

SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

# Martin Luther King, Jr.

THROUGH THE LENS OF  
THE IVAN ALLEN DIGITAL  
ARCHIVE

STEPHEN DUNLAP AND KEVIN CHO





# THE 1960'S

"THE CITY TOO BUSY TO HATE"

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The 1960's for Atlanta was marked by both economic and social growth. This period of progress was primarily overseen by Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr., who served two terms in office and served as a pivotal bridge between the African American community and the majority white business leaders. Under the leadership of Mayor Allen, the city of Atlanta attracted new investors ranging from the Braves to the Falcons. Through his temperate leadership, his legacies of urban leadership and social equality echo in the streets of Atlanta today and are reflected in the progressive city she is today.

# **GROWING PAINS**

*THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT*

# GROWING PAINS



In all of its growth, Atlanta was sure to arrive at a junction when the city's divisive and polarizing stances on the issue of civil rights would become an impediment to the growth of the city; for Atlanta, it occurred under the leadership of Allen as well as Martin Luther King, Jr., a prominent African American leader who spearheaded the civil rights movement with his charisma and vision for the future: a world where no racial barriers exist. In his memoir, *Mayor: Notes on the Sixties*, Ivan Allen depicts the truths of his tenure and reveals the inner workings of Atlanta from his perspective. Simultaneously, King was also leading the African American community through non-violent protests in his advocacy for equality. Inevitably, Allen and King's paths cross multiple times, and they together work towards a common goal of moving the city of Atlanta forward.

Quickly to Allen, King became the personification of the fight to gain equality and more importantly, a guiding hand during his mayoral tenure. His respect and admiration for him is reflected in the way that King impacted Allen's views. On one of Allen's visits to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) offices to chat with King, King gives Allen a copy of his book, *Where Do We Go from Here : Chaos or Community?*. Allen notes that this book became an "extension of the chats... to guide me in whatever I did as mayor" (Allen, 195). The flexibility and docility of Allen to the teachings of King reflects the relationship that Allen and King shared was one in which it was "slow and late in blooming, mainly because I was up to my ears with the daily routine in Atlanta's City Hall, and he was trying to carry the civil-rights cause to every corner of the nation" (Allen, 195). To Allen, his relationship with King was one between two civil rights leaders who could collaborate to steer the city of Atlanta in the right direction in which racial barriers no longer existed. However, the Ivan Allen Digital Archive reveals additional perspectives and voices in the city of Atlanta in which at the time, was under the leadership of Lester Maddox, and these complicate the narrative of King that has been painted by Allen. It unveils that more communities and organizations, mostly composed of southern racists and traditionalists, sought to neutralize King's efforts than supported him during the civil rights movements; it also unveils the true progress that Atlanta had made in its race for social equality.

**KING**

**AND**

**ALLEN'S**

**RELATIONSHIP**

# A CLOSER LOOK AT THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

**1**

*Communist Influences*

"A Training School for  
Communists"

**2**

*Embedded Racism*

"Prize for Strife"

**3**

*A Witchhunt*

"Martin Luther Kings'  
Record"

