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# “Nothing wrong with prejudice and discrimination:” Omaha newspaper coverage of the Civil Rights Movement in 1968

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“Nothing wrong with prejudice and discrimination:”

Omaha newspaper coverage of the Civil Rights Movement in 1968

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**Abstract:**

This thesis discusses Omaha newspaper coverage of the Civil Rights Movement from January to April 1968. As the Vietnam War raged, racial tension continued to build in the United States, including Omaha, Nebraska. Despite its desegregation, a primarily white, male government controlled the city. The visit of Alabama Governor George Wallace, a widely known white-supremacist presidential candidate, and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. exacerbated the anger already felt by black communities throughout the city. This thesis examines the accuracy and contrasting content of the *Omaha Star*, a newspaper created to serve the black community, and the *Omaha World-Herald*, which mainly published articles written by white men.

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**Introduction:**

The Civil Rights Movement was pivotal to United States history because it gave a voice to black Americans struggling under crippling discrimination and segregation. 1968 was a particularly momentous year, especially following the April 4 assassination of Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Race riots broke out nationwide in response to his assassination. Conflicts increased throughout the country, including Omaha, Nebraska (Grace, 2018).

Omaha was not like the South, where Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation and institutionalized social, educational, and economic disadvantages. Grace (2018) states:

Jim Crow was embedded in the city's institutions. White people held virtually all elected positions. While students might sit side by side in some high schools, most Omaha public schools were racially segregated. There were few black teachers or principals. Black firefighters had separate eating and sleeping arrangements at the city's firehouses, and black police officers had to sue for better hiring practices and promotions.

Even though Omaha did not have Jim Crow laws in place, black Omaha residents lived in similar racist conditions to those in the South. Tensions soared especially high in March 1968 when George Wallace, a governor from Alabama and staunch segregationist, visited Omaha to campaign for presidency.

Protestors and supporters alike gathered to listen to Wallace speak in the Civic Auditorium. Police tried to remove demonstrators, and fights erupted. O'Connor (2014) states, "Student demonstrators...threw wads of paper at him...police tried to remove the demonstrators. A chair-throwing melee erupted, and violence spread to the streets. Ten Omaha businesses were looted, two white motorists were beaten and a 16-year-old youth was shot..." Exactly one month later, Dr. Martin Luther King Junior was assassinated. More riots ensued.

This thesis studies stories published by the *Omaha World-Herald* and *Omaha Star* in 1968. By focusing solely on 1968, the study examines the details of the events in Omaha such as George Wallace’s visit, and how they were reported. In addition, it looks for relationships between stories to determine the newspaper’s accuracy and potential bias. The thesis gives insight on what it was like to live in 1968 Omaha and shows how Omaha’s past has affected the city.

**Research questions:**

1. What Civil Rights issues did the *Omaha World-Herald* and *Omaha Star* address?
2. Did bias exist in articles written about the Civil Rights Movement?
3. Did Omaha journalists include quotes and viewpoints from Americans of different races in their articles?

**Methodology:**

To answer these questions, this thesis uses L. John Martin and Harold L. Nelson’s “The Historical Standard in Analyzing Press Performances,” (1956) published in *Journalism Quarterly*. This method will help judge the quality of Omaha newspapers’ Civil Rights Movement coverage.

The four procedures Martin and Nelson highlight are, “*Accuracy*: whether the report is factual, unambiguous, up-to-date and precise; *Selection*: whether the news reported is significant, balanced and comprehensive; *Judgment*: whether the opinions or analyses are based on and grow logically from facts, and show a good grasp of the meaning of events; and *Foresight*: whether the

writers can see the significant in insignificant day-to-day events and in the general atmosphere of the situation" (Martin and Nelson 463).

*Omaha World-Herald* and *Omaha Star* articles can be obtained using an online archive. Every daily and weekly newspaper published by the organization from January to April 1968 has been examined, using Martin and Nelson's method to judge the quality of the articles. In addition, books and Criss Library databases provide more information about relevant national events.

**January 1968**

The *Omaha World-Herald* mentioned little about the Civil Rights Movement throughout the month of January. News coverage focused on the Vietnam War and first-ever heart transplant in South Africa. However, snippets of the Civil Rights Movement set the scene for the upcoming unrest in Omaha.

The *Omaha World-Herald*'s first mention of the Civil Rights Movement in 1968 was on January 2. The article includes statements from Dr. Joseph H. Jackson, head of the National Baptist Convention of the U.S.A., about the importance of nonviolence and the "thin line between civil disobedience and lawlessness" ("Constitution Points Way to Racial Harmony," 1968). The article emphasizes the use of the Constitution as a moral compass and states civil disobedience is not a solution provided by the Constitution.

In contrast, the *Omaha Star* article focuses on militancy and the divide between white and black people in the community. In the January 18 edition, the *Omaha Star* reports on State Senator Ernie Chambers's remarks about black militancy. At the time, Chambers was not an elected official. He owned a barbershop in Omaha and spoke out on black rights. Chambers said, "The time for non-violence is over and the Negro is forced to say, 'We are going to fight your people like you fight us'" ("Chambers Speaks to Violence Symposium," 1968).

The article lists others who spoke at the violence symposium held at Northwestern University. The common theme between the speakers was they were tired of sitting back and nothing being done to gain their rights. The participants felt violence could help them overcome inequality.

The *Omaha Star* also reported a polarization taking place between the white and black communities in Omaha. The article, "Polarization Between White and Negro Community Taking

Place, Says Hahn" (1968) focuses on Norman Hahn, who served as the chairman of the Omaha Human Relations Board. He was worried "responsible" black leaders had a "lack of victories" compared to "irresponsible" black leaders, which could turn "moderates into militants and militants into extremists."

The *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Omaha Star*'s reports are starkly different. The *Omaha World-Herald* veered sharply from militancy, while the *Omaha Star* articles focus on it and mention possible benefits of increased violence. The *Omaha Star* also reported on the polarization between the white and black communities and the fear of increased violence. The newspaper showed multiple perspectives, while the *Omaha World-Herald* focused solely on the nonviolence movement, led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

One reason the *Omaha World-Herald* may not have mentioned militancy is because it did not fit within the majority of its reporters' and readers' political beliefs. The *Omaha World-Herald* was mainly written by white males and a majority of its readers were white. Writing about flaws of the nonviolent movement could have angered readers. James H. Cone (2001) states:

White Martin King praised white liberals for their support, Malcom (X) castigated them for their hypocrisy-- professing to be for integration while creating de facto segregation in schools, housing and other segments of American life. When blacks manage to move to a white community, the liberals are the first to leave...They (white liberals) urged blacks to follow Martin King--embrace nonviolence and reject violence in any form (p. 180).

The *Omaha World-Herald* shied away from discussing violence within the Civil Rights Movement, even though black militancy was present in the city and Omaha is Malcolm X's

birthplace. The paper did not want to promote issues that did not fit within its demographic because it could reduce sales. The *Omaha Star* discussed both sides of the issue because its audience was largely black. Some readers would likely have been open to the idea of black militancy, while others would have sided more with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In addition to juxtaposed reports on nonviolence, the January *Omaha World-Herald* and *Omaha Star* newspapers had differing articles on the need for dentists in North Omaha. The *Omaha Star* published an article criticizing the city's dismissiveness of the stark need for dentists in North Omaha. The article reports just two dentists served a black population of 33,000 to 42,000. The ratio of patients to dentists was one to 18,000. The article states, "Little or no effort has been directed in an organized way to recruit Negro dental students or Negro dentists to serve the people of this area. Organized dentistry and Boards of Dental Examiners are tacitly aware of this massive problem" ("Decline Becomes Decay," 1968). Many residents in North Omaha had no access to dentistry. Doctors could not handle the patient load. The *Omaha Star* article suggests six steps to improve black's access to dentists:

1. Schools should deliberately recruit black scholars.
2. Pilot projects should begin to resolve the immediate healthcare issue.
3. Local dental schools should salvage black applicants not quite prepared for school.
4. High school programs should be in place.
5. Black women should be given more opportunities.
6. Examinations for dental licenses should be meaningful and realistic.

