Atlanta: "The City too Busy to Hate", the Socioeconomic Compromise that Stunned the South

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The Civil Rights Movement is a time commonly characterized by bold marches, brave sit-ins, and fiery court battles. However, the economic battles waged between America’s elite and Civil Right activists were also pivotal to transforming the Civil Rights Movement from a hopeful idea into a national phenomenon. The unprecedented compromise between Mayor Ivan Allen Jr., Coca-Cola Industries, and the elite of Atlanta, exemplifies the ingenuity of Atlanta’s business sector, not only to attract international business but to also facilitate social justice. As Atlanta’s leading political, business, and religious leaders gathered to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.’s Nobel Peace Prize, they demonstrated to the nation and world that racial disputes could not only be circumvented, but also mitigated by skillful negotiation.

With a theme of “Conflict and Compromise,” civil rights seemed a natural fit. While we wanted to avoid big names, Martin Luther King’s’ ability to negotiate and compromise couldn’t be ignored. As we investigated the controversy around business leaders’ refusal to celebrate Dr. King’s Nobel prize achievement, we were inspired to investigate the economic and moral underpinnings of Coca-Cola’s ultimatum to the Atlanta’s business leaders.

We knew from the beginning of our research that no medium other than a documentary could do our topic justice. The plethora of characters and places within our recounting of the event made it a necessity to display it all in a documentary format. Furthermore, the copious amount of beautiful music that correlated directly with our topic made choosing a documentary an easy choice. With the advantage of technology on our side, we could depict the tension of the time, while also portraying the immensity of Mayor Allen’s and Coca-Cola Industries’ actions.
Mayor Allen, Coca-Cola, and the civil rights activists of Atlanta, took a powerful stand against the institutional racism in Atlanta’s business sector. While change did not come easily, the economics of Atlanta required the fight for racial equality to grow. The often overlooked economics of the Civil Rights movement and the unexpected motivations of characters involved made this event an excellent topic.

We started our research by searching through newspaper databases for anything concerning the event of Martin Luther King Jr.’s celebration dinner. Approaching our research process from a primary source first perspective allowed us to identify all major characters in the Atlanta compromise while also properly composing the story with minimal bias. We then contacted the living authors of these articles to interview. This led to our interview with Ted Ryan a Coca-Cola archivist, and former mayor Sam Massell.

Coca-Cola’s fluid relationship with Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement created one of the first encounters forcing corporate titans to take a public stand concerning the Civil Rights Movement. The combination of our Atlanta interviews, newspaper clippings, and background research allowed us to create a vivid documentary that not only displayed the true motives concerning the Atlanta compromise, but also depicted how Atlanta cemented itself as truly the “The City too Busy to Hate.”
Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources


This New York Times article reported the celebration dinner for Dr. King, which was set for the Wednesday following. The Times reported how the dinner sold a total of 1,400 tickets with 200 requests turned down. The article reported how the dinner was staged to begin at 7:00 pm at the Dinkler Plaza Hotel. While the Dinkler Plaza Hotel initially only held 1200 guest, the building was beginning rearranged to provide for the extra guests, showing the power of the force attracted local figures to the dinner.

“Anti-Vietnam War Protest” *King Rose Archives* 1 April 2013.

This footage of protesters of the Vietnam War depicted the strong opposition to the war that festered throughout the nation. Multiple protests, similar to that depicted in this footage, happened throughout America in the 1960s. The mass media coverage of these protest only further excited anti-war sentiments throughout the nation.


This song is a play on words used in the documentary. This song plays in the back while the narrator depicts the many issues facing Atlanta prior to and after the compromise.
The Atlanta History Center provided us with numerous images of the Civil Rights Movement in Atlanta. These images were very useful and represented the racial tension we wished to depict throughout our documentary.


This article published by the New York Times explored the personal efforts of Mayor Ivan Allen Jr. in his attempt to celebrate Dr. King. The reporter documented how Mayor Allen was personally reaching out to many leaders in the Atlanta community to persuade them to help sponsor the event. This article also pointed out how the opposition to the dinner had grown silent after strong negotiation in favor of the Dr. King’s dinner by Coca-Cola Industries.


Professor Bayor’s interview with Andrew Young was a major asset to our documentary. Young’s incite on the status of Atlanta was essential to understanding the economic oppression that was common there. However, he also explained how a business oriented strategy to undermine racism was the only way to effectively social equality in Atlanta, Georgia.