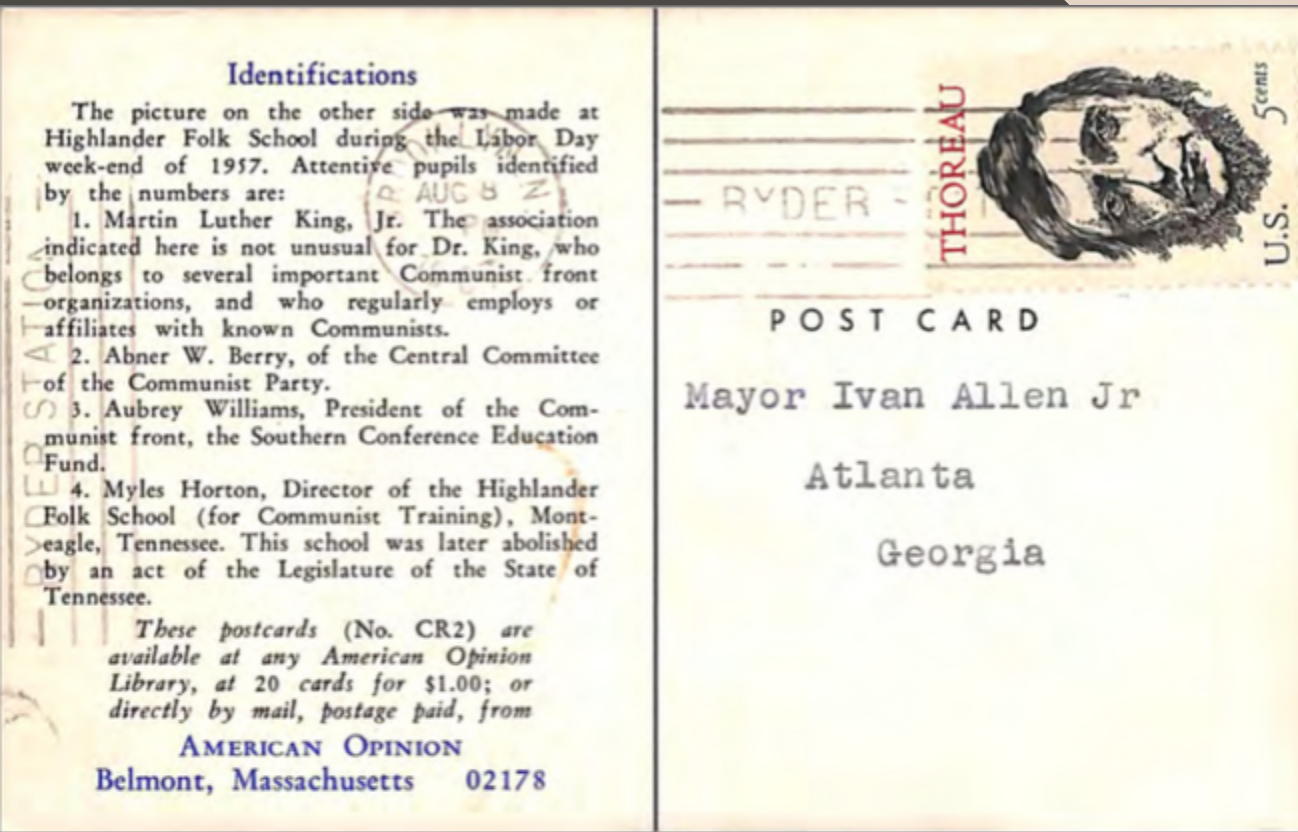
**4**

*Honoring King*

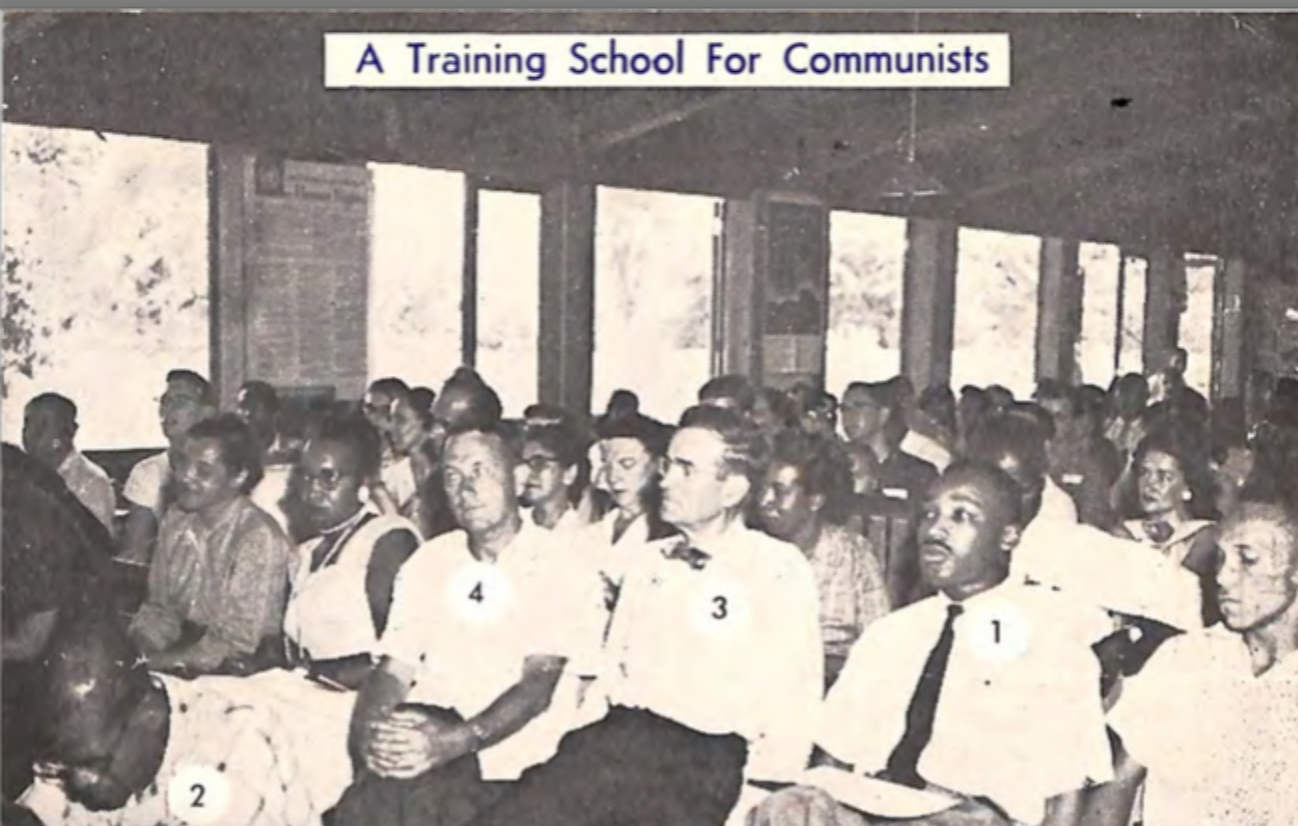
"Proclamation"

# 1 Communist Influences

"A Training School for Communists"



This postcard, which was mailed to Mayor Allen, depicts the divided opinion among the general population by calling him a communist. The 1960's were a tumultuous time for politics in America. With the Red Scare and the Soviets and the U.S's relations, there was a heavy negative connotation with the word "communist", and by attaching this negative descriptor to Allen and associating him with real communist leaders Abner W. Berry and Aubrey Williams automatically categorizes him with the "bad side". This common contempt and animosity towards the idea and the followers of communism was uniform across the nation, unlike the issue of civil rights, and it was because many believed that it was a massive threat to the national security of the United States. There would only be negative repercussions from associating King with the communists. Even his majority African American audience would be taken aback at the accusation as at the end of the day, the one thing that both whites and blacks shared was their citizenship and their concern for the national security of the country. This shared characteristic emboldened many white supremacists to take action and publish false information about King and his companions. In addition, by mass producing this and placing it on a postcard, they were able to reach a wide audience with their false accusations of King, and the postcard repudiates the narrative that Allen creates about the support that King received. Though he might have had a strong base of supporters in Atlanta, anywhere outside of it was mostly comprised of staunch segregationists. It is important to remember that many American heroes that we so dearly celebrate today were once ridiculed and demonized by the rest of society. The fact that we remember them as heroes today surely is a mark of societal progress.