Although dentistry, and healthcare in general, was not at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement, blacks did experience oppression in the medical world, especially between the Reconstruction and the Jim Crow eras. Omaha's hospitals were desegregated, but the underlying

tensions were still present. Hunkele (2014) states this “...affected the ability of African Americans to gain access to medical care that was equal to whites. This inequality prevented blacks from being accepted into society and from living quality lives that stem from adequate healthcare” (p. 188). The *Omaha Star* accurately reported the havoc the lack of healthcare created in North Omaha. The story could have been passed off as insignificant because the problem had been going on so continuously. The inequalities the residents of North Omaha faced were not new. The *Omaha Star* picked up on what could have been considered an old story and brought the issue to light.

The *Omaha World-Herald* published a news story in response to the *Omaha Star*'s article. The *Omaha World-Herald* news story focuses on the opinions of professionals at University of Nebraska and Creighton Law schools. The *Omaha World-Herald* reported the lack of dentists was the black communities fault because black students were not interested in dentistry. Dr. Raymond Shaddy, dean of Creighton's dental school and a source for the article, stated “We at Creighton have made an attempt to encourage Negro students to enter the dental college, but they are just not to be found” (“Dental Colleges Say Negroes Don't Apply,” 1968).

The article published by the *Omaha World-Herald* is short and does not include any opinions from those affected by the healthcare deficiencies. In contrast, the *Omaha Star* article does not include opinions from professionals within the Nebraska dental schools. Both articles are somewhat one-sided. However, the article published by the *Omaha Star* includes relevant statistics and brought the issue forward. If the *Omaha Star* had not published the article, the *Omaha World-Herald* likely would not have written about the dental-care problem in North Omaha. The *Omaha World-Herald* article was simply a response to help the dental schools save face and appear more willing to help the struggling black community.

The January 1968 protest did not compare to the summer riots of 1966, which involved about 200 protestors and 130 police officers and spurred violence (Howard, 2017, p. 85). This peaceful protest brought attention to 'an unfortunate victim' (discrimination and segregation). The protest was held as a funeral in Primm Chapel. About 200 people attended. The ceremony included music, a eulogy, and an obituary-- all symbols of what could- and had- happened to blacks in Omaha due to racial prejudice.

The *Omaha World-Herald* and *Omaha Star* both reported on the incident. The *Omaha Star* stated where, when, and why the event was happening. As a weekly paper, the *Omaha Star* didn't always have space for in-depth reports ("Unfortunate Victim's Funeral This Sunday, Jan. 15 at Primm Chapel," 1968). The *Omaha World-Herald* also dedicated just a small section in one of its twice-daily papers. The newspaper reported on what the event was, who was there, and what was said.

One of the memorable quotes the *Omaha World-Herald* included from Joe N. Williams, Human Relations Director, is, "Bigotry should be fought everywhere. There is a greater need for unity and a purpose of togetherness" ("Funeral for 'Mr. Whoosit' Marks Near North Protest," 1968). Overall, the coverage of the protest by the two newspapers followed Martin and Nelson's requirements for competent coverage. Both newspapers accurately reported the situation and showed balance and foresight in their writing. The event was important to cover because it showed the effects of discrimination and the Civil Rights Movement in Omaha. The newspapers realized its importance and wrote fair articles.

**February 1968**

The coverage of the Civil Rights Movement from February 1968 revolved around two events: the nation-wide riots and George Wallace's impending visit. The 1960s-violence started in the South, "first with the sit-ins of 1960, then the freedom rides of 1961...and similar events in Selma in 1965" (Graham, 1980, p. 8). Later, the urban riots of 1964-68 erupted. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, also known as the Kerner Commission, was established on July 27, 1967. Illinois Governor Otto Kerner Jr. served as chair of the 11-member presidential commission created by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The commission was:

tasked with assessing the causes of widespread urban rioting at the time.... 'What happened? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again?' The report...blamed the more than 150 riots between 1965 and 1968 on 'white racism' ...it concluded that 'our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white-separate and unequal (Cychosz, 2017).

The report was much anticipated in February 1968, as people waited for its March 1 release. Recommendations from the report were largely ignored after major political events erupted, including the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. President Johnson accepted the report, but did not support its conclusions that society was becoming "separate and unequal" (Cychosz, 2017).

Riots exploded in 1968-- in Chicago, Orangeburg, South Carolina, and Omaha, Nebraska. Orangeburg, South Carolina made national news February 1968. Both the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Omaha Star* reported on the catastrophic Orangeburg Massacre. The massacre started when students at South Carolina State College and Kent State University protested All-Star Bowling Lanes, a bowling alley that refused service to black people, despite the passage of the

1964 Civil Rights Act. Black students entered the bowling alley February 5 and 6, only to be pushed out by law enforcement. Students were arrested and police officers viciously beat several women. On February 7, the mayor addressed the students, who called to end police brutality. However, the governor called in the National Guard, and distrust rose. On February 8, more than 100 students gathered at South Carolina State. Students chanted “black power” and sang “We Shall Overcome” as officers gathered around them. The students lit a bonfire to warm up, and the officers called in a firetruck, which escalated the situation and made students nervous (Boissoneault, 2018).

The protest came to a head at 10:30 p.m., when a foreign object hit patrolman David Shealy in the head by a foreign object and injured him. Boissoneault (2018) states:

Minutes later, nine State Highway patrolmen opened fire on the unarmed students...Many, including Governor McNair, argued the students had begun shooting first, despite there being no evidence that any students had firearms. Not only were the patrolmen using much higher caliber ammunition than called for, but the vast majority of students were injured in a way that indicated they were attempting to flee.

Three students were killed and about 50 others were injured. The massacre was publicized nationwide, but many stories, including those published by the *Associated Press*, contained significant errors. The *Omaha World-Herald* published the *Associated Press* report, which stated the incident included “a heavy exchange of gunfire” (Boissoneault, 2018). The article made it seem like the students and officers opened fire on each other, but the officers were the only ones armed.

The *Omaha World-Herald* also published a statement from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., accusing the policemen of an “immense over-reaction” and stating the injuries and deaths

"must not go unpunished" ("King: Students Shot in Back," 1968). Although the *Associated Press* did not correct its "exchange of gunfire" mistake, the *Omaha World-Herald* did make it clear the officers were in the wrong in its news story. The first report erred in accuracy and judgement because it contained the significant mistake. The second showed accuracy, judgement, foresight, and selection because it reported fairly on the historic massacre and gave both the opinions of the Justice Department and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The *Omaha Star* said little about the Orangeburg Massacre. The biggest mention of it was in the article "N.A.A.C.P. Youth to Stage Memorial March," published in the February 22 edition of the newspaper. The Omaha Youth Council of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People held a memorial march on February 24, 1968 in honor of the Orangeburg Massacre. The article gave a background on the massacre and the need for peaceful societal change. The February 22 paper was the second published since the massacre. This showed little foresight. The newspaper should have published an article about the event in an earlier edition. Even though the massacre did not happen in Omaha, it was significant enough that it affected the Civil Rights Movement and deserved more Omaha coverage. The *Omaha World-Herald* published more thorough and timely accounts of the massacre and followed Martin and Nelson's procedures more closely.

