 1962 to try and influence the direction of the civil rights movement, it refused to offer federal protection to activists who joined the project for fear of alienating its Southern white Democratic political allies. Much like Williams in Monroe in the late 1950s, activists working on voter registration drives were left to the mercy of often hostile local law enforcement.<sup>16</sup> As a result of these conditions, many found themselves being protected by armed locals. In some areas, locals set up defence patrols to protect visiting activists. In other instances, those who took in civil rights workers sat up at night armed, guarding their homes.<sup>17</sup> The grassroots movement is awash with figures like C.O. Chinn, who provided

---

the Wild West, 195; Simon Wendt, *The Spirit and the Shotgun: Armed Resistance and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Gainesville; Tallahassee; Tampa; Boca Raton; Pensacola; Orlando; Miami; Jacksonville; Ft. Myers: University Press of Florida, 2007), 103-5.

<sup>15</sup> Wendt, *The Spirit and the Shotgun*, 108.

<sup>16</sup> Steven F. Lawson, “Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Nation,” in *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), 24-5.

<sup>17</sup> Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Trenches*, 122-3

shelter and armed protection to CORE activists in Canton, Mississippi.<sup>18</sup> In another fairly typical example, SNCC activist Fay Bellamy Powell recalls how a farmer in rural Greene County, Alabama showed up to guard the Freedom House one night, showing her and a fellow activist how to use his shotgun as a precaution.<sup>19</sup> These largely uncelebrated figures facilitated the movement in some of the most repressive areas of the rural Deep South.

Though historians debate the extent to which SNCC was an entirely philosophically nonviolent organisation from its inception, the experience of working in the rural South led a significant number of activists to accept nonviolence only as a useful strategy, not a way of life. By 1963, CORE's James Farmer suggested that the proponents of philosophical nonviolence constituted only a small proportion of the movement's participants.<sup>20</sup> Those who embraced nonviolence tactically but not philosophically often shared the view of Williams and many other rural Black Southerners that self-defence and nonviolence were complementary rather than contradictory. Nonviolent demonstrations could be an effective tool for producing concessions, but self-defence was a necessary measure to ensure the safety of activists working in a dangerous environment.<sup>21</sup> Discontent to rely solely on others for their safety, many activists working in the rural Deep South chose to take up arms themselves. The experience of Freedom Summer in 1964 in particular appears to have led many to this conclusion. James Forman later wrote that the campaign 'confirmed the absolute necessity for armed self-defence – a necessity that existed before the project but which

---

<sup>18</sup> Wendt, *The Spirit and the Shotgun*, 109-10.

<sup>19</sup> Fay Bellamy Powell, "Playtime is Over," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, ed. Faith S. Holsaert et al. (Urbana; Chicago; Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 479. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1hj9xfc.62>.

<sup>20</sup> Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Trenches*, 116.

<sup>21</sup> Christopher B. Strain, *Pure Fire: Self-Defence as Activism in the Civil Rights Era* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 176.

became overwhelmingly clear to SNCC people during and after it.<sup>22</sup> By 1966 both organisations explicitly endorsed self-defence as a legitimate and viable tactic, something many fieldworkers had already accepted.<sup>23</sup> Whether in the form of local protection or activists arming themselves, self-defence played its most prominent role in the grassroots civil rights movement.

### Organised Black Self-Defence

In some cases, self-defence took on a more organised form. In 1964, Korean War veteran Joseph Mallisham formed a self-defence organisation in Tuscaloosa, Alabama to protect local movement leaders. The group, organised like a military unit and composed strictly of married veterans who had served in active combat, played a vital role in the success of the local movement.<sup>24</sup> The following year, a group of Black men in Natchez, Mississippi formed a paramilitary group with ties to the local NAACP after the car bombing of a prominent activist in the town. The Natchez movement combined paramilitary self-defence with economic boycotts of downtown stores in an effective strategy that was emulated throughout the southwest of the state.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1972), 375.

<sup>23</sup> Akinyele O. Umoja, "The Ballot and the Bullet: A Comparative Analysis of Armed Resistance in the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Black Studies* 29, no. 4 (1999): 558, 562. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2645870>.

<sup>24</sup> Simon Wendt, "God, Gandhi, and Guns: The African American Freedom Struggle in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1964-1965," *The Journal of African American History* 89, no. 1 (2004): 45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134045>.

<sup>25</sup> Akinyele Omowale Umoja, "'We Will Shoot Back': The Natchez Model and Paramilitary Organization in the Mississippi Freedom Movement," *Journal of Black Studies* 32, no. 3 (2002): 287. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002193470203200301>.

By far the most well-known self-defence organisation associated with the movement, however, are The Deacons for Defence and Justice. Founded in Jonesboro, Louisiana in 1964, the Deacons showcase several common characteristics of self-defence within the movement. Membership, for example, was comprised mostly of working-class Black veterans, and they were formed primarily to protect CORE activists working in the town. In Jonesboro and later in Bogalusa the Deacons maintained a public presence, guarding Freedom Houses and patrolling the streets with their weapons in a direct challenge to Klan harassment. More than just protecting locals and activists however, Charles Sims, president of the Bogalusa Deacons, claimed that their presence changed the way whites thought about Black people: ‘we told [whites] a brand-new Negro was born. The one he’d been pushin’ around, he didn’t exist anymore.’<sup>26</sup> In this sense, the organisation performed a psychological duty as well as a physical one, contradicting longstanding notions of Black people’s passivity and the racial double standard of gun ownership in the South.

The Deacons represented a shift for self-defence in the movement. As Crosby writes, they ‘took the already existing tradition... combined it with an assertive, confrontational attitude, and brought both into the public eye.’<sup>27</sup> Whereas Mallisham’s group were unnamed in an attempt to remain unknown, the Deacons actively sought publicity and aimed to expand with chapters throughout the South. In this sense, Hill writes that they resembled a political organisation more so than a self-defence group.<sup>28</sup> With articles in the likes of the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Newsweek*, the Deacons drew significant attention to the

---

<sup>26</sup> Charles Sims, “Armed Defence,” in *Black Protest: History, Documents and Analyses, 1619 to the Present*, ed. Joanne Grant (New York: Fawcett Premier, 1968), 357-365.

<sup>27</sup> Crosby, *It Wasn’t the Wild West*, 229.

<sup>28</sup> Lance Hill, *The Deacons for Defence: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) 46. ProQuest Ebook Central.

role of self-defence in the movement. In a 1965 *New York Times* article, CORE's Southern director Richard Haley admitted that 'the deacons had caused him to think anew about his own philosophy of nonviolence,' and that by protecting activists from immediate danger they provided a valuable function that CORE could not perform.<sup>29</sup> His comments highlight the organisation's transitioning stance in regards to self-defence as activists increasingly appreciated the aid of groups like the Deacons.