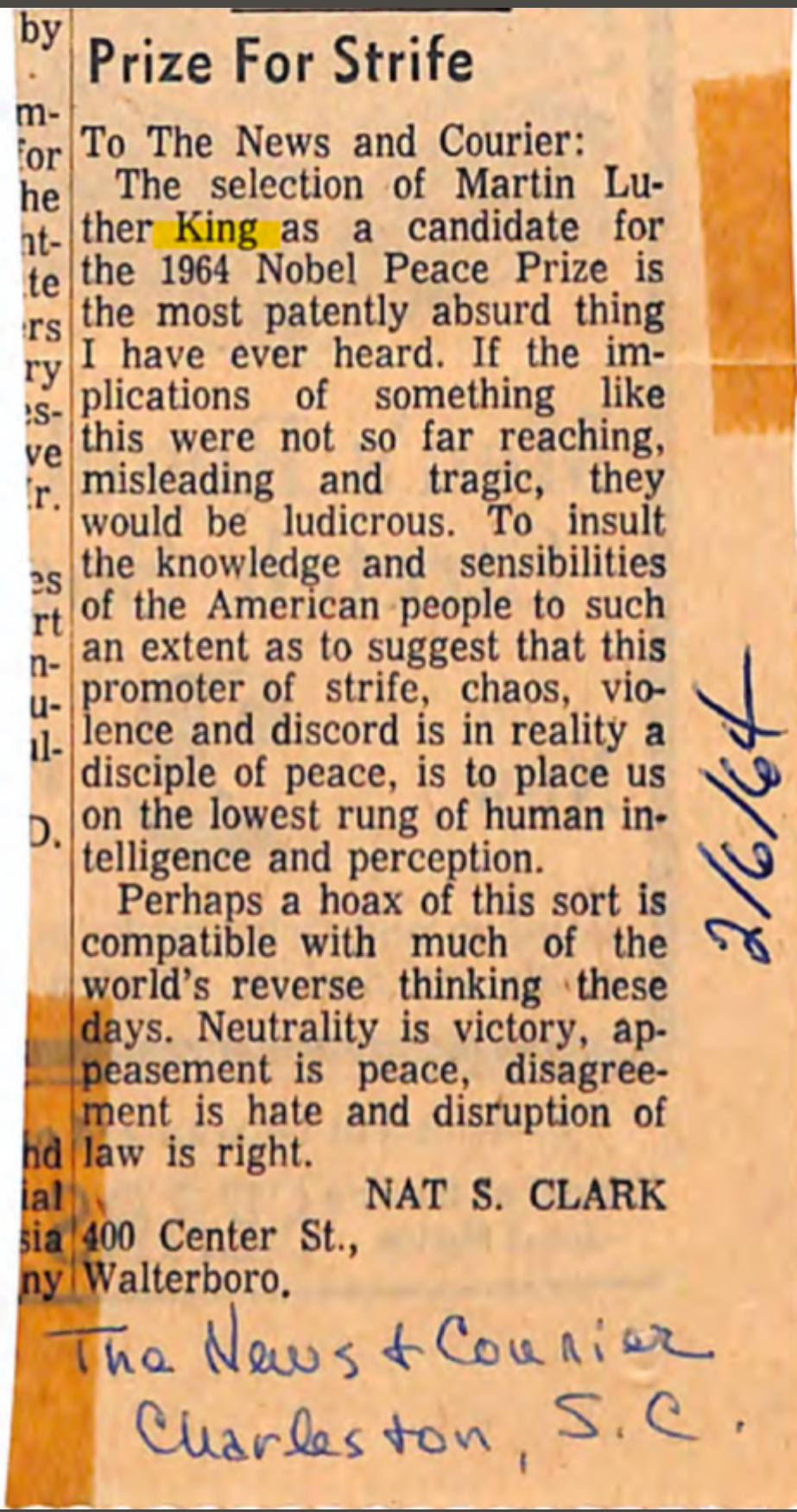


Box 16 Folder 8 Page 83  
From the Crackpot Letters: King at a  
Communist Meeting

# 2 Embedded Racism

"Prize for Strife"