Cities such as Chicago took steps to halt the outbreak of riots by forming anti-riot posses. A Chicago judge stopped recruitment to the volunteer anti-riot posse, according to the *Omaha World-Herald*. Organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People filed lawsuits challenging its legality ("Chicago Judge Halts Steps to Recruit Anti-Riot Posse," 1968). The *Omaha World-Herald* did not mention the issues the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People had with the anti-riot posse, but the *Omaha Star* did:

There have been constant calls for policemen to 'get tough' with Negroes as a way of preventing riots...surveys of Negro neighborhoods show that better police protection is at the top of the list of community needs, but they seldom get it...So it is not police protection that Negroes resent...What Negroes resent is the way they are singled out for police harassment... Greater cooperation between policemen and the community they serve is needed ("The Police and the Ghetto," 1968).

The *Omaha Star's* report on the riot posses is more detailed and explains the issues the black community saw in them. The report shows greater foresight because it acknowledges the importance in seemingly small, every day events. Anti-riot groups were forming throughout the country, and it would have been easy to overlook them as a commonplace event.

In addition to riot coverage, the *Omaha World-Herald* dedicated space in its newspaper to the impending visit of Alabama Governor George Wallace. The *Omaha Star* lacked foresight of the importance of the event and did not publish any articles revolving around his visit until March. Wallace was the subject of more than five February *Omaha World-Herald* articles. The first spread dedicated to Wallace, "Wallace Runs; Splinter Party Effects Unsure," published February 8, 1968. Wallace was elected as a Democrat governor in Alabama in 1962, but entered the presidential race as a third-party, independent candidate.

The *Omaha World-Herald* (1968) states, "George Wallace, saying there now exists a virtual 'one-party' system in the United States, declared none of the announced candidates provides any indication that Democratic and GOP platforms will be much different." His entry into the race angered many because he was known as a staunch segregationist. His inaugural speech as the Alabama governor concluded with this line: "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." His bid for presidency was supported mainly by white, working-

class Southerners (biography.com).

The *Omaha World-Herald* announced the date of Wallace's convention on February 17, 1968. Wallace hoped the convention, set for March 4, 1968, would lead to the organization of a Nebraska independent political party in support of him ("Wallace Convention Date March 4," 1968).

The *Omaha World-Herald* showed foresight by publishing articles on George Wallace. The newspaper saw the importance of the event and wrote fair, accurate articles. The *Omaha Star* should have published at least one article leading up to Wallace's visit. However, the *Omaha Star* only published articles on Wallace after the convention and the violence that ensued was over.

In addition to conflicting thoughts on Wallace's visit, Omahans argued over the city's possible admittance to the Model Cities Program, created to eliminate "urban blight" (Olken 1971, p. 206). President Johnson appointed a special Task Force on Urban Problems in October 1965, which led to the development of the program. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provided grants and assistance to cities that wanted to carry out local programs to provide a "comprehensive attack on social, economic, and physical problems in selected slum and blighted areas through concentration and coordination of Federal, State, and local public and private efforts" (Olken, 1971, p. 206). The community could be involved in implementing the program, but the Omaha City Council had the final say in program activity choices.

Omaha had a model city application draft in 1968, instituting an all-white Model Cities Advisory Committee. If Omaha was chosen for funding, the committee would control all aspects of the application. Activist Ernest Chambers presented the committee with a 46-page appraisal of the application in 1968. He said it would give white people more control and power over the

black community. Both the *Omaha Star* and the *Omaha World-Herald* reported on Chamber's appraisal and the pros and cons of the Model City Program in February and later again in April. Omaha was not one of the 150 cities selected between 1967 and 1974, but the application sparked disagreements throughout the city.

The Omaha City Council met to draft an application for the second round of federal Model Cities grants in February 1968, after Omaha was denied funding for the first round. The *Omaha Star* reported Mayor Sorensen was reluctant to seek a grant again because the guidelines for the second round of grants required "broader participation of persons from the affected area" ("Model City Application Would Give 'Whites Greater Control Over Destiny of Blacks,'" 1968).

Black activist Ernie Chambers argued the mayor did not care about giving the community more freedom of choice because if he did, "he has friends and associates who can lend him able assistance in achieving it" (Model City Application Would Give 'Whites Greater Control Over Destiny of Blacks' 1968). Chambers insisted the Omaha was not "sophisticated enough" to make sure the black community would benefit from the funding. He believed the city would simply use the money for its own benefit and not for its intended use: to bolster the poor communities.

The *Omaha World-Herald* released an article very similar to the *Omaha Star*'s report on the Model Cities Application. The article focuses on Chambers' comments to the mayor, giving a more detailed overview of Chambers' appraisal than the *Omaha Star*. The *Omaha Star* only stated Chambers believe the application would not help the black community, but the *Omaha World-Herald* listed reasons why Chambers felt that way. The *Omaha World-Herald* article states Chambers found the mayor's outlook on urban problems "amusing" (Negro Views 'Model' Plan, 1968). Chambers said:

Urban renewal has not eliminated blight, but only caused a shifting around. The Model Cities program is a national confession that there has been inadequate implementation of urban renewal's original purpose of improving living conditions for ghetto people, and (the application proposed) a course of action which will grant white people greater control and power over the destiny of black people ("Negro Views 'Model' Plan," 1968). Chambers worried the plan to fix housing structures in North Omaha would instead displace the residents and leave them without homes. He argued it is better to have crumbling homes than none at all.

The *Omaha World-Herald* and *Omaha Star* articles both followed Martin and Nelson's procedures in their articles. Both articles included perspectives of Chambers and the Mayor. The articles were factual, timely and showed foresight. Although the city was not chosen for the Model Cities program, the disagreements caused by the application were important and deserved coverage. The authors of the articles did not insert their opinions into the reports. Every opinionated sentence was attributed to a person, whether it was Chambers, the mayor, or a councilman.

The *Omaha World-Herald* article was a bit more comprehensive than the *Omaha Star* report because it gave background information on the program. The story also explained that Omaha already applied for the program and was not accepted. The *Omaha Star* article lacked that information, which made the report a bit confusing. Anyone reading the article would need to be well-versed in what the Model Cities program was in order to understand it.

**March 1968**

Civil Rights articles filled Omaha newspapers in March. The first article came out March 1, listing the results of the Kerner Commission. The *Omaha World-Herald* article "Report Blames White Prejudice for Prospect of 'Divided, Unequal U.S.'" includes excerpts from the report such as this one, "What white Americans have never fully understood, but what the Negro can never forget, is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it" ("Report Blames White Prejudice for Prospect of 'Divided, Unequal U.S.," 1968). The report:

- Proposed aid to blacks in the slums.
- Warned equipping police with "mass destruction weapon" would increase, not decrease violence.
- Urged that two million jobs be created in the next three years.
- Called for tax incentives and subsidies for industries in poor rural and urban areas.
- Moved to eliminate employment barriers.
- Increased efforts to eliminate de facto segregation and discrimination.
- Promoted early childhood education for disadvantaged children.
- Proposed aid and federal support for black students pursuing college educations.
- Recommended welfare reform.
- Advocated elimination of the "man in the house rule," "designed to curb illegitimate births among mothers on welfare."
- Supported development of a "national system of income supplementation" to support those with low-paying jobs.

- Outlined steps to provide accessible housing and inexpensive rent to low-income families ("Report Blames White Prejudice for Prospect of 'Divided, Unequal U.S.," 1968).

The next day, the *Omaha World-Herald* released the police's response to the Kerner Commission. Police officials were angry the report suggested officers not be armed. The report reads, "Weapons which are designed to destroy, not to control have no place in densely populated urban communities" ("National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders," 1968, p. 9). The *Omaha World-Herald* article states police were buying armored vehicles, high-powered rifles, and helicopters throughout the country ("Police Open Fire on Riot Report: Say Warning on Weapons Is Senseless," 1968).