The Deacons were at their most visible during the Meredith March of 1966. The organisation provided protection with armed members walking alongside the marchers, guarding the campsites at night, and providing armed escorts for those travelling to and from the march.<sup>30</sup> Though controversial, the decision to enlist their help was a sign of changing currents within the movement. The role of self-defence, which had largely been hidden until recently, was gradually pushing to the surface. The march proved to be a crucial turning point for the Black Freedom Struggle due to the public emergence of the Black Power slogan. While the organisation would be hugely influential for Black Power activists, however, Sims disliked the slogan, stating that he wished to live under equal power.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, unlike those activists who turned to Black Power due to frustration with the limitations of nonviolence, Sims maintained that nonviolence was the only way for the movement to achieve its aims.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, while the Deacons paved the way for the developments that followed, they represent the apotheosis of the role of self-defence within the civil rights movement.

---

<sup>29</sup> Roy Reed, "Armed Negro Unit Spreads in South: New Groups to Fight White Terror are Established in Mississippi and Alabama," *New York Times*, June 6, 1965. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/armed-negro-unit-spreads-south/docview/116865958/se-2?accountid=14182>.

<sup>30</sup> Strain, *Pure Fire*, 118.

<sup>31</sup> Christopher B. Strain, "'We Walked Like Men': The Deacons for Defence and Justice," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 38, no. 1 (1997): 59. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4233369>.

<sup>32</sup> "Rights Activities Spread in the South," *New York Times*, August 1, 1965

In conclusion, the civil rights movement was far more heterogenous than the dominant narrative portrays. Nonviolence and direct-action protests were undoubtedly essential elements of the movement, but by focusing solely on these elements the dominant narrative obscures others. Economic strategies were prominent throughout the movement, for example, but are not emphasised in the narrative. Armed self-defence is simply another aspect of the movement that is omitted from the narrative. Much like nonviolence, self-defence has leading advocates and standout figures such as Robert F. Williams and Charles Sims. It played a key part in major struggles, most notably in the grassroots movement, frequently alongside what are widely recognised to be nonviolent protests. Finally, self-defence not only played a prominent role in mainstream civil rights organisations but was the basis of several organisations that emerged from the grassroots movement, most notably the Deacons for Defence and Justice. By shunning the role of armed self-defence in the civil rights movement, the dominant narrative erases a rich and vital aspect of the movement's history.

## Chapter 2: Leadership in the Dominant Narrative

Throughout history leaders have been imbued with immense power to influence the public perception of events both in their time and retrospectively. Historians have often shown a propensity to emphasise such figures in their work, producing top-down narratives. As the focal point of much historiography, leaders are thus frequently used to define the course of history. This is certainly true of the dominant narrative of the civil rights movement. As a top-down narrative, it defines the movement by its leaders, or more accurately, by the leadership of one man: Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. To understand the version of the movement that the dominant narrative promotes then, specifically why it does not account for the role of self-defence, it is useful to examine the role of leaders in the narrative. #

### Martin Luther King, Jr.

The dominant narrative focuses overwhelmingly on the leadership of King. As Fred Powledge contends, '[i]n the minds of untold numbers of Americans,' King '*was* the civil rights movement. Thought it up, led it, produced its victories, became its sole martyr.'<sup>33</sup> The equation of the movement with King has resulted in the pervasive assumption that King's philosophy of nonviolence defines the entire movement. This conceals not only the role of self-defence, but of other aspects of the civil rights struggle such as economic protests. His central position in the narrative has roots in the contemporary perception of the movement. After emerging on the national scene during the Montgomery Bus Boycott, King was widely seen as the movement's pre-eminent leader. One *New York Times* article in 1964 proclaimed

---

<sup>33</sup> Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Trenches*, 113.



‘[n]o one will dispute... that Dr. King is the leading spokesman for the American Negro and the most prominent of his race since Booker T. Washington.’<sup>34</sup> From this position, King had considerable power to influence the national perception of the movement. Seeking to secure public sympathy and financial support from white liberals, King and his aides embraced the politics of respectability. By ensuring activists and demonstrators adhered to middle-class ideals of order, presentability, and responsibility, the movement challenged centuries old negative stereotypes that depicted African Americans as impulsive, hyper-sexual, and brutish.<sup>35</sup> Nonviolence was inherently intertwined with the politics of respectability. By showing restraint and discipline in the face of extreme violence and provocation, Black activists challenged notions of Black people’s impulsivity and showed their movement to be moral and noble.<sup>36</sup> Thus, as its predominant leader, King successfully cultivated an image of the movement as respectable and nonviolent, promoting ideas of Gandhian self-suffering and Christian brotherly love as the movement’s official creed.<sup>37</sup>

King’s status undoubtedly elevated nonviolence to the movement’s sole philosophy in the eyes of many. The version of King that appears in the dominant narrative, however, is a heavily sanitised figure, as Dowd Hall explains, ‘frozen in 1963, proclaiming “I have a dream.”’<sup>38</sup> More challenging aspects of his character, for example his stance against the Vietnam war in the final years of his life, and his repeated insistence of the importance of economic equality, are erased from the narrative. The King of the dominant narrative is

---

<sup>34</sup> John Herbers, “Critical Test for the Nonviolent Way,” *New York Times*, July 5, 1964.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/critical-test-nonviolent-way/docview/115561162/se-2?accountid=14182>.

<sup>35</sup> Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward, “‘Dress modestly, neatly ... as if you were going to church’: Respectability, Class and Gender in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Early Civil Rights Movement,” in *Gender in the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Peter J. Ling, and Sharon Monteith (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), 78. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>37</sup> Wendt, *The Spirit and the Shotgun*, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Hall, *The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past*, 1234.

defined solely by the philosophy of nonviolence and his interracial dream. And yet, while King undoubtedly believed deeply in nonviolence, his views on the matter, as well as those of self-defence, are more nuanced than the dominant narrative suggests. While he promoted it, for example, King understood that nonviolent philosophy did not define the entire movement. In 1964, he admitted that he believed the majority of Blacks accepted nonviolence tactically, but not philosophically: ‘they believe in it in a pragmatic sense, not as a way of life as I do.’<sup>39</sup> Moreover, though he openly challenged the efficacy of self-defence as a movement strategy, King never denied the *right* to self-defence, writing in 1959 that all societies accept self-defence to be moral and legal, and that it was not opposed ‘even by Gandhi, who sanctioned it for those unable to master pure nonviolence.’<sup>40</sup> King knew that nonviolence, while prominent, was just one aspect of a vast and varied movement. But by defining the movement solely by the leadership of King, and by defining King solely by the philosophy of nonviolence and the goal of integration, the dominant narrative omits all other strategies and philosophies that were part of the movement, thus obscuring the role of self-defence.

### Malcolm X

As its most famous (or infamous) Black advocate in American history, Malcolm X is the pre-eminent Black leader associated with armed self-defence. Due to the primacy of King in popular understandings of the Black Freedom Struggle, Malcolm is frequently framed in opposition to the civil rights leader. This promotes the notion that nonviolence and self-defence are opposing philosophies. Many of the men’s actions and statements contribute to

---

<sup>39</sup> Herbers, *Critical Test for the Nonviolent Way*.