Bayor, Ronald. Personal Interview. 4 June 2018.

Professor Bayor is the author of Race and Shaping of 20th Century America. He teaches at Georgia Tech and is well versed in the Civil Rights movement in America. He explained to us how Mayor Allen and Coca-Cola were working on economic agendas not
strong moral compasses. He also clarified why the business elites of Atlanta were in strict opposition of Martin Luther King Jr. prior to Coca-Cola’s compromise.


This article examined the mixed responses from political leaders at the announcement of Dr. King's Nobel Peace Prize. Mayor Allen submitted official congratulation to Dr. King, similarly to Robert Kennedy. Dr. King also obtained congratulations from international figures like Pope Paul VI and Dr. Ralph J. Bunche, the first African American to receive the Nobel prize. However, some segregationists were strictly against the decision. Eugene T. Connor, the former Police Commissioner of Birmingham, Alabama consider Dr. King’s selection “scraping the bottom of the barrell.”


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQjNESlXZc>.

This video was the recording of President Lyndon B. Johnson signing into act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964. His signing was strong symbolism of the manifestation of the struggles of the Civil Rights movement. Without economic compromises, as displayed in Atlanta, the Civil Rights movement would have been never have maintained momentum and pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964.


This article described a prime example of why the business elites of Atlanta were
initially in fierce opposition to Dr. King’s celebratory dinner. The reporter documented how the Dr. King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference was in strong support of the Scripto stikes taking place in late 1964. Therefore, Dr. King was disliked throughout the Atlanta business community because he was forging an alliance between the Civil Rights Movement and the Worker’s Rights Movement. Thus, when it came time to celebrate Dr. King for his Nobel Prize many of Atlanta’s business elite were not on board.


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEBlaMOmKV4.

This song spoke upon the hope for change. This song was a constant motivator during the Civil Rights Movement and even today, and helped with the flow of our documentary. This song also foreshadows the change that Atlanta would encounter after the Atlanta Compromise, making it an excellent choice.


This archive had photos which we used in our documentary. The pictures were mostly of Civil Rights activist, and national marches. They demonstrated the struggles and advances of the Civil Rights Movement very well.


http://ivanallen.iac.gatech.edu/omeka/.

This collection of images of former Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen Jr. helped us depict a
large part of our research. It also helped us grasp a bigger overall picture of who exactly Ivan Allen Jr. was. As most politician, the visualization of Mayor Allen was just as important as his beliefs, in regards to public relations.


Dr. King’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech was truly powerful. It helped us to see what role Dr. King played in not only the political side of the Civil Rights Movement but the economical side as well. Dr. King’s honor of the Nobel Prize also depicted how the Civil Rights movement was being observed internationally, and in good light.


This article showed us how the citizens of Atlanta viewed their former Mayor Ivan Allen Jr., and his impact on the city. From integrating key parts of local government institutions, to participating in activities with African Americans personally, Mayor Allen embraced race relations for the betterment of Atlanta.


This is photo of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. marching in Atlanta, at Georgia's Scripto Corporation manufacturing plant strike shows how Dr. King upset many business leaders
in Scripto was one of the United States' most popular pen and pencil manufacturers. In November 1964, Scripto workers left site demanding more equitable pay for skilled and unskilled workers. The strike ended in January 1965. MLK Jr. and the other strikers are carrying signs that say "Scripto. Inc. Employees ON STRIKE for a living wage Local 754 Int. Chemical Workers Union".


This article by the New York Times explained the role Dr. King played in organized the southern Civil Rights movement from his office in Atlanta, Georgia. With the support of millions of Americans, Dr. King led a powerful coalition against the racist institutions plaguing the United States. The unknown author of this article highlights that the Civil Rights would have been nearly dormant without the powerful leadership of Dr. King.


This article by the New York Times described the event of Dr. Martin Luther King receiving the Nobel Prize. The announcement was a surprise to some and an expected outcome to others, nonetheless, Dr. King’s success was major news nationally and internationally. Dr. King believed that his success on the international stage showed that the world public opinion was in favor of the fight for equality.