Police officials argued these purchases were necessary to keep the peace. Walter Towbridge, Monroe County, Michigan chief deputy said, "I don't think the commission's comment makes much sense at all. Officers must have weapons for their own protection and they must be equipped to immediately apply whatever force is needed. It isn't something you can get tomorrow or next week, if you need it now" ("Report Blames White Prejudice for Prospect of 'Divided, Unequal U.S.," 1968). The *Omaha World-Herald* article makes it clear many people opposed the findings of the Kerner Commission. People did not like that the report suggested law enforcement and white racism was the cause of the 1960s violence.

The *Omaha World-Herald* discussed the report again on March 3, 1968. George H. Mahon, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said the report's proposals were financially "unrealistic" ("Report on Disorders: Riots May Turn into Rebellion if Multibillion-Dollar Measures Not Taken," 1968). The report suggests the U.S. government make changes to prevent rebellion among the black community. In addition, the report recommends financial support for blacks.

Another March 3 article published by the *Omaha World-Herald* calls the report an "outrageous whitewash." The article, written by black conservative George Schuyler, explains it is not the government's fault many black people have "poor job prospects." He said, "What's new about that? Haven't the untrained and unwilling always had poor job prospects? And who has stopped the people in the slums from visiting a library, attending their district political club, and registering and voting" ("Negro Author, Editor Calls Report on Riots an 'Outrageous Whitewash,'" 1968).

Schuyler claimed the report unfairly blamed white people for black people's troubles and "racial trauma." He also argued prejudice or pre-judging people is simply choosing who you want to be around. He said, "There is nothing wrong with prejudice and discrimination per se. Without them, we would be devoid of individual personality and the ability to act in new situations" ("Negro Author, Editor Calls Report on Riots an 'Outrageous Whitewash,'" 1968).

The *Omaha World-Herald* also published Wallace's thoughts on the Kerner Report in preparation for his March 4 convention at the Civic Auditorium. Wallace blamed riots on "militants, activists, communists and revolutionists" and claimed the report "criticized the mass of American citizens" ("Wallace Takes Crack at Report on Riots," 1968).

The rest of the article and the other articles published by the *Omaha World-Herald* March 4 focus on expectations for Wallace's rally. The articles explain Wallace needed signatures to create his new American Party ("Marsh to Observe Wallace's Meeting," 1968). The newspaper was one day behind. No one expected the rally to end with such violence.

Most of the *Omaha World-Herald* articles about the Kerner Commission display accuracy, judgment, selection, and foresight, but one news story lacks those four key elements. The articles "Police Open Fire on Riot Report: Say Warning on Weapons Is Senseless," "Report

Blames White Prejudice for Prospect of 'Divided, Unequal U.S.," "Report on Disorders: Riots May Turn Into Rebellion if Multibillion- Dollar Measures Not Taken," and "Wallace Takes Crack At Report on Riots 1968" are all well-researched, give multiple opinions and sources, and present facts logically.

The articles about white prejudice and the multibillion-dollar expenses list facts and proposals from the Kerner Report. They also provide reasons those proposals may not be feasible, mainly financial. The two articles balance each other. One leans in favor of the report and its proposals. The other shows the downfalls of the report, ultimately leading to its dismissal. The proposals would bolster the black community by giving blacks access to more equal education, improving the welfare system, and helping working and non-working adults. However, the proposals were very costly and many government officials did not agree with spending billions of dollars to "fix" the disparities between the black and white communities.

The article about police officials' reaction to the report also follows Martin and Nelson's press performance standards. The *Omaha World-Herald* was right to include the opinions of the police because this shows a different side of the report. Many people believed the purchase of weapons by police was unnecessary. The *Omaha World-Herald* article gave officers the platform to explain themselves. The report shows foresight because weapons, owned by both civilians and police officers, sparked conflict after the Wallace convention.

In addition to the police reaction, the *Omaha World-Herald's* inclusion of Wallace's opinion was essential because his convention was the same day. The article gave Omahans a preview of Wallace's speech, confirming people's support or opposition to Wallace.

The *Omaha Star* published no articles about George Wallace leading up to his convention. The weekly newspaper did not have an issue published in the last week of February

or the first week of March. Therefore, any article about Wallace needed to be published two weeks in advance. The newspaper did not show foresight because it did not talk about Wallace until after the riot on March 4. However, since the newspaper only came out once a week and skipped a few issues, it is understandable that Wallace was not mentioned until after his convention and the Omaha riots.

The *Omaha Star* did publish an article addressing the Kerner Commission on March 7. The *Omaha Star* article gives a comprehensive list of what the report included, similarly to the *Omaha World-Herald* article. The *Omaha Star* emphasized the conclusion of the report, "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white--separate and unequal" ("Movement Toward Two Societies Must Stop," 1968). The *Omaha Star* article is well-researched and shows accuracy, selection, judgment and foresight. The article includes facts from the report and officials and emphasizes the importance of the Kerner Commission and the conclusions drawn from the report.

Omaha newspaper articles published in March quickly shifted their focus from the Kerner Commission to Wallace's visit--and the aftermath. The city exploded March 4, the day Wallace or "the face of racism" (Grace, 2018) was scheduled to speak. Wallace arrived at Eppley Airfield on March 3<sup>rd</sup> to chants of "Sock it to me, Black Power!" from demonstrators outside the airplane terminal. Howard (2006) states:

The Omaha Police Department guessed that over 1,500 people had gathered to either welcome or denounce Wallace. Both groups vigorously pumped signs in the air ranging from 'Wallace Go Home' to 'Welcome to Nebraska,' from 'Anarchy in the Street is from Racism in the States' to 'We Conservatives Must Stick Together'" (p. 57).

Omahans had very different opinions of Wallace. Some were supporters, while others detested Wallace's political beliefs and overt racism. The second Wallace stepped off of the plane, it was clear Omahans' disagreements surrounding Wallace would lead to conflict.

Both the *Omaha Star* and the *Omaha World-Herald* reported on that conflict. *The Omaha World-Herald* published more than 15 articles surrounding Wallace's convention and the events that ensued. The articles show detail and multiple points of view. The *Omaha Star* articles were a bit lagging because it only published weekly. The *Omaha World-Herald* delivered timely stories, unlike the *Omaha Star*. However, the *Omaha Star*'s articles showed foresight because they reflect on the events and discuss their impact on the city and black community.

The day after Wallace arrived in Omaha, he came to the University of Nebraska at Omaha campus to speak in Professor Richard Marvel's political science class. By 1:30 p.m., 500 protesters gathered in the parking lot, voicing their opinions of Wallace. Protestors held signs reading "Burn Bigot Burn," "Let Me Go to Jail and Wallace Go to Hell," and "When will the Civil War End," according to the *Omaha World-Herald* article "Wallace Claims Victory" (1968).

Wallace took notice of the signs and informed the class that he did not care for the 'pseudo-intellectuals' outside. Wallace is quoted in the *Gateway* campus newspaper as saying, "If I get to be president and one of the anarchists lays down in front of my car, it will be the last one he lays under" ("A Day of Stupidity," 1968). Wallace made it clear immediately he had no interest in anyone else's opinions, especially if they contradicted his own.

Protestors, including youths and Catholic nuns, marched with signs outside of the Omaha Civic Auditorium an hour before Wallace's scheduled appearance, chanting, "We want Freedom--Send Wallace Home." They held signs reading, "Racism is UnChristian" and "What

Color is God, Governor?" North Omaha neighborhood associations leaders and Omaha Catholic priests organized the protest. They did not expect the peaceful protest to turn into a riot (*Omaha World-Herald*, "Turmoil Marks Wallace Party Meeting," 1968).