<sup>40</sup> Daniel J. Ott, “Nonviolence and the Nightmare: King and Black Self-Defence,” *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 39, no. 1 (2018): 67. doi:10.5406/amerjtheophil.39.1.0064.; Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Social Organisation of Non-Violence,” in *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*, ed. Clayborne Carson et al. (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 112-13.

this perception. Malcolm vehemently attacked King repeatedly in interviews and speeches, branding him as ‘a fool,’ ‘a traitor,’ and ‘a twentieth century religious Uncle Tom.’<sup>41</sup> He was equally critical of nonviolence, and claimed that whites supported King financially so that he would disarm Blacks. In one interview, he proclaimed that ‘King is the best weapon that the white man... has ever gotten in this country, because he is setting up a situation where, when the white man wants to attack Negroes, they can’t defend themselves.’<sup>42</sup> Conversely, King used militants like Malcolm to warn worrying whites of what Blacks would turn to if nonviolent tactics failed. In the most famous example, King wrote in his letter from Birmingham jail that if Blacks could not express their repressed emotions in nonviolent ways, ‘they will come out in ominous expressions of violence,’ and warned that ‘a frightening racial nightmare’ could arise from Blacks resorting to ‘black nationalist ideologies.’<sup>43</sup> The framing of the two men as opposites thus has some basis in the true nature of their public statements about one another.

Some historians, however, claim that this portrayal obscures the common ground between the two. Clayborne Carson, for example, writes that ‘[u]nlike many of their followers, the two men understood at the end of their lives that their basic messages were compatible rather than contradictory.’<sup>44</sup> Some of Malcolm’s more militant views softened after his split from the Nation of Islam and his completion of the Hajj, and by the end of his life he appears to have willingly played the threatening role in order to support King. In Selma in 1965 he told

---

<sup>41</sup> Lewis V. Baldwin, “Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.: What They Thought About Each Other,” *Islamic Studies* 25, no. 4 (1986): 399. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20839793>.

<sup>42</sup> Kenneth B. Clark, *King, Malcolm, Baldwin: Three Interviews by Kenneth B. Clark* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 43.

<sup>43</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” in *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*, ed. Clayborne Carson et al. (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 156-157.

<sup>44</sup> Clayborne Carson, “The Unfinished Dialogue of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X,” *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 1 (2005): 25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163737>.

Coretta Scott King that he came to make King's job easier, claiming that '[i]f the white people realise what the alternative is, perhaps they will be more willing to hear Dr. King.'<sup>45</sup> Though they hailed from vastly different backgrounds and undoubtedly held contrasting views, Malcolm and King may have been on course for reconciliation in the months leading to Malcolm's death. Since King's death however the two leaders have largely been remembered as figureheads of opposing ideologies. Carson laments that African Americans are frequently advised to choose between the two men, implying that one cannot embrace both.<sup>46</sup> This ultimately obscures the role of self-defence in the civil rights movement. By so prominently aligning the movement with King, the dominant narrative constructs a pervasive dichotomy in which King, nonviolence, and the Southern civil rights movement represent one facet of the Black Freedom Struggle, and Malcolm, self-defence, and urban struggles in the North represent another opposing facet. By portraying self-defence as separate from the movement, in both a geographical and philosophical/tactical sense, this dichotomy obscures the role that armed self-defence played within the Southern civil rights movement alongside nonviolent tactics.

### Robert F. Williams

Robert F. Williams was another important leader of the Black Freedom Struggle during this time. In many ways, Williams is a similar figure to Malcolm X. Not only did both men endorse armed self-defence, but like Malcolm, Williams embraced a wider ideology of Black nationalism, emphasising Black economic advancement, Black pride, and connections between the Black Freedom Struggle in the U.S. and anticolonial movements abroad.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Coretta Scott King, *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Avon Books, 1969), 259-60.

<sup>46</sup> Carson, *The Unfinished Dialogue of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X*, 25.

<sup>47</sup> Timothy B. Tyson, "Robert F. Williams, "Black Power," and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle," *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 2 (1998): 559. doi:10.2307/2567750.

Recognising their shared philosophy, Malcolm became a staunch supporter of Williams, holding fundraisers for the purchase of rifles in Monroe and selling copies of Williams' newsletter, *The Crusader*, in Harlem's Temple No. 7.<sup>48</sup> Unlike Malcolm, however, Robert F. Williams is absent from the dominant narrative of the civil rights movement. On a functional level this can be explained because, as Mohamud and Whitburn write, 'the traditional interpretation [of the movement] already has its threatening antagonist in Malcolm,' thus it has no need for a second leader of a similar ilk.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, though, I point out that Williams is omitted from the narrative because he makes it untenable. By aligning Black self-defence so heavily with Malcolm X, the narrative conveys it as something that occurred solely outside of the movement. In contrast, the civil rights movement is portrayed as entirely nonviolent, taking place primarily in the South between the major episodes of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1956 and the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Williams contradicts this narrative. As a Black leader organising protests in the South between 1956 and 1961, working within a mainstream civil rights organisation for three of those years (the NAACP), Williams, unlike Malcolm, can be considered a player in the civil rights movement. His unabashed advocacy of self-defence, then, reveals that armed self-defence did indeed play a role in the movement. It is precisely because Williams challenges the narrative's nonviolence/self-defence dichotomy, rather than confirm it like Malcolm, that he is erased from the narrative.

On a more fundamental level, Williams challenges the very purpose of the dominant narrative. As Theoharis explains, the movement has become a way for the nation to celebrate

---

<sup>48</sup> Timothy B. Tyson, "Robert F. Williams and the Promise of Southern Biography," *Southern Cultures* 8, no. 3 (2002): 43. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44376494>.

<sup>49</sup> Abdul Mohamud and Robin Whitburn, *Doing Justice to History: Transforming Black History in Secondary Schools* (London: Institute of Education Press, 2016) 62. ProQuest Ebook Central.

its own identity.<sup>50</sup> By confining the movement to the South, casting its enemies solely as working-class white Southerners, and erasing the opposition it faced in the North and West among the middle-classes, by freezing King in place proclaiming “I have a dream,” the narrative portrays the movement as a time in which the nation came together to eliminate the evil of Jim Crow, fulfilling the inevitable promise of American democracy. Williams presents a very different picture of the civil rights movement. Like Malcolm, Williams was critical of nonviolence. Though he claimed to have great respect for pacifists, he complained that ‘Nonviolent workshops are springing up throughout Black communities’ while ‘not a single one has been established in racist white communities to curb the violence of the Ku Klux Klan.’<sup>51</sup> In the same year that the famous nonviolent demonstrations were taking place in Birmingham, Williams was proclaiming on his radio show from exile in Havana that nonviolence was an inefficient, foreign influence to the US. Self-defence was a true American tradition, he claimed, highlighting the American Revolution as an inspiring example.<sup>52</sup> While nonviolent demonstrators marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965, Williams vehemently wrote that ‘the power structure of the USA is a cruel force of brutal oppression, exploitation, dehumanisation, bloody imperialism and rabid racism.’<sup>53</sup> His sentiment echoes that of Malcolm, but unlike Malcolm, Williams was a player in the civil rights movement. That the movement encompassed leaders like Williams as well as those like King shows it to be a far more challenging, less flattering period of American history than the dominant narrative portrays.