This article, published in 1964, described the exact moment Dr. King learned he won the
Nobel Peace Prize. At that moment, Dr. King was resting in a hospital after some recent health issues, when he was called by his wife, Coretta Scott King, who informed him that he won the prize. While he did not initially believe the news, supposing it was a dream, he was overjoyed that his efforts were being acknowledged and accepted internationally.

The article also explained how Mrs. King and Dr. King while pursuing their educations.

Massell, Sam. Personal interview. 13 April 2018.

Sam Massell was the mayor of Atlanta immediately following Ivan Allen Jr. He served as the City Council President in 1965, and attended Dr. King’s celebration dinner. His interview focused mainly on how he continued Mayor Allen’s legacy and continued to integrate and diversify Atlanta’s city government. However, Mr. Massell also commented on the role big business played in Atlanta’s history.


This collection of photographs allowed us to view and capture one of the most powerful men in Atlanta at the time, Robert Woodruff. His pragmatic and straight-forward visuals helped cement Woodruff’s mindset that benefited civil rights in the Atlanta compromise. Woodruff’s business mindset was a major catalyst for Coca-Cola’s involvement in Dr. King’s celebration.

Ryan, Ted. Personal interview. 13 April 2018.

This interview was conducted at the Coca-Cola archives in Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Ryan is the senior archivist at Coca-Cola Industries. He was extremely informative, and walked us through the history of Coca-Cola and the Civil Rights Movement in Atlanta. He also
described the relationship Coca-Cola made with the Atlanta community, and how Coca-Cola continues to provide support to the greater georgian community.


This article broke the news that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by 8 Swedish members of Parliament. Dr. King received international fame for leading nonviolent demonstrations against the oppression African Americans were encountering in the United States. The Swedish politicians that nominated Dr. King respected his principle of peace and believed that his strategy would prove the best results for his goals of racial equality.


This song symbolized the emotions of African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement. This song also connected and alluded to how Civil Rights activists would not allow racism and economic subjection deter them from their quest for economic equality in Atlanta’s business sector.


This song was a great metaphor for the determination of Mayor Ivan Allen, Coca-Cola Industries, and Atlanta’s civil rights activist. It also alluded to Coca-Cola’s business mindset that would not allow racism and prejudice to hurt its public relation.

These pictures helped us depict Dr. King’s civil rights ideals and portray the change that needed to happen in Atlanta. They were also used to depict the racial subjection that existed in Atlanta regardless of the “City too Busy to Hate” persona Mayor Allen tried to show to the nation and world.


This article supplied vital information about the Friendship 9, and their influence on the South Carolinian African-American community. The article also went into detail about the struggles surrounding the Civil Rights Movement, during the time of the Friendship 9’s sit-in.


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CBtp8mIgOE>.

This song symbolized what many Civil Rights advocates felt at the time of the Movement. The song portrayed to the viewer the senseless of racism in the business sector of Atlanta, that was all to common.


This article showed us how the city of Atlanta first felt of Dr. King’s Nobel Prize. This article also described how Dr. King initially reacted to the announcement as well. There
were many different opinions of Dr. King winning the prize, but the majority of Atlanta’s elite disagreed with the decision.


We used this video as background footage during our documentary. Our documentary was mentioning Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Right Movement when we presented this video, allowing the viewer to more clearer understand the nature of the movement.

Williams, Cecil. “Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement -- Images of a Peoples’ Movement.”


These pictures helped us compare the Atlanta civil rights movement to the movement throughout the rest of the United States. Giving the viewer the ability to compare the national Civil Rights movement to that which was happening in Atlanta was vital to highlighting the compromise in Atlanta.

**Secondary Sources**


This article spoke of the racial tension in Greensboro, as well as, commenting on the Friendship 9 as a whole. The article went into great detail about the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement, and the relief the “Jail no Bail” strategy brought to the struggle for equality.

This article explained the history of W. E. B. Du Bois in detail. However, the article also explained W. E. B. Du Bois’ connection and relationship to the city of Atlanta. Du Bois explained how Atlanta exhibited characteristics of both southern and northern cities and while doing so added to the character and business sector of Atlanta.


This article enlightened us on the role economics played in Atlanta’s civil rights movement, as well as, the national Civil Rights Movement. This article explained why Atlanta did not want to be labeled as racist by international companies, and the possible consequences if Atlanta was characterized that way.