Omaha police officers came up to the crowd and moved the high school protestors into a reserved section inside the auditorium, immediately adjacent to Wallace's stage. The adult marchers tried to chaperone the high schoolers and asked the officers if they could sit with the young protestors. The officers denied their request, saying the reserved section was full. Instead, officers led them to the balcony (Howard, 2006, pp. 59-60).

The Civic Auditorium had 1,400 seats, but more than 5,400 people crowded inside. The mass of people made the auditorium stifflingly hot. Roster clerks sat inside the convention, campaigning for people to join Wallace's new American Party. Both supporters and protestors sang the national anthem and said the Pledge of Allegiance. Wallace took the stage at 9 p.m. A few moments later, an unknown person released stink bombs in the auditorium, leaving a vomit stench throughout the room, according to the *Omaha World-Herald* article "Fire Bombs are Thrown, Six Arrested" (1968).

Student protestors, sitting adjacent to the stage, began tearing their signs and throwing them onstage. Howard (2006) states, "When Wallace gave the signal, 'it is people like you' and pointed down at the youth, the melee began" (p. 61). A police officer walked down the main aisle and told protestors to get out.

Protestors ignored the officer, who started tapping people on the leg with his hand, causing one man to jump up. The officer grabbed him. Grace (2018) states, "Then, mayhem...Billy clubs swung. People ran. Chairs flew...Outside, more chaos as some people ran

and others began hurling anything they could find at cars and windows." What started as a convention turned into a full-fledged riot.

The *Omaha World-Herald* described the rush of violence at the rally. Wallace supporters shoved demonstrators. Police hit people with sticks and sprayed them with chemicals designed for crowd control. The article states, "It was over inside the hall within five minutes. But outside, nine windows were broken and here and there a fight erupted between opposing forces," ("Wallace Petitions Draw Enough Names to Put Candidate on the Ballot," 1968). Wallace accused the demonstrators of listening to communists instead of someone "who is assembled peacefully." Although his speech caused a huge commotion, Wallace still received a standing ovation and arrived safely to the car waiting for him outside.

Protestors began gathering in North Omaha. Around 10:30 p.m., reports came in of broken windows on 19<sup>th</sup> street and cars gathering in the Safeway parking lot on 24<sup>th</sup> and Lake streets. About 200 people gathered at 24<sup>th</sup> and Lake streets by 10:40 p.m. James Abbott, a 23-year-old off-duty police officer, checked in with his commanding officer to see if the police needed any help controlling the growing crowd. He worked George Wallace's convention earlier that evening. His officer assigned him and three others to keep a watch over North Omaha ("Daily Nebraskan, 'Omaha, 1968- The Watched Pot Begins to Boil,'" 1968).

Just a few minutes later, Abbott received a radio call to go to the Crosstown Loan and Pawn shop. The owners requested someone guard their store because youths broke the store windows and attempted to tear down security bars. Howard (2017) states:

While Officer Abbott sat inside with his riot gun protecting the store, Howard Stevenson crawled through a broken window and started to open a sliding glass door granting others

access to the shop. The police officer shouted 'stop' and then shot. Abbott fired from a distance of thirty-three feet and the blast nearly tore Stevenson in half (p. 93).

Despite using a riot gun while off-duty, Abbott was never charged with a crime. Two years earlier, Abbot and Stevenson had met at the city's youth-police camping outing in Columbus, Nebraska, meant to decrease the tension between police officers and the young black youth. That camping trip was not enough to stop the violence in March 1968 (Howard, 2017, p. 93).

Chaos escalated throughout Omaha. People threw firebombs at a drugstore, barbershop, private homes, and other buildings. Police arrested six black youths around midnight for suspicion of possessing and using firebombs. The *Omaha World-Herald* reported more than 60 volunteers patrolled North Omaha, instructing protestors to go home and cool off (20 Clergymen, Others Spend Night Trying to Ease Tension 1968).

The protests did not end that night. Attendance numbers dropped at predominantly black schools. Howard (2006) states:

The next morning, one thousand students walked out of Horace Mann Junior High School. By March 8, over 3,500 of the 5,700-total student population at Central, Tech, and North High Schools were absent. White parents and moderate black parents, fearing violence, kept their children home. Those that remained in school wreaked havoc there (p. 64).

A Molotov cocktail, an incendiary device containing flammable liquid, blasted in North High School March 6. That same day, female students from Horace Mann broke windows at Sacred Heart Catholic School. Students also lit bushes on fire outside of Sacred Heart and started a grass fire at North High School. A Tech High student set a trashcan on fire as other students threw rocks at passing cars (Howard 2006, p. 65).

Ernie Chambers urged the youth to stop rioting, according to an *Omaha World-Herald* report. He claimed the media would paint them as troublesome hoodlums. Police officers were stationed in the schools until March 25 to prevent further rioting ("Chambers Quiets Milling Pupils," 1968).

Despite the expulsion of several students from North Omaha area schools due to the violence, the schools worked hard to maintain their normal schedules after the chaotic week. The *Omaha World-Herald* article "Schools Head: Some Expelled After Disorder" (1968) makes it clear the school principals were doing everything in their power to return the schools to normalcy. The article states, "North High Principal Harold Reeves said the school is 'so normal it's almost unbelievable.' He reported attendance 'real fine.'"

Although the tensions died down, Omahans could not forget the violence of early March. The riots scared citizens, and many felt the need to arm themselves in case fights broke out again. Handgun sales tripled at Hansen's Sporting Goods store, and the rifle and handgun sales increased twenty-five percent at J.C. Penney. Howard (2006) states, "Police registration records in Omaha showed that four times as many owners registered pistols in the two weeks after Wallace spoke than had in a comparable period before March 4. The average daily registration before March 4 was thirteen; on March 4, it hit a high of fifty in one day" (p. 67).

Black youths became more militant in Omaha after George Wallace's racist display in the Civic Auditorium, and schools and businesses struggled to repair the damage to their buildings. In addition to the financial burden, the riots strained inter-racial friendships and relationships. In a March 8 *Omaha World-Herald* article, 17-year-old LaWanda Mitchell said, "Since Tuesday, if Negroes were seen with whites, they were called Uncle Toms" ("North High Students: Prejudice is Showing" 1968).

Tension between white and black students came to a head on March 7 near 36<sup>th</sup> and Boyd streets, as 40 white youths marched towards 30 black youths. Howard (2006) states, "Before the police arrived to disperse them, a 15-year-old white girl brandishing a shotgun ran toward the group of black students" (p. 70). The girl was briefly scolded and sent home.

Blacks were not the only Omahans targeted by rioters. The *Omaha World-Herald* reported a North Omaha resident threw a brick at and robbed a young white man in early April 1968. The man suffered a concussion and bruising. However, he did not blame the attack on race-hatred. He said, "I guess we have them (hot-heads) on both sides of the fence" ("Bricks Hew, Then Mind Went Blank," 1968).

The *Omaha Star* published a series of articles addressing the aftermath of Wallace's visit, starting March 7. The newspaper included this quote from an unnamed woman who attended Wallace's convention:

Wallace may have succeeded in forming a third party in Nebraska, but he succeeded in giving credence to the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder's contention that we, indeed, live in a 'racist society' and made prophecy out of the (Kerner) Commission's that we are 'moving toward two societies, one black and one white-separate and unequal ("The Impact of Wallace and the Aftermath," March 7, 1968).

The article goes on to address how Omaha police handled the protests and Wallace's public speaking tactics, which people compared to Hitler. Overall, the first article of the Wallace series was much more critical of the governor than the *Omaha World-Herald*. The *Omaha World-Herald's* reports were more objective than the *Omaha Star's*, which painted Wallace in a very bad light.