---

<sup>50</sup> Theoharis, *A More Beautiful and Terrible History*, xiii.

<sup>51</sup> Strain, *Pure Fire*, 64-5.

<sup>52</sup> Cristina Mislán, “‘In the Spirit of ’76 Venceremos!’: Nationalising and Transnationalising Self-Defence on *Radio Free Dixie*,” *American Journalism* 32, no. 4 (2015): 441-443. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08821127.2015.1099265>.

<sup>53</sup> Robert F. Williams, “USA: The Potential of a Minority Revolution,” *The Crusader* 7, no. 1, August 1965. <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/1960-1970/crusader/7-1.pdf>.

To conclude, by providing a top-down perspective of the civil rights movement, the dominant narrative is defined by the figures whose leadership it emphasises. Its depiction of those leaders obscures the role that self-defence played in the movement. By casting a filtered version of King as the defining figure of the movement, the narrative elevates nonviolence to its sole philosophy. King's centrality in the narrative takes root from the contemporary public perception of the movement; he was undoubtedly widely seen as the movement's primary leader as it was occurring, imbuing him with disproportionate power to influence how it was perceived by the public. As a result, the public perception of the movement consisted largely of the elements that King emphasised: nonviolence and the politics of respectability, resulting in a widespread public unawareness of the role of self-defence. King was a more challenging and nuanced character than the dominant narrative depicts, however. He understood the heterogeneity of the Black Freedom Struggle and wrote on several occasions about Black self-defence. In comparison, the dominant narrative defines King solely by nonviolence and the goal of integration. By casting this version of King in such an overarching role, the dominant narrative obscures all other aspects of the movement that deviate from this narrow scope, resulting in the omission of the role of armed self-defence.

Just as it uses King to portray the movement as entirely nonviolent, the dominant narrative depicts Malcolm X as the defining figure of Black self-defence. While Malcolm was a public figure as the movement was taking place, he is not considered a part of it. By squarely identifying self-defence with him, then, the narrative conveys the notion that it occurred solely outside of the movement. This version of Malcolm is cast as the antithesis of the narrative's version of King, producing a dichotomy between nonviolence and self-defence. The dominant narrative's portrayal of the two leaders as ideological opposites thus promotes the perception of nonviolence and self-defence as opposing philosophies. This is misleading.

Self-defence was frequently utilised within the movement alongside nonviolent strategies. By portraying the two as opposites, the narrative obscures the role that self-defence played in the movement. Robert F. Williams invalidates the dominant narrative's nonviolence/self-defence dichotomy. As a figure ideologically similar to Malcolm but part of the same movement as King, Williams disrupts the binary that the narrative constructs with its portrayal of the two leaders. Williams ultimately reveals the true nature of self-defence during this period of the Black Freedom Struggle – it was utilised within the civil rights movement in aid of nonviolent tactics. Not only does Williams highlight the inadequacy of the narrative, his harsh, vitriolic critiques of the nation make him counterproductive to its very purpose, the celebration of national identity. As a result, he is erased from the narrative, alongside the role of self-defence. The dominant narrative's portrayal of leaders – its depiction of King and Malcolm and lack of depiction of Williams – thus contributes to the omission of the role of self-defence.



### Chapter 3: Mass Media and the Development of the Dominant Narrative

Mass media played a vital and well documented role in the civil rights movement. The contemporary importance of media is obvious; network news coverage provided millions of Americans with their primary account of the movement, greatly influencing its national perception. However, despite an abundance of scholarship since the 1980s attesting to its complexity and heterogeneity, public perception of the movement today remains heavily influenced by contemporary media accounts. This is because, as Edward Morgan explains, ‘public memory draws heavily on the very stories, events, and personalities that prevailed in past media accounts.’<sup>54</sup> Therefore, to understand why the role of self-defence is omitted from the dominant narrative, it is useful to examine the contemporary media portrayal of the civil rights movement.

#### The Media Portrayal of the Civil Rights Movement

Media coverage of the movement focused on the same big events that are emphasised in the dominant narrative. Major episodes like the March on Washington and Selma were media spectacles that defined the movement for the public. Charles Payne explains that while the media focused on big, dramatic events, the processes that led to such events were largely ignored.<sup>55</sup> It was within such processes, the grassroots, everyday aspects of the movement, that self-defence played the most prominent role. By focusing primarily on big events, the media presented a narrow rendition of the movement that omitted the role of self-defence.

The nonviolence of Black protestors, moreover, was a key aspect of media coverage. As Paul

---

<sup>54</sup> Edward P. Morgan, “The Good, the Bad, and the Forgotten: Media Culture and Public Memory of the Civil Rights Movement,” in *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, ed. Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), 139.

<sup>55</sup> Charles M. Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organising Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 289. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Good recalled, most journalists covering the Mississippi freedom summer project in 1964 sought stories of ‘violence, police brutality, volunteer heroism, [and] Negro suffering.’<sup>56</sup> Such themes defined movement coverage. Violence was a draw for the media, but primarily that enacted by aggressive whites against nonviolent Blacks. Carter writes that ‘white violence directed against nonviolent African American demonstrators,’ was ‘the dominant interpretive frame... of how television’ portrayed the movement to national audiences.<sup>57</sup> The media additionally played a role in elevating King to the status of the movement’s ultimate leader. ‘By 1957,’ Baker writes, ‘King had displaced in the American press’s imagination all of the traditional faces and roles of’ Black leadership.<sup>58</sup> In this sense, the dominant narrative’s overwhelming emphasis of King has roots in contemporary media portrayal of the movement.

The dominant narrative developed from contemporary media coverage of the civil rights movement. Kathryn Nasstrom describes the process in which this took place. First, the movement was filtered and framed by contemporary media coverage. This narrow conception of the movement was then solidified by scholars in the proceeding decades who relied heavily on media accounts. Finally, the narrative has become cemented in the public mentality by its replication in popular culture.<sup>59</sup> As a result, the same events, individuals, and nonviolent philosophy that were the focus of the media are those that today define the dominant narrative and thus the modern perception of the movement. This evaluation is

---

<sup>56</sup> Paul Good, *The Trouble I’ve Seen: White Journalists, Black Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1975) 255.

<sup>57</sup> David Carter, “From ‘We Shall Overcome’ to ‘We Shall Overrun’: The Transformation of US Media Coverage of the Black Freedom Struggle, 1964-68, in Comparative Perspective,” in *Media and Revolt: Strategies and Performances from the 1960s to the Present*, ed. By Kathrin Fahlenbrach et al. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014) 191. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qd0bs.15>.

<sup>58</sup> Houston Baker, Jr., “Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere,” in *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, ed. By Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999) 275.