This short article by Professor Bayor gives a general synopsis of the Atlanta compromise that is the center of our documentary. Professor Bayor highlights how the Atlanta’s white community did not respond to the dinner well, especially since many business leaders believed that Martin Luther King Jr. was bad for business. However,
after pressures from Mayor Allen and the corporate titan Coca-Cola local business elites did support Dr. King and his recent accomplishment.


This song illustrates the need and want for social equality that was prevalent throughout the Civil Rights movement. The song is also fast and lively which is exactly what we wanted to end our documentary with.

“Black History Month: Celebrating the Unsung Heroes of Civil Rights | NY Daily News.”

This article centered around Mayor Ivan Allen, and the large role he played in Atlanta’s civil rights movement. The article also highlighted many of the racially progressives practices he instated and the local government level as well, in an effort to label Atlanta as racially moderate.


This article explained the gigantic role Coca-Cola played in compromising with Atlanta’s elite and celebrating Dr. King. The celebration dinner would not have happened with Coca-Cola’s help.


This article explained Coca-Cola’s tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. Coca-Cola honored Mr. King for his non-violent protests and continued effort throughout the Civil Rights Movement and for also being born in Atlanta where Coca-Cola is headquartered. Dr. King’s nonviolent protests made him an excellent recipient for Coca-Cola’s award.


This blog post was a strong starting point for understanding why Coca-Cola Industries was able to force many of Atlanta’s elite into accepting Dr. King’s celebration dinner, and supporting the movement. The blog also cited many resources that were vital for the documentary’s success.

Crawford, Vicki. Telephone interview. 11 April 2018.

Ms. Crawford is the Director of Archives at the King Collection at Morehouse. Ms. Crawford gave us important insight on the life and legacy of Dr. King. She also explained to us that Coca-Cola’s decision to support Dr. King’s dinner was one of economic protection not moral sensibility.

Hale, Sheffield. “An Award for All Mankind, a Dinner for One — the Atlanta Nobel Prize Party for MLK, given by the City’s Image-Conscious White Leadership.” SaportaReport, January 19, 2015. https://saportareport.com/an-award-for-all-mankind-a-dinner-for-one-the-atlanta-nobel-prize-party-for-mlk-given-by-the-citys-image-conscious-white-leadership/. This well-written article is explains the many parties, and their motivations, that were a part of this dinner. This article also explained the anger that many of Atlanta’s elite expressed once they were invited to the dinner.

Hatford, Bruce. “The Year of 1961.” Civil Rights Movement -- History & Timeline, www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis61.htm. This detailed accounting of the Civil Rights Movement, elaborated upon the Friendship 9 and Greenville sit-ins with great detail. The site revealed unfound information about the lives of the Friendship 9 before the sit-in, and was a gateway to many other sources concerning “Jail No Bail.”


This short synopsis of Mayor Ivan Allen Jr.’s life was a brilliant launchpad for deeper research into his past. However, this article also explained the motivations of Mayor Allen. Mayor Allen was pushing to make Atlanta a racially progressive city to attract business and protect sales. However, there is also evidence that Mayor Allen himself was racially progressive morally.


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUZOKvYcx_o.

This beautiful song fits perfectly with our documentary theme and topic. Thus, we believed it was a perfect fit for the Atlanta compromise and found it useful depicting the history, and emotions of the time.


This article detailed the Atlanta compromise between Mayor Allen, Coca-Cola Industries, and the white elite of Atlanta in a new and interesting way. Moye explained the pivotal this event played in Coca-Cola’s history, and how the event changed Atlanta for the better.

This well-written book explained how Coca-Cola companies operate, and the role the Civil Rights Movement played in Coca-Cola history. However, the book also explained how the consequences Coca-Cola could have faced if they would not have stood up for racial justice in Atlanta in 1965.


This Atlanta Journal article provided a vivid recounting of the entire event. Reporter Ernie Suggs explained the importance of compromise and greater movement with great detail and accuracy.


This source was a great introductory website to captivate our interests and guide our research further. This article explained the role the Jewish community played in the Civil Rights Movement, and how the Jewish worked hand-in-hand with Dr. King in Atlanta. This website also provided pictures of Dr. Kings with Jacob Rothschild at Dr. King’s Nobel Prize celebration dinner.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Pk_oHxy15M.

Mr. Pharrell’s musical variety and empowering vocals reflect the emotions of the Civil Rights Movement well. Freedom also alluded to the state of African American after the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.