The second article in the *Omaha Star's* Wallace series, carried the same sentiment. The article states:

Human Relations Board Chairman Norman L. Hahn voiced a similar sentiment when he declared until Wallace came to Omaha 'we were making much headway toward achieving harmonious race relations.' He predicted that Wallace's visit, and the ensuing events which it triggered, 'will set back race relations in Omaha two or three years'" ("The Impact and Aftermath of Wallace," March 14, 1968).

The *Omaha Star* criticized city officials for letting Wallace visit Omaha because people like Hahn knew the visit would be a detriment to the city. However, Mayor Sorensen argued not letting Wallace speak would go against the freedom of speech rights protected under the First Amendment.

The second article also criticizes how police officers handled protestors at Wallace's convention. The report says Mayor Sorensen thought the police did a superb job handling the riot, but then disproved the mayor's statement, going into detail about the officer's errors.

The article states there was an exit near the center of the auditorium, close to where the protestors were seated, and "...police officers should have removed the protestors by this exit before Wallace arrived. Instead they waited, forming a buffer line between the demonstrators and the platform, which also blocked access to the nearest exit" ("The Impact and Aftermath of Wallace," March 14, 1968). The article claims the police overreacted when protestors disbursed, leaving protestors vulnerable to blows from clubs, fists, and chairs. The article states, "Not only were the protestors fleeing the police, offering no resistance, but they had to ward off physical abuse from the whites attending the convention" ("The Impact and Aftermath of Wallace," March 14, 1968).

The *Omaha Star*'s second installment of the "Impact and Aftermath of Wallace" shows less bias toward Wallace than the first article because it includes the perspectives of several city officials with opposing viewpoints such as Hahn and Sorensen. Hahn thought it was foolish to let Wallace speak, but Sorensen believed it was Wallace's right. The article also states Sorensen thought the police handled the riot exceptionally. The article criticizes the city for allowing Wallace to speak, despite the Mayor's opinion. It states only "an extremely naïve person would not have anticipated reactions of some degree occurring in an emotional environment that circumscribed two polar extremes, black power advocates and white bigots" ("The Impact and Aftermath of Wallace," March 14, 1968).

Both the *Omaha Star* and *Omaha World-Herald* coverage of the Wallace convention, protests, and riots followed Martin and Nelson's four procedures for news coverage. However, the *Omaha World-Herald*'s coverage of the events was much more complete than the *Omaha Star*'s. In addition, the articles published by the *Omaha Star* showed strong opinions, while the *Omaha World-Herald*'s articles remained largely unbiased.

The *Omaha World-Herald* showed strong selection because the articles detailed each event and offered multiple perspectives. The *Omaha World-Herald* reached out to protestors and black students for their opinions, as shown in the article "North High Students: Prejudice is Showing" (1968). The paper also included the mayor and other public officials' perspective's, as in "Schools Head: Some Expelled After Disorder" (1968). The numerous articles published by the *Omaha World-Herald* made it easy to piece the events and history together and see the effect each event had on the ones following. The articles were factual and logical and gave credit to the importance of the events.

The *Omaha Star* only published a few articles on the Wallace convention, protests, and riots. The articles were accurate and showed the black community's unique perspective on the events. However, the paper erred in selection because the articles were written in an editorial style and were largely one-sided. The *Omaha Star* would have gained credibility if it had written the articles in a hard news format. In addition, the newspaper lacked foresight because it only published a few articles about the events, compared to the *Omaha World-Herald's* multitude of articles. The Wallace convention made a huge impact on race relations in Omaha, and it should have been given more coverage by the *Omaha Star*.

Overall, the Omaha newspapers showed how the riots and violence affected both black and white Omaha communities in March 1968. The riots and racial tensions cooled down towards the end of March. No one expected April to bring more pain and misunderstanding between the two communities.

**April 1968**

The city blazed in April 1968. The *Omaha World-Herald* coverage focused on the Micklin Warehouse fire ("Bulldozers Are Used to Check Fire," 1968) and arguments over the Model City Plan ("Negro 'Distrust' Of Council Balks Model City Step," 1968). However, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4 in Memphis, Tennessee dwarfed those problems for many Omahans.

On April 5, the stories shifted to coverage of Dr. King's assassination. People wanted to know what happened, why it happened, and what was next for the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. King was in Memphis to bring attention to and support the city sanitation workers' strike. Hutchinson (2019) states:

On Feb. 1, 1968, Memphis garbage collectors Robert Walker and Echol Cole were crushed to death when a garbage truck malfunctioned. The incident cast a light on the poor working conditions and low wages of sanitation workers, who were prompted by the deaths of the two men to call for a strike. Sanitation workers, all of them black, walked off their jobs on Feb. 12 and set up picket lines, toting signs reading, "I Am a Man."

Dr. King decided to bring national attention to the strike because he was a prominent Civil Rights leader.

He previously led the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955, following the arrest of Rosa Parks, a black woman, after she refused to give up her seat to a white man and move to the back a city bus. For the next decade, King organized nonviolent protests such as his 1963 march on Washington D.C. to demand change for black communities throughout the country. During that march, he "...gave a blistering speech on the National Mall, calling out the federal government for its 'apathy and hypocrisy, its betrayal of the cause of justice'" (Hutchinson,

2019). He hoped he would see the day when people did not judge one another for their skin colors, and his speech was forever remembered as the 'I Have a Dream' speech. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965 (Hutchinson, 2019).

Dr. King and his entourage stayed in the Lorraine Motel in Memphis in 1968 because it was known to be "friendly to African Americans" (Hutchinson, 2019). On April 3, Dr. King spoke to a crowd at the Mason Temple Church. He told the crowd, "I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land" (King, 1968).

The next day, Dr. King planned to have dinner with Memphis minister Reverend Samuel Billy Kyles. King left his motel room to go to the dinner at about 6 p.m. Hutchinson (2019) states, "A bullet hit King in the right cheek, shattering his jaw, several vertebrae and severing his spinal cord. He was rushed to St. Joseph's Hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 7:05 p.m."

More than 100 riots broke out in cities across the country in response to Dr. King's assassination, killing more than 25 people. The riots were especially violent in Chicago and Washington D.C. President Johnson dedicated April 7 as a national day of mourning, and Dr. King's funeral was held at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta on April 8.

Police officers found the fingerprints of James Earl Ray, a convicted robber and prison escapee, on the rifle used in the assassination. Ray was arrested on June 8, 1968 in London and extradited back to the United States, where he spent the rest of his life in prison (Hutchinson, 2019).

The *Omaha World-Herald* kept readers up to date. On April 5, the paper published an in-depth story on the Memphis assassination. The article tells readers what happened to Dr. King, as

well as emphasizes the importance of nonviolence, even after the violent assassination. The news story opens with quotes from President Johnson, who spoke of nonviolence. President Johnson said, "America is shocked and saddened by the brutal slaying tonight of Dr. Martin Luther King. I ask every citizen to stay away from violence that struck Dr. King... We can achieve nothing by violence--it is only by joining together and working together that we can move toward full equality for all of our people" ("Memphis Sniper Kills Martin Luther King," 1968). The newspaper does not tell the story of how Dr. King was killed until the second section of the article.

The second section of the article details how Dr. King was shot and describes the scene of the crime. It also states that police are looking for the assassin and lists basic details of his appearance. Overall, the article is factual and timely, but it shows bias by focusing on nonviolence more than the assassination. The newspaper pushed the president's agenda to mitigate violence. The newspaper should have described what happened to Dr. King first because that was the major piece of news. President Johnson's comments were simply a response to the assassination.