This depicts a newspaper clipping from Allen's mayoral archive that writes about the 'absurdity' of King's nomination for the nobel prize. The scathing diction of the title reflects the attitude and view of King that the author holds. Inserting irony into the title of the column, he inserts a sense of humor and derides King for his nomination. They crown him saying he is receiving a "Prize for Strife", essentially claiming that he doesn't deserve the award as he only created chaos and bitter disagreement across the nation. The writer further accuses King as a "promoter of strife, chaos, violence, and discord." Second, the writer creates a sense of unity between the reader and the writer by creating a barrier between them and King. He implies that King receiving this award is rather an insult to anyone who didn't receive the award, insinuating that they are of the "lowest rung of human intelligence and perception"; however, this rather unveils the underlying racist tones of the passage as this insult implies that King is of the lowest rung of human intelligence and perception as they think they deserve the award more than King does. Finally, the writer goes on to claim that the world is in a state of reverse thinking claiming that "Neutrality is victory, appeasement is peace, disagreement is hate and disruption of law is right." Clark, again, projects his view onto the reader; however, there are clear logical fallacies that outline this argument. The most prominent is a post-hoc. Even if the world had been somehow in reverse thinking at the time, claiming that King's nomination only occurred as a result of his nomination being after the world had been in a state of reverse thinking is an empty argument. In addition, Clark uses a sweeping generalization to apply the trends of the world to the single event of King being nominated for the award and applies a very broad generalization to a single premise. This except goes to show the stark contrast between Allen's respect and relationship with King versus the hate and accusations that white superemacists showed towards him. Their objection to King's Nobel Prize nominations shows the noticeable divide in views on racial equality both in the Atlanta and in the rest of the country.



Box 16 Folder 7 Page 68

From the Crackpot Letters: Candidate for the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize

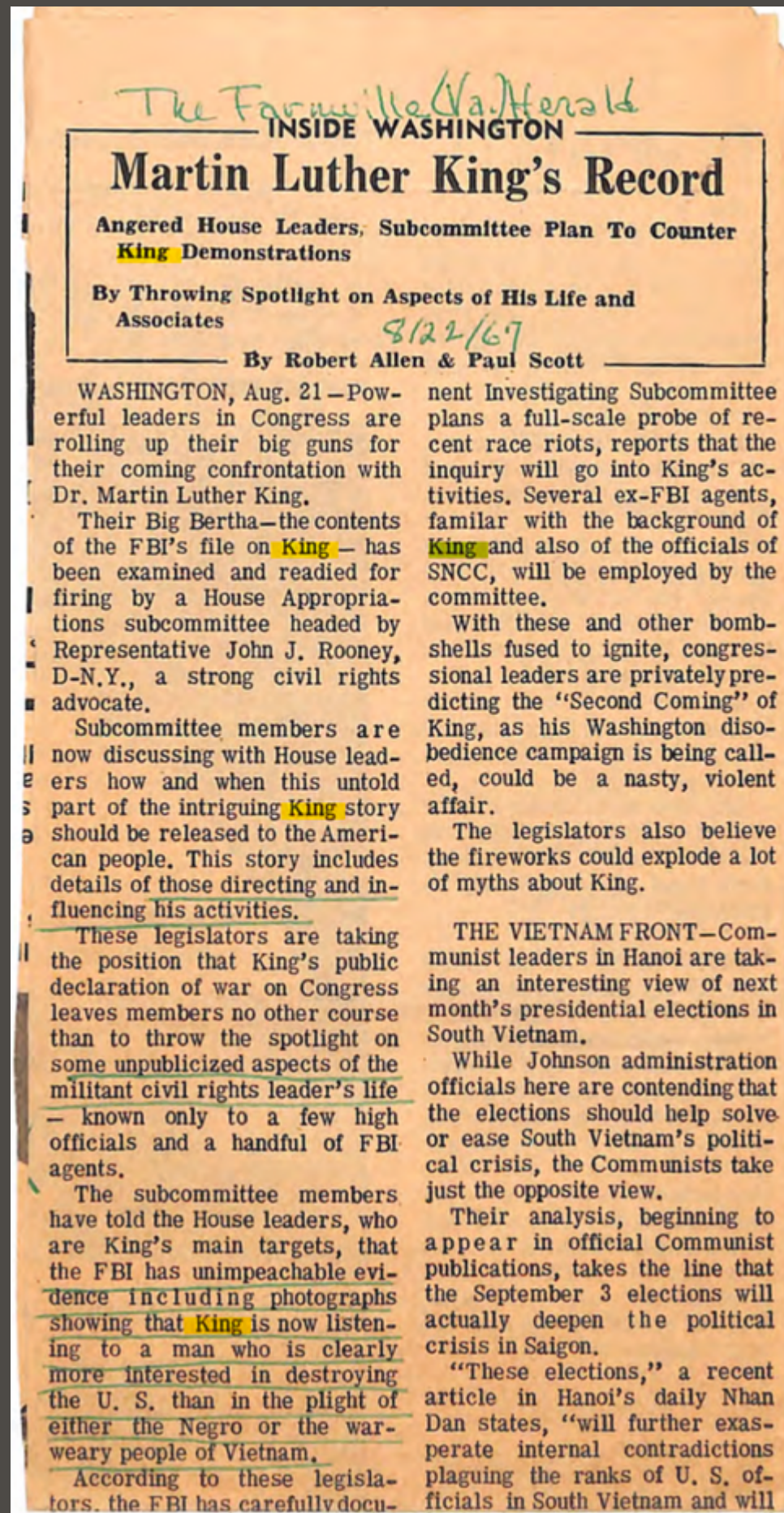


# 3

## A Witchhunt

"Martin Luther Kings' Record"

In this article, Allen and Scott write about exposing King and his private life. Though they don't mention it explicitly, it is implied that King participated in events outside of his leadership that shows his "interest... in destroying the U.S." Once again, it hints at King's involvement with the communists and illuminates the question of national security among readers to create a sense of unity and suspicion about King. In Senate Committee Report on the FBI's Campaign Against Martin Luther King, 1963-1968 (1976), it is revealed that the methods that the FBI used against King to neutralize his efforts were "similar techniques against Soviet agents." (Griffith 187). The FBI investigation sought to discredit King in any way possible hoping to isolate King from his role in the civil rights movement. News stories like this fed into the desperate attempts of white supremacists to demonize King to the black community. They even tried blackmailing King and hoped to replace him as the leader of the black community. In addition, the FBI attempted to shut down the SCLC by sending letters forged with King's signature to their donors. Even after King's death, they continued to try to ruin his reputation by trying to convince congressional leaders not to vote in favor of Martin Luther King day. While great progress in the civil rights movement had been made, this reveals that the extreme opposition and divide between the state and the federal level regarding the civil rights movement.



Box 16 Folder 7 Page 69

From the Crackpot Letters; What does King's day look like?

# 4 Honoring King

## "Proclamation"

On April 5th 1968, closely following the assassination of MLK, Mayor Allen released a proclamation calling upon all citizens to observe and recognize April 8th as the "Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Mourning". This document, derived from the Ivan Allen Jr. Digital Archive, shows the great respect that Allen had for King and confirms the overwhelming influence that King had on Allen and his stance on the civil rights movement. In his proclamation, Allen writes that he hopes "our nation may attain the goal of complete racial justice and racial equality" (Box 9 Folder 24 page 19). Here, Allen mirrors the goals set by King and further voices his support of King in view of the public eye. By doing this, Allen hoped to gain the support of the people and bridge racial divides. Allen's proclamation reflects the relationship with King that he depicts in his memoir where he writes that it was "based on a mutual respect and admiration" (Allen, 195). His stated admiration of King is clear in the proclamation recognizing King as "one of the greatest advocates of the cause of peace among all nations and all races". By crediting King with such monumental accomplishments, Allen backs up his position in the memoir and confirms the great respect that he had for King.