<sup>59</sup> Kathryn L. Nasstrom, “Between Memory and History: Autobiographies of the Civil Rights Movement and the Writing of Civil Rights History,” *The Journal of Southern History* 74, no. 2 (2008): 330-31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27650145>.

supported by Kathleen McElroy, who examined five obituaries written for civil rights activists that died between 1998 and 2008, and found that ‘journalists still prefer to see the movement through narratives that permeated the mainstream news media in the 1950s and early 1960s.’<sup>60</sup> A legacy of the contemporary media portrayal is the perception of Blacks within the movement as the passive victims of white violence, a notion reinforced by some of the most enduring images associated with the movement; those depicting Black protestors being attacked by police dogs and firehoses in Birmingham. This notion has become a key aspect of the dominant narrative, overshadowing the lived experience of thousands of participants who chose to arm themselves for protection.

### Media Strategies of Civil Rights Organisations

The widespread media neglect of self-defence was not solely the fault of journalists and the networks. Activists understood that the media spotlight could be a valuable tool for advancing the movement and attempted to use this to their advantage. Media coverage became a key element of King and the SCLC’s strategy. Whites could no longer attack Blacks in dark corners, King proclaimed, ‘we’re going to make them do it in the glaring light of television.’<sup>61</sup> By provoking clashes between nonviolent Black protestors and aggressive whites, King knew that he could appeal to the media’s love of dramatic events and incite coverage that would present the issue in simplistic terms of good versus evil, winning sympathy for the movement. Such footage outraged white viewers and, in the backdrop of the

---

<sup>60</sup> Kathleen McElroy, “You Must Remember This: Obituaries and the Civil Rights Movement,” *Journal of Black Studies* 44, no. 4 (2013): 336. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24572933>.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., quoted in David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015) 111.

Cold War, exposed the hypocrisy of America's rhetoric of freedom and democracy on the global stage, putting pressure on the federal government to pass legislation.

Organisations attempted to portray the movement to the nation as favourably as possible. This was a difficult task. Despite being perceived today as a moral crusade that awoke the nation to the error of its ways, the movement's attempts to challenge the racial status quo drew opposition from large segments of the population who viewed it as a nuisance. Now remembered as an American hero, King was branded as un-American for his actions. One poll in 1966 revealed that only 28% of Americans had a favourable opinion of him.<sup>62</sup> This is significant because King tailored the image of the movement to be as unthreatening as possible and still faced widespread hostility. Considering this, had the public been aware of the true role of self-defence within the movement rather than perceiving it as nonviolent, it would likely have been opposed by much of the population.

SNCC and CORE, the two mainstream organisations in which self-defence played the most prominent role, understood this. As Walmsley explains, passive reporting – simply covering pre-scheduled publicity events or responding to an organisation's press releases – was widespread, giving SNCC and CORE considerable control over their mainstream media image.<sup>63</sup> Seeking to maintain as much public sympathy and funding from white Northern liberals as possible, both organisations worked to uphold a nonviolent reputation, producing fundraising literature that suggested members were deeply committed to nonviolence as a

---

<sup>62</sup> Theoharis, *A More Beautiful and Terrible History*, 6.

<sup>63</sup> Mark Joseph Walmsley, "Tell it Like it Isn't: SNCC and the Media, 1960-1965," *Journal of American Studies* 48, no. 1 (2014): 299-300. doi:10.1017/S0021875813002545.

way of life.<sup>64</sup> As explained in chapter one, this was misleading. Beginning in the early-1960s, support for philosophical nonviolence was dwindling among activists conducting dangerous fieldwork in the Deep South, and a culture soon emerged in which activists frequently accepted armed protection from locals, and even decided to carry a weapon themselves. Yet, both organisations actively sought to hide radical developments associated with self-defence from the media, purposefully maintaining the inaccurate portrayal of the movement as uniformly nonviolent. Developments in the mid-1960s would prove this strategy to be well-founded. When SNCC and CORE openly endorsed armed self-defence in 1966, the organisations lost considerable support from white liberals who perceived this development as a betrayal of King's teachings. In turn, financial contributions reduced to almost nothing.<sup>65</sup> That the organisations' shift to Black Power took the media by surprise shows the extent to which they were successful in hiding radical currents from the media. It also gives credit to Payne's argument that the media focused on big events while failing to grasp the processes that lead to them.<sup>66</sup> This shows that civil rights organisations' media strategies, alongside the tendencies of mainstream media coverage, led to the omittance of the role of self-defence from media portrayals of the movement, thus contributing to its omittance from the dominant narrative.

### Self-Defence in the Media

While overarching trends resulted in its widespread omittance from media coverage, some journalists proved to be aware of the role of self-defence within the movement to varying degrees. Several Black newspapers, for example, provided consistent sympathetic coverage

---

<sup>64</sup> Wendt, *The Spirit and the Shotgun*, 102, 110-11.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>66</sup> Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 289.

of Robert F. Williams and the struggle in Monroe. The *Los Angeles Tribune* wrote that ‘it is seldom that you find a president of an NAACP branch with the courage, the bluntness, the plain-spokenness, the intuitiveness, the sympathy, the righteous wrath of a Robert F. Williams.’<sup>67</sup> The *New York Times* additionally published stories about Williams, though the coverage was much less sympathetic. One article proclaimed that ‘Williams has publicly advocated violence as a means of ending racial restrictions.’<sup>68</sup> The mischaracterisation of self-defence as violence was common among mainstream media coverage that delved into the issue. When discussed, self-defence was frequently associated with Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam. Malcolm was presented in the media as a menacing outsider, perpetually juxtaposed with King. As Bodroghkozy explains, ‘in the white media, King and Malcolm functioned as binary opposites: nonviolent vs. violent; integrationist vs. separatist; potentially one of us vs. totally other.’<sup>69</sup> The dominant narrative’s framing of Malcolm against King and of self-defence as a separate, opposing strategy to nonviolence thus has roots in contemporary media depictions of Black self-defence.

Journalist John Herbers proved to be aware that nonviolence was not ubiquitous in the movement. Herbers accurately wrote in the *New York Times* that a new militancy had emerged by the summer of 1964, with demonstrators in several cities departing from nonviolent policy.<sup>70</sup> James Forman supports this assessment, remembering the Freedom Summer of that year as a turning point for the widespread acceptance of armed self-defence

---

<sup>67</sup> “The ‘Temper of the Negro Community’ Everywhere is to Fight Back,” *Los Angeles Tribune*, June 12, 1959, *Readex: African American Newspapers*. <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANAAA&docref=image/v2%3A129280BA5DFE7A33%40EANAAA-12C5FE08A268C2F8%402436732-12C5FE08D22E1550%409>.

<sup>68</sup> Claude Sitton, “Leader of Carolina Pickets Flees Home – Freedom Riders in Monroe Vow to Continue Fight on Segregation,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1961, <https://search.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/leader-carolina-pickets-flees-home-freedom-riders/docview/115360721/se-2?accountid=14182>.