The April 5 paper dedicated an entire page of the newspaper to King's assassination. The articles, "Dr. King's Aide: Don't Give Up Non-Violence," "King Murder Shocks Nation," "Fear for Husband Stalked Mrs. King," "Sniper Kills Martin King in Memphis," and "Omahans Fearful of Wider Race Gap" describe how Dr. King was assassinated and further emphasize the government's focus on nonviolence.

The article on nonviolence is the first on the page, showcasing how the *Omaha World-Herald* focused on nonviolence more than the assassination and pushed the president's agenda. The article states, "Hosea Williams, one of Dr. King's top aides who was standing beneath the

balcony on which Dr. King was shot to death Thursday, called immediately for continued non-violence. 'Let's not burn America down...we must maintain and advocate and promote the philosophy of non-violence,' he said" (Dr. King's Aide: Don't Give Up Non-Violence, 1968). The article goes on to explain Dr. King preached non-violence and people should continue his vision, especially after his death.

The *Omaha World-Herald* articles, "Sniper Kills Martin King in Memphis," "Fear for Husband Stalked Mrs. King," and "King Murder Shocks Nation" describe Dr. King's assassination and how it affected both the country and those close to him. It was essential for the *Omaha World-Herald* to include these articles because Dr. King was a prominent Civil Rights leader and one of the most well-known people in the country.

The newspaper showed foresight, accuracy and judgement in these articles because they truthfully explained the important events. However, the articles lack some selection because they push the president's nonviolent agenda. There is nothing wrong with writing about the nonviolent movement, but the newspaper should have acknowledged the militant movement and why some activists were turning to violence.

Each of the *Omaha World-Herald* articles emphasized nonviolence. The article "Fear for Husband Stalked Mrs. King," (1968) states, "Last week, Mrs. King said nonviolence is still the best instrument of change regardless of what critics say." The article "King Murder Shocks Nation" (1968) states, "Mr. Stokes said he was sure that Dr. King would rather have his death further the cause of Civil Rights than further the cause of violence." The article "Sniper Kills Martin King in Memphis" (1968) states, "Dr. King's aides said he felt he had to lead another demonstration here--and keep it nonviolent." While the nonviolent movement was important to

mention, the articles should have been more focused on the assassination. The articles also should have mentioned the militant movement and the rationale behind it.

The *Omaha World-Herald* article, "Omahans Fearful of Wider Race Gap" follows all four of Martin and Nelson's press procedures. The article is particularly strong in selection and judgement because it includes quotes and opinions from Omahans of different backgrounds. It also addresses how the assassination negatively affected race relations and explains why some people feel they need to turn to violence in order to enact change. The article includes an interesting quote from Raymond Metoyer, listed as a Near North Side business man:

It's a shame on the country. From this the American Negro is going to realize that you can't accomplish anything with non-violence. At least it appears this way. When a non-violent man is struck down this way it certainly seems obvious that you can't achieve your means by non-violent ways. I can't see how it will make anything closer between whites and Negroes ("Omahans Fearful of Wider Race Gap," 1968).

This quote and the article stand out because it is the first *Omaha World-Herald* article of many that acknowledges the downfalls of the non-violent movement.

The article also emphasizes the struggle between the nonviolent and militant movements. It includes this quote from Mrs. Travis Gatus, a former member of the Greater Omaha Community Action Board, "I just hope they think of him and have peace, but I am afraid it won't be that way...I think this will encourage militants to say, 'See there, peace doesn't work to bring equality'" ("Omahans Fearful of Wider Race Gap," 1968). The article does a fantastic job discussing both movements, the struggle between them, and how that struggle affects the country--and Omaha.

The April 5 *Omaha World-Herald* newspaper has a second page completely dedicated to Dr. King. The page consists of one article about Dr. King and photographs of Dr. King with his family and during public speaking engagements. The article follows Martin and Nelson's procedures because it simply gives a timeline of Dr. King's life, his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, and his death (King's Dream: That Nation Would Rise Up to Its Creed, 'the Equality of Man,' 1968).

The *Omaha Star's* April 11 newspaper is largely dedicated to Dr. King. It includes dozens of condolences for Dr. King from people and businesses throughout Omaha such as this one from H & G Brokerage (1968), "In Memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Who Quipped on Love: 'I've Decided to Stick with Love...Hate is too Great a Burden to Bear.'" The newspaper also includes articles about the assassination and the nonviolent and militant movements.

The article "Death of a Prophet" (1968) acknowledges that Dr. King "...as much as or more than any other man... is responsible for the historic political reforms that once seemed to mark the beginning of the end of racism in our society." It gives Dr. King credit for leading the Civil Rights Movement, enacting change, and giving a voice to black Americans--from New York to Nebraska to California.

The article also recognizes that Dr. King was not able to end racism, despite his efforts. The article states:

...he did not conquer racism--not in Chicago, not in the Congress...He was obviously a good man. But against the cold racial contempt of the Northern ethnic neighborhoods, the sudden panic of suburban mortgagors, the impersonal logic of an economic system that had no need of his people and no rationale for saving them, neither world prestige nor spiritual force took effect ("Death of a Prophet," 1968).

The article shows readers the downfalls of Dr. King's teaching, unlike the majority of the *Omaha World-Herald* articles. The *Omaha Star* showed better selection than the *Omaha World-Herald* in the wake of the tragedy of the assassination of Dr. King.

In addition, the article "Death of a Prophet" (1968) discusses the tension between the militant and nonviolent movements and draws conclusions as to why some people involved in the Civil Rights Movement resorted to violence. The article states, "If this apostle of the American Dream could neither shame nor inspire white Americans into honoring the pledges of America, why rely on dreamers? If love isn't the right gimmick, why not see what a little hating will do?" ("Death of a Prophet," 1968). The article follows Martin and Nelson's procedures because it discusses both the assassination and the conflicts surrounding it.

The *Omaha Star* describes how the nonviolent movement was not truly free of violence in the article "A Nonviolent Man--Plagued by Violence" (1968). The article explains Dr. King preached and practiced nonviolence, but people opposed to him used violence to bring him down. On top of his assassination, he was previously a victim of bomb threats and stabbings. The article states, "King's life was threatened regularly, but he refused a guard and often drove to his Southern Christian Leadership Council offices alone" ("A Nonviolent Man--Plagued by Violence," 1968). The article explains how violence followed King. It states even some of Dr. King's followers were starting to feel militancy was necessary for real change.

The *Omaha Star* showed great judgement and selection because it published articles focused on nonviolence, as well as militancy. The article "Says Mrs. Martin Luther King Jr.--'Nonviolence Still Best'" states, "Mrs. King believes that activists must work to create the king of society in which these attitudes can change. 'The nonviolent method confronts people with other people, different people.' ...Mrs. King believes that massive demonstrations are still

effective" ("Says Mrs. Martin Luther King Jr.-- 'Nonviolence Still Best,'" 1968). Recognizing both nonviolence and militancy was essential for balanced news coverage. The *Omaha Star* dedicated large sections of its paper to both movements. The *Omaha World-Herald* only dedicated large sections to the nonviolent movement. Just one, short *Omaha World-Herald* article mentions militancy. The *Omaha World-Herald* articles lack selection because they do not give equal coverage to the two movements.

The *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Omaha Star*'s reports are starkly different. The *Omaha World-Herald* veered sharply from militancy, while the *Omaha Star* focused on it and mentioned possible benefits of increased violence. The *Omaha Star* also reported on the polarization between the white and black communities and the fear of increased violence. The *Omaha Star* showed multiple perspectives, while the *Omaha World-Herald* focused solely on the nonviolent movement, led by Dr. King.

