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Proposal

During the civil rights movement, African Americans looked to major leaders in the movement to lead, such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. However, underneath all of the charisma and speeches, another group was in support of the movement: the women who organized it all. Women were rarely placed in the spotlight because of their inability to take leadership in the civil rights movement. Major leaders such as King were particularly sexist in this respect, by preventing women's presence in his group of advisors, or by letting them take major leadership within the movement. The proposed essay will question why women were unable to take leadership in the civil rights movement, and will focus primarily on civil rights activist Ella Baker as an example of women's struggle for leadership.

The main person that this paper will focus on as evidence of this struggle is civil rights activist Ella Josephine Baker. As a member of African-American rights groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Baker was a critical part of the movement. In many interviews, Ella Baker outlines her struggle within the movement's system, and her inability to be taken seriously beyond being an organizer. For example, when she first moved to work with the SCLC, Baker was placed in a role as a secretary, working out of a hotel room and sending out memos to other members of the SCLC.

Ella Baker is an excellent example of women in the civil rights movement because she was present and involved throughout the entire effort. She joined the NAACP in the 1920s and worked with them tirelessly through the peak of the movement, in the 1950s and 1960s, when

she joined forces with the SCLC and helped to form the SNCC. She understood the entire movement over much of the twentieth century.

This paper will address many important issues, and may be somewhat controversial in the way that it challenges traditional views of the civil rights movement. This paper will make accusations against organizations that are well respected amongst Americans, such as the SCLC, for being sexist. Primary sources accuse extremely influential leaders such as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for sexism against women within the movement, more specifically, Ella Baker. In order to prove this accusation, primary sources must be found that explicitly prove the sexism of somebody like King.

Another issue that this topic may face is the problem of Ella Baker's involvement in the civil rights movement is that Ella Baker actually *was* able to achieve some amount of influence in the movement after spending large portions of her time working for it. Her struggle should be enumerated so that it is easier to understand the difficulty to become an influential leader. Many people may make the argument that women were always important as organizers, and had the ability to influence their male counterparts, who served as leaders. This paper will argue that despite this, the credit that important women such as Ella Baker deserve exceeds the praise that they received for their organization.

Of all of the sources being used or considered in this research, the most important are the primary sources, especially those provided by Ella Baker herself. In addition, Baker wrote articles for journals, such as "Bigger Than A Hamburger" in *Southern Patriot*, and conducted interviews with Eugene Walker, Susan Thrasher, and Gerda Lerner. The interviews are most likely the most informative of all primary sources because she gave long explanations for her experience as an important member of the civil rights movement. The articles are informative as

well because they were written to influence other members of the movement and make an impression on them.

Secondary sources have proven to be easy to find, and many have been extremely informative. Secondary sources on the civil rights movement have varying and diverse topics. The books by Joanne Grant and Barbara Ransby have been the most informative, as they focus primarily on Ella Baker. It is from those books that many primary sources were found, in addition to secondary sources that pertain to more than just Baker specifically. Many sources were obtained on Martin Luther King Jr. and also on organizations that Baker was involved in, such as the SCLC and then SNCC.

Ella Baker took issue with civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and his apparent sexism towards women as major leaders. This paper looks to enumerate first why she felt that leadership such as King's was not as productive, and secondly, how this inhibited her ability to influence and progress the movement because of her gender.

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The civil rights movement. At the end of World War II , African Americans were poised to make far-reaching demands to end racism . They were unwilling to give up the minimal gains that had been made during the war.Â Direct nonviolent action by African Americans achieved its first major success in the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott of 1955â€“56, led by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.Â In April 1960 leaders of the sit-in movement organized the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In the spring of 1961, to defy segregation on interstate buses, â€œfreedom ridesâ€ in Alabama and Mississippi were organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) under its national director, James Farmer . Greensboro sit-in. The civil rights movement (1865â€“1896) aimed to eliminate racial discrimination against African Americans, improve their educational and employment opportunities, and establish their electoral power, just after the abolition of slavery in the United States. The period from 1865 to 1895 saw a tremendous change in the fortunes of the black community following the elimination of slavery in the South. Martin Luther King Jr.'s search for racial justice and black citizenship often found him protesting the gap between American democracy's lofty rhetoric and its more brutal reality, says Peniel Joseph. This gap continues to grow in our own time.Â Martin Luther King Jr. was best known for his role in the civil rights movement and nonviolent protests. His life's work has been honored with a national holiday, schools and public buildings named after him, and a memorial on the National Mall in Washington. Take a look back at the late civil rights leader's defining years.Â Photos: The legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. King speaks during the Prayer Pilgrimage near the Reflecting Pool in Washington on May 17, 1957. Hide Caption. 5 of 22. The American Civil Rights Movement (1955-1968) was a biblically based movement that had significant social and political consequences for the United States. Black clergymen such as the Reverends Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Joseph Lowery, Wyatt T. Walker, Fred Shuttlesworth, and numerous others relied on religious faith strategically applied to solve America's obstinate racial problems. Black Christian leaders and their white allies joined together to challenge the immoral system of