*Proclamation*



CITY OF ATLANTA

*Office of the Mayor*

WHEREAS, The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. takes from Atlanta one of its greatest citizens of all time, who honored his home city in the eyes of all the world when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, and

WHEREAS, this senseless act of violence takes from our nation one of its greatest leaders of all time in the cause of human brotherhood and racial amity, and

WHEREAS, this tragic misdeed takes from our world one of its greatest advocates of the cause of peace among all nations and all races, and

WHEREAS, although the physical presence of this eminent American has been torn from us, his soul will go marching on to inspire all Americans to achieve the goal of equal justice, equal opportunity and equal citizenship for each and every American, regardless of race, creed or color, and

WHEREAS, our Atlanta citizenry joins with all men and women of good will everywhere on our earth, and particularly with the good citizenry of our sister city of Memphis, in deploring the deadly shot whose echoes of hatred resounded around the world and in one tragic instant transmitted a living leader of our present to a martyr of ages to come,

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Ivan Allen, Jr., Mayor of the City of Atlanta, do hereby proclaim Monday, April 8, as

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF MOURNING  
and call upon all citizens to observe that day in honor of the memory of our eminent fellow citizen and to join with me in praying that, with God's help, our nation may attain the goal of complete racial justice and racial equality for which he gave his life.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have  
hereunto set my hand and caused the  
Seal of the City of Atlanta to be affixed  
this 5th day of April, 1968.

Ivan Allen, Jr.  
Mayor

Box 9 Folder 24 page 19

From the Martin Luther King Specific Folder:

Declaration of a day of mourning for King

# ALLEN'S MAYORAL TENURE FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Allen wants the reader to take away that he is a man that stands up for things despite what it might do to his political standing. This was his mindset when he gave his testimony for the bill earlier in the book, and it was his mindset for speaking out against Sam Massell, the mayor that inevitably succeeded his tenure. He emphasizes repeatedly that this was what he did during his tenure: speaking out against what he believed was right. A quote that truly encapsulates his tenure into a sentence is: "I felt very strongly that I had an obligation to speak out, just as I had done so many times during my stay in office" (Allen 232). Reflecting on the legacy and portraits that Allen painted of King and left behind, it is a clear reflection of the early signs of a progressive, liberal Atlanta in the 1960's; however, it is also a reflection of the stagnant, conservative aspect of the rest of Georgia as well as the country. Though the city of Atlanta might have been "a city that was too busy to hate" as it was growing economically and making strides socially, it was also too busy to help getting the rest of Georgia on the same page. And this is reflected in the disagreements and the polarizing portrait of King that the rest of the country had painted of King that is supported by the Ivan Allen Archive versus the portrait that is painted of King in Atlanta under the leadership of Mayor Allen.



Ivan Allen Jr. Digital Collection

# WORKS CITED

Unless otherwise noted, all documents and images used courtesy of the Ivan Allen Digital Archive, Georgia Institute of Technology.

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*Carson, Clayborne. "Between Contending Forces: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the African American Freedom Struggle." OAH Magazine of History, vol. 19, no. 1, 2005, pp. 17-21. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/25163736](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163736).*

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*"Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King, and Ivan Allen, Jr.," Ivan Allen, Jr. Digital Collection, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://ivanallen.iac.gatech.edu/omeka/items/show/28>.*

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Unless otherwise noted, all documents and images used courtesy of the Ivan Allen Digital Archive, Georgia Institute of Technology.

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*WSB-TV (Television station : Atlanta, Ga.), "WSB-TV newsfilm clip of mayor Ivan Allen, Jr. escorting Coretta Scott King away from Hartsfield International Airport immediately after learning about the death of her husband, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Atlanta, Georgia, 1968 April 4," Ivan Allen, Jr. Digital Collection, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://ivanallen.iac.gatech.edu/omeka/items/show/375>.*