<sup>69</sup> Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 123. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt2t9gf>.

<sup>70</sup> Herbers, *Critical Test for the Nonviolent Way*.

among SNCC fieldworkers.<sup>71</sup> The article proves that Herbers had some degree of knowledge about the diminution of nonviolent philosophy in the movement and the growing acceptance of self-defence among participants. It also highlights that journalists did not uniformly accept that the movement was unified and defined solely by nonviolence. Media coverage concerning self-defence increased significantly with the emergence of the Deacons for Defence and Justice in 1964. Over the following two years, major national newspapers provided steady coverage of the organisation and civil rights struggles in Jonesboro and Bogalusa. As Hill writes, this marked a turning point for the role of self-defence in the movement, with the Deacons publicly embracing what had previously been largely hidden.<sup>72</sup>

Coverage of the role of self-defence in the movement was generally confined to print journalism, however. Though major publications like the *New York Times* maintained significant readership, their influence on public perception of the movement pales in comparison to that of network news coverage. Television was by far the most prominent form of mass media at the time of the movement, with 92% of US households owning at least one television set by the early 1960s.<sup>73</sup> During this time, television news became an authoritative force in American life, and the movement was its first major ongoing domestic story.<sup>74</sup> This made network news coverage the primary framework through which the majority of the population experienced the civil rights movement, giving the networks immense power to frame how it was perceived in the nation. Thus, while there are examples of print journalists grappling with the role of self-defence, with some stories even appearing in one of the nation's foremost publications, the influence of such articles on national perception of the

---

<sup>71</sup> Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 375.

<sup>72</sup> Hill, *The Deacons for Defence*, 10.

<sup>73</sup> Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time*, 2-3.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

movement is minimal compared to the monumental television coverage of major events like the March on Washington. As a result, network news coverage is the primary form of mass media that influenced the dominant narrative

In conclusion, the dominant narrative is heavily influenced by the contemporary media portrayal of the civil rights movement. Mass media performed the initial function of filtering the movement, reducing it to certain key elements: nonviolence, Martin Luther King, and major episodes of direct action. In the process, the media established a national perception of the movement that has remained largely unchanged ever since. Scholars discussing the movement in the decades immediately following it relied heavily on media accounts. As such, the media narrative became increasingly entrenched as the dominant narrative. In this sense, the narrative's depiction of civil rights leaders discussed in chapter two developed from the contemporary media portrayal of those leaders. The media was largely responsible for elevating King to the status of the movement's supreme leader, and depicted Malcolm X as King's perpetual antagonist, two key factors of the narrative that obscure the role of self-defence. In this way, the contemporary media portrayal of the civil rights movement continues to influence its perception today, greatly obscuring the role of self-defence in the movement.

The same events and figures that were emphasised in the media have become the focal points of the narrative. This has led to the omission of self-defence, as the media generally focused on major episodes of nonviolent direct action and emphasised the leadership of King. In contrast, the processes that led to these moments were largely ignored. This coverage overshadowed other elements of the movement, primarily the grassroots movement where



self-defence played the most prominent role. Hoping to gain sympathy and funding, civil rights organisations manipulated media coverage. King and the SCLC provoked clashes between nonviolent protestors and aggressive law enforcement, producing media spectacles that benefitted the movement's cause. In the process, the perception of Black demonstrators in the movement as passive victims became ingrained in the national psyche. SNCC and CORE additionally manipulated media coverage by obscuring elements of the movement that deviated from the recognised narrative of a nonviolent movement led by King. Both organisations were largely successful in their endeavours, and the role of self-defence within the movement remained widely unrecognised by the media until the mid-1960s. There was not a complete media blackout on the matter, however, and some journalists proved to be aware of its role in the movement, though examples are largely confined to print media. Compared to network news coverage, print journalism had a limited impact on the dominant narrative. Because the narrative aligns so strongly with the media portrayal of the movement then, the media portrayal is a major cause of the omission of self-defence from the dominant narrative.

## Conclusion

The dominant narrative is a regressive account of the civil rights movement. As Tyson explains, it ‘idealises Black history, downplays the oppression of Jim Crow,’ and ‘blurs the racial dilemmas that follow us into the twenty-first century.’<sup>75</sup> This has ultimately damaged the prospects of modern protests in the Black Freedom Struggle. Demonstrations that deviate from the narrow scope of protest presented in the dominant narrative face incessant criticism from those who argue that they betray the legacy of the civil rights movement. The dominant narrative used to justify this claim, however, is inaccurate. Modern protests are thus held to unrealistic standards that the civil rights movement itself did not adhere to. By attempting to rectify the dominant narrative, revisionist historians are working to limit its negative impact. I hope to have contributed to this process by building on historiography on the dominant narrative and the role of self-defence in the civil rights movement to show how and why self-defence is omitted from the narrative.

A legacy of the dominant narrative’s roots in the media portrayal of the civil rights movement is that the narrative caters to a white American audience. Civil rights organisations were hyper-aware of how they appeared to whites, and throughout the movement activists attempted to appeal to them by emphasising elements of the movement that would do so and obscuring those that would not. Self-defence was, of course, one of those elements that activists knew would hinder support among whites. This is because whites have historically viewed Black self-defence with suspicion and caution. A racial double standard concerning the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment has persisted throughout US history, manifesting in repeated attempts by

---

<sup>75</sup> Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 307.

the white establishment to restrict African Americans' right to bear arms. In his 1852 review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, William Lloyd Garrison condemned this double standard, writing that Blacks 'are required by the Bible to put away all wrath, to submit to every conceivable outrage without resistance,' something that is never suggested to whites; 'Oh no, for them it is let the blood of the tyrants flow!'<sup>76</sup> Over a century later Malcolm X protested this same issue, complaining that 'when it comes time for a Black man to explode, they call it violence, but white people can be exploding against Black people all day long and it's never called violence.'<sup>77</sup>

During the civil rights movement, this double standard influenced how activists attempted to portray the movement. Aware that Black self-defence would be received negatively, participants promoted nonviolence as the movement's official creed. Today, the assumption that the movement was a nonviolent crusade is essential to the widespread reverence it receives in American society. In contrast, the Black Power Movement, of which self-defence is known to have been a central component, remains a highly controversial and heavily criticised period of the Black Freedom Struggle. Inherent to this perception of Black Power is the assumption that Black self-defence is morally inferior to nonviolence. Underlining this is the notion that African Americans' rights are dependent on them displaying certain behaviours. Reflecting on university courses she has taught on the civil rights movement, Crosby writes that many white students implicitly assume that Black rhetoric and expression of self-defence negates African American citizenship rights, 'part of a historic and contemporary sense that African Americans do not have the same inherent rights as other

---

<sup>76</sup> William Lloyd Garrison, *The Liberator*, March 26, 1852, <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/reviews/rere02at.html>.

<sup>77</sup> Malcolm X, "Communication and Reality," Speech to Domestic Peace Corps, December 12, 1964.