The *Omaha World-Herald* should have mentioned both the nonviolent and violent movements because both were instrumental to the chaos of 1968. According to Gallati's article "Malcolm X & Martin Luther King Jr. Non-Violent v. Violent Resistance in the Civil Rights Movement in the American South" (2012):

Bound by a common goal, but separate by opposing philosophies, these two men were regularly forced to defend and explain their respective movements in the media. While this could be construed as attacks on one another and counter-productive for the ultimate goal of freedom from oppression, it was in fact, beneficial to both movements...the end result was greater understanding for those who actually listened. There was a place for both points of view in the freedom movement.

The *Omaha Star* recognized the importance of both points of view and included them in the newspaper.

Because the *Omaha Star*'s audience was largely black, some readers would likely have been open to the idea of black militancy, while others would have sided more with Dr. King. One reason the *Omaha World-Herald* may not have mentioned militancy is because it did not fit within the majority of their reporters' and readers' political beliefs, mainly white male writers and a white readership. The paper could have lost sales if it promoted and discussed issues that did not fit within its demographic.

Later April issues of the *Omaha Star* and the *Omaha World-Herald* discuss Dr. King's funeral, race riots throughout the country, and an Omaha march. The *Omaha World-Herald* published the first article about Dr. King's funeral. The article focuses on Ernie Chamber's advice for parents to keep children out of school the day of Dr. King's funeral on April 8 as a memorial to Dr. King. Chambers said:

When black men are shot down who range on the spectrum from the infrared anger of Malcolm X to the ultraviolet passiveness of Dr. King, we see that regardless of a black man's philosophy, he is judged in America on the basis of his being black, and this judgment in American carries with it the sentence of death at the hand of any murderer who chooses to do the job ("Rights Activist Says Keep Pupils at Home on Day of King Funeral," 1968).

This *Omaha World-Herald* article shows strong foresight because the author recognizes how the assassination of Dr. King affected Omaha families and communities. The *Omaha World-Herald* also covered the events of the funeral on April 8 with the articles, "King's Death Mourned Throughout the World" and "Negro Leader Laid to Rest to the Echo of Slave Song" (1968).

The *Omaha Star* and *Omaha World-Herald* newspapers reported on the growing unrest throughout the country in response to Dr. King's assassination. The *Omaha World-Herald* reported on riots in Baltimore, Washington D.C., New Orleans, Pittsburgh and other cities. Dozens of people were killed and thousands more were injured ("Big Riots Ease; Toll Now 37," 1968). Omaha remained surprisingly peaceful. People did not riot as they had after Wallace's March visit.

The *Omaha Star* article "Race Riots Could Lead Nation to Fascism, Warns Dr. Martin L. King" (1968) reflects on Dr. King's message in response to the outbreak of riots nationwide. The article states, "Rev. King said that he would continue to teach and preach nonviolence.... But, he added, 'I'm frank enough to admit that if our nonviolent campaign doesn't generate some progress, people are just going to engage in more violent activity.'" The article shows King understood violence would ensue if his campaign failed or ended. Dr. King predicted what happened after his assassination.

Religious and Civil Rights leaders in North Omaha planned a peaceful march on April 7. The *Omaha Star* and the *Omaha World-Herald* both covered the story. Both white and black community members attended the march, including Mayor Sorensen ("March, Service are Planned on Near North Side," 1968). The *Omaha World-Herald* article "Mayor, Black Leaders Call for Nonviolence" (1968) reports, "Between 15 hundred and two thousand persons, mostly Negroes, marched quietly from Twenty-fourth and Ohio Streets to Salem Baptist Church on Sunday for a memorial service to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Hundreds more watched from cars, sidewalks, and store windows along the 14-block route." Mayor Sorensen and Lawrence W. M. McVoy of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People spoke at the service. They urged the crowd to stay focused on Dr. King's dream of nonviolence.

The *Omaha Star* article on the march was much smaller than the *Omaha World-Herald's*. The article "Memorial March Sunday April 7 for the Reverend Martin Luther King" (1968) consists of five photos from the march, paired with quotes from Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech. It does not include as much detail as the *Omaha World-Herald*, but it shows readers the gist of what happened at the march and emphasizes its importance to the city-- especially the black community.

The newspaper coverage of the Civil Rights Movement in April ends with the search for Dr. King's assassin. James Earl Ray was not yet identified and was not captured until June 1968. The *Omaha World-Herald* article "FBI Pushes Hunt for King's Killer" (1968) explains the FBI first thought King's assassin was 37-year-old Eric Starvo Galt. The article states, "*Associated Press* checks disclosed that FBI agents had contacted persons named Galt in several states, including Virginia, Alabama, and Florida...Police sources in Memphis disclosed Sunday that the FBI was withholding nationwide distribution of a composite drawing of Dr. King's killer." The article was short and to the point. It did not include much detail because so little was known about the alleged assassin.

The *Omaha World-Herald* article "FBI Pushes Hunt for King's Killer" (1968) follows Martin and Nelson's procedures because it gives an accurate, largely unbiased description of the search for King's killer. The *Omaha Star* did not include an article about the hunt for King's assassin in April, showing a lack of foresight. The search for the murderer was monumental, and it should have been reported by both newspapers.

Overall, the newspaper coverage by the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Omaha Star* was accurate and showed excellent judgement and foresight. The newspapers gave factual descriptions of the April events and saw the importance of the incidents to the country and to

Omaha. The *Omaha Star* should have covered a few topics such the search for King's assassin, more comprehensively. It was difficult for the *Omaha Star* to include every story because the paper was only published once a week. In general, the newspaper had good selection because it reported on the most current events.

Some of the *Omaha World-Herald* articles lacked selection because they did not acknowledge the growing militant movement. The newspaper pushed the president's nonviolent agenda, instead of showing both perspectives. The *Omaha Star* reports were more balanced than the *Omaha World-Herald's* because they included stories and quotes from people of both opinions.

**Conclusion:**

The *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Omaha Star* followed Martin and Nelson's four press procedures (accuracy, selection, judgment, and foresight) in the majority of their articles, but the *Omaha Star* followed the procedures more closely than the *Omaha World-Herald*.

The procedure the *Omaha World-Herald* struggled most with was selection. Some of the *Omaha World-Herald* reports were one-sided. The greatest example of this is the January 3 article on the lack of dentists in North Omaha. The *Omaha World-Herald* did not ask the opinions of residents in need of healthcare. Instead, the newspaper published statements from dental schools, which claimed black people were simply not interested in studying dentistry. The *Omaha World-Herald* also rarely mentioned the tension between the violent and nonviolent movements. The newspaper should have discussed the importance of both movements because the anger surrounding them caused the 1968 havoc.

The procedure the *Omaha Star* struggled most with was foresight. For instance, the newspaper did not publish a major story on the Orangeburg, South Carolina Massacre. The massacre was not local, but it spurred fear and hatred nationwide. The newspaper should have picked up on the importance of the event.

The *Omaha World-Herald* and *Omaha Star* newspapers give insight on what it was like to live in 1968 Omaha. The prejudice, fear, hatred, and empathy felt by communities throughout Omaha pours through the pages of the two newspapers. The newspapers showed different perspectives. The *Omaha World-Herald* largely printed the articles and opinions of white men, while the *Omaha Star* was more cognizant of the black community's attitudes and beliefs.

The newspapers made clear the misunderstanding between the white and black communities. People were afraid of the violence of the Civil Rights Movement. Some people did

not understand what spurred that brutality. Howard (pp. 107-108) states, "During riots blacks spontaneously took control of their ghettos, and 'the ordinary patterns of authority and property relationship were set aside.' In essence, this is what rioting...came to mean. A taking back of power, an assertion of self, black rioting in the 1960s became the ultimate cry for autonomy."

The *Omaha World-Herald* showed how oblivious some citizens were of the inequalities present in the city. The *Omaha Star* helped black community members share their fight for equal rights.

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