American citizens,' and that Blacks have to 'earn their rights.'<sup>78</sup> The widespread positive reception of the civil rights movement today hinges on the perception that Blacks earned their rights by protesting in the correct way. If the role of self-defence in the movement was widely known, I argue, the movement would be a far more controversial, less celebrated period of American history.

Aiming to celebrate national identity, the dominant narrative of the civil rights movement is thus constructed in a way that obscures the role of self-defence. Providing a top-down perspective, the narrative focuses overwhelmingly on the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., portraying nonviolence as the movement's sole philosophy. This overshadows other aspects of the movement, particularly the grassroots movement where self-defence played its most prominent role. In contrast, the narrative heavily associates self-defence with Malcolm X, presenting it as something that occurred solely outside of the movement. By depicting Malcolm in perpetual opposition to King, the narrative constructs a dichotomy between nonviolence and self-defence, portraying them as antithetical philosophies. This obscures the complementary role that self-defence played in the movement, frequently used alongside nonviolent strategies. The narrative's depiction of civil rights leaders is a legacy of the contemporary media portrayal of the movement. Mass media is ultimately responsible for producing the filtered image of the movement that the narrative maintains. By showing a propensity to emphasise largescale events of nonviolent direct-action as media spectacles, and elevating King to the movement's sole national spokesman, the media promoted an image to the nation of the movement as entirely nonviolent. Civil rights organisations

---

<sup>78</sup> Emilye J. Crosby, "'This Nonviolent Stuff Ain't No Good. It'll Get Ya Killed.' Teaching About Self-Defence in the African-American Freedom Struggle," in *Teaching the American Civil Rights Movement: Freedom's Bittersweet Song*, ed. Julie Buckner Armstrong et al. (New York: Routledge, 2002) 160.

maintained this image to secure white liberal sympathy and funding, hiding more radical aspects of the movement, including the role of self-defence, from the media. As a result, self-defence was largely absent from the contemporary media portrayal of the civil rights movement. In the decades following the movement, the dominant narrative developed from media accounts. By presenting a narrow scope of acceptable protest, the dominant narrative has greatly limited modern understandings of the movement and inhibited modern protest movements. A revision of the narrative is becoming increasingly necessary to highlight the scope of resistance strategies in a world that, as Curry and Kelleher write, ‘looks eerily similar to the 1950s and 1960s regarding the public executions of Black men, and condition of Blacks more generally.’<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Curry and Kelleher, Robert F. Williams and Militant Civil Rights, 68.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Avery, Annie Pearl. "There Are No Cowards in My Family." In *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, edited by Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner, 453-460. Urbana; Chicago; Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1hj9xfc.59>.

Clark, Kenneth B. *King, Malcolm, Baldwin: Three Interviews by Kenneth B. Clark*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1985.

"Defence Deacons Organising Here." *Chicago Daily Defender*. April 6, 1966.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/defense-deacons-organizing-here/docview/494226963/se-2?accountid=14182>.

Forman, James. *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*. Seattle: University of Washington, 1972.

Garrison, Williams Lloyd. *The Liberator*, March 26, 1852.

<http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/reviews/rere02at.html>.

Good, Paul. *The Trouble I've Seen: White Journalists, Black Movement*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1975.

Haskins, Jim, and Rosa Parks. *My Story*. New York: Puffin Books, 1992.

Herbers, John. "Critical Test for the Nonviolent Way." *New York Times*. July 5, 1964.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/critical-test-nonviolent-way/docview/115561162/se-2?accountid=14182>.

Herbers, John. "Non-Violence – Powerful Rights Weapon." *New York Times*. February 28, 1965. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/non-violence-powerful-rights-weapon/docview/116779899/se-2?accountid=14182>.

King, Coretta Scott. *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Avon Books, 1969.

King, Jr., Martin Luther. "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." In *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*, edited by Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, 153-158. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.

King, Jr., Martin Luther. "The Social Organisation of Non-Violence." In *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*, edited by Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, 112-113. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.

Moses, Janet Jemmott. "If We Must Die." In *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, edited by Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner, 266-270. Urbana; Chicago; Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1hj9xfc.37>.

Page, Mildred Forman. "Two Variations on Nonviolence." In *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, edited by Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner, 53-55. Urbana; Chicago; Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1hj9xfc.9>.

Powell, Fay Bellamy. "Playtime is Over." In *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, edited by Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner, 473-483. Urbana; Chicago; Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1hj9xfc.62>.



Reed, Roy. "Armed Negro Unit Spreads in South: New Groups to Fight White Terror are Established in Mississippi and Alabama." *New York Times*. June 6, 1965.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/armed-negro-unit-spreads-south/docview/116865958/se-2?accountid=14182>.

Reed, Roy. "The Deacons, Too, Ride by Night." *New York Times*. August 15, 1965.

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/deacons-too-ride-night/docview/116956172/se-2?accountid=14182>.

"Rights Activities Spread in the South." *New York Times*. August 1, 1965.

Roberts, Gene. "Meredith Leads the March on Eve of Rally in Jackson." *New York Times*. June 26, 1966. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/meredith-leads-march-on-eve-rally-jackson/docview/117005561/se-2?accountid=14182>.

Sims, Charles. "Armed Defence." In *Black Protest: History, Documents and Analyses, 1619 to the Present*, edited by Joanne Grant, 357-365. New York: Fawcett Premier, 1968.

Sitton, Claude. "Leader of Carolina Pickets Flees Home – Freedom Riders in Monroe Vow to Continue Fight on Segregation." *New York Time*. August 29, 1961.

<https://search.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/leader-carolina-pickets-flees-home-freedom-riders/docview/115360721/se-2?accountid=14182>.

“The ‘Temper of the Negro Community’ Everywhere is to Fight Back.” *Los Angeles Tribune*, June 12, 1959. *Readex: African American Newspapers*.

<https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANAAA&docref=image/v2%3A129280BA5DFE7A33%40EANAAA-12C5FE08A268C2F8%402436732-12C5FE08D22E1550%409>.

Wells, Ida B. *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*. Edited by Jacqueline Jones Royster. Boston: Bedford, 1997.

Williams, Robert F. “Is Violence Necessary to Combat Injustice? For the Positive: Williams Says “We Must Fight Back.” In *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*, edited by Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, 110-112. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.

Williams, Robert F. *Negroes with Guns*. New York: Marzani & Munsell, Inc., 1962.

Williams, Robert F. “USA: The Potential of a Minority Revolution.” *The Crusader* 7, no. 1, August 1965. <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/1960-1970/crusader/7-1.pdf>.

X, Malcolm. “Communication and Reality.” Speech to Domestic Peace Corps. December 12, 1964.

## Bibliography

### Secondary Sources

Baker Jr., Houston. "Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere." In *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, edited by Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg, 264-296.

Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999.

Baldwin, Lewis V, "Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.: What They Thought About Each Other." *Islamic Studies* 25, no. 4 (1986): 395-416. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20839793>.

Barksdale, Marcellus C. "Robert F. Williams and the Indigenous Civil Rights Movement in Monroe, North Carolina, 1961." *The Journal of Negro History* 69, no. 2 (1984): 73-89.

doi:10.2307/2717599.

Bodroghkozy, Aniko. *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt2tt9gf>.

Bostdorff, Denise M., and Steven R. Goldzwig. "History, Collective Memory, and the Appropriation of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Reagan's Rhetorical Legacy." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005): 661-690. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27552723>.

Carson, Clayborne. "The Unfinished Dialogue of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X." *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 1 (2005): 22-26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163737>.

Carter, David. "From 'We Shall Overcome' to 'We Shall Overrun': The Transformation of US Media Coverage of the Black Freedom Struggle, 1965-68, in Comparative Perspective." In *Media and Revolt: Strategies and Performances from the 1960s to the Present*, edited by Kathrin Fahlenbrach, Sivertsen Erling, and Erenskjold Rolf, 182-196. New York: Berghahn Books, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qd0bs.15>.

Chappell, Marisa, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward. "'Dress Modestly, Neatly... As If You Were Going to Church': Respectability, Class and Gender in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Early Civil Rights Movement." In *Gender in the Civil Rights Movement*, edited by Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith, 69-100. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Corlett, J. Angelo. "Political Integration, Political Separation, and the African-American Experience: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X on Social Change." *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 21, no. 2 (1995): 191-207. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23263016>.

Cottrol, Robert J., and Raymond T. Diamond. "The Second Amendment: Toward an Afro-Americanist Reconsideration." *The Georgetown Law Journal* 80 (1991): 309-361. [https://digitalcommons.law.lsu.edu/faculty\\_scholarship/283](https://digitalcommons.law.lsu.edu/faculty_scholarship/283).

Crosby, Emilye. “‘It Wasn’t the Wild West’: Keeping Local Studies in Self-Defence Historiography.” In *Civil Rights History from the Ground Up*, edited by Emilye Crosby, 195-255. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2011.

Crosby, Emilye J. “‘This Nonviolent Stuff Ain’t No Good: It’ll Get Ya Killed.’ Teaching About Self-Defence in the African-American Freedom Struggle.” In *Teaching the American Civil Rights Movement: Freedom’s Bittersweet Song*, edited by Julie Buckner Armstrong, Susan Hult Edwards, Houston Bryan Roberson, and Rhonda Y. Williams, 159-173. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Curry, Tommy J., and Max Kelleher. “Robert F. Williams and Militant Civil Rights: The Legacy and Philosophy of Pre-Emptive Self-Defence.” *Radical Philosophy Review* 18, no. 1 (2015): 45-68. <https://doi.org/10.5840/radphilrev20153432>.

Curry, Tommy J. “The Fortune of Wells: Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s Use of T. Thomas Fortune’s Philosophy of Social Agitation as a Prolegomenon to Militant Civil Rights Activism.” *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society* 48, no. 4 (2012): 456-482.  
doi:10.2979/trancharpeirsoc.48.4.456.

Frost, Jennifer. “Using ‘Master Narratives’ to Teach History: The Case of the Civil Rights Movement.” *The History Teacher* 45, no. 3 (2012): 437-446.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23265897>.

Garrow, David J. *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd. "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1233-1263. doi:10.2307/3660172.

Hill, Lance. *The Deacons for Defence: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Hasian Jr., Marouf and Robert E. Frank. "Rhetoric, History and Collective Memory: Decoding the Goldhagen Debates." *Western Journal of Communication* 63 (1999): 95-114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570319909374630>.

Lawson, Steven F. "Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Nation." In *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*, 3-42. Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998.

Ling, Peter J. *Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Routledge, 2002.

McElroy, Kathleen. "You Must Remember This: Obituaries and the Civil Rights Movement." *Journal of Black Studies* 44, no. 4 (2013): 335-355. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24572933>.

McGuire, Danielle L. *At The Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011.

Mislan, Cristina. “‘In the Spirit of ’76 Venceremos!’: Nationalising and Transnationalising Self-Defence on *Radio Free Dixie*.” *American Journalism* 32, no. 4 (2015): 434-452.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08821127.2015.1099265>.

Mohamud, Abdul, and Robin Whitburn. *Doing Justice to History: Transforming Black History in Secondary Schools*. London: Institute of Education Press, 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Morgan, Edward P. “The Good, the Bad, and the Forgotten: Media Culture and Public Memory of the Civil Rights Movement.” In *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, edited by Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, 137-166. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2006.

Nasstrom, Kathryn L. “Between Memory and History: Autobiographies of the Civil Rights Movement and the Writing of Civil Rights History.” *The Journal of Southern History* 74, no. 2 (2008): 325-364. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27650145>.

Ott, Daniel J. "Nonviolence and the Nightmare: King and Black Self-Defence." *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 39, no. 1 (2018): 64-73.

doi:10.5406/amerjtheophil.39.1.0064.

Payne, Charles. "Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Trenches." In *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*, 99-136. Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998.

Payne, Charles M. *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organising Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Strain, Christopher B. *Pure Fire: Self-Defence as Activism in the Civil Rights Era*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005.

Strain, Christopher B. "'We Walked Like Men': The Deacons for Defence and Justice." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 38, no. 1 (1997): 43-62. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4233369>.

Theoharis, Jeanne. *A More Beautiful and Terrible History: The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.



Tyson, Timothy B. *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Tyson, Timothy B. "Robert F. Williams and the Promise of Southern Bibliography." *Southern Cultures* 8, no. 3 (2002): 38-55. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44376494>.

Tyson, Timothy B. "Robert F. Williams, 'Black Power,' and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle." *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 2 (1998): 540-570. doi:10.2307/2567750.

Umoja, Akinyele O. "The Ballot and the Bullet: A Comparative Analysis of Armed Resistance in the Civil Rights Movement." *Journal of Black Studies* 29, no. 4 (1999): 558-578. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2645870>.

Umoja, Akinyele Omowale. "'We Will Shoot Back': The Natchez Model and Paramilitary Organisation in the Mississippi Freedom Movement." *Journal of Black Studies* 32, no. 3 (2002): 271-294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002193470203200301>.

Walmsley, Mark Joseph. "Tell it Like it Isn't: SNCC and the Media, 1960-1965." *Journal of American Studies* 48, no. 1 (2014): 291-308. doi:10.1017/S0021875813002545.

Wendt, Simon. "God, Gandhi, and Guns: The African American Freedom Struggle in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1964-1965." *The Journal of African American History* 89, no. 1 (2004): 36-56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134045>.

Wendt, Simon. *The Spirit and the Shotgun: Armed Resistance and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. Gainesville; Tallahassee; Tampa; Boca Raton; Pensacola; Orlando; Miami; Jacksonville; Fr. Myers: University Press of Florida, 2007.

Woodson, Ashley N. "'There Ain't No White People Here': Master Narratives of the Civil Rights Movement in the Stories of Urban Youth." *Urban Education* 52, no. 3 (2015): 316-342. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085915602543>.