

TITLE: The Aftermath of The Temple Bombing: A Catalyst for Social Change during the Civil Rights Movement in the Deep South

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Introduction: On October 12, 1958 a group of white supremacists detonated a bomb in the breezeway behind the sanctuary of a Jewish synagogue (“The Temple”) in Atlanta, Georgia. This anti-Semitic action shocked the nation, as people struggled to understand how such violence could be perpetuated against a religious space in America. At first glance, the event seems to be a clash between two distinct groups of people: American Jews and white supremacists. A closer look, however, reveals that a network of leaders in the Civil Rights Movement were impacted by the bombing as it caused them to join forces and sustain working relations throughout the movement.

Purpose: This project examines the relationship of the bombing and the American Civil Rights Movement in general. Further exploration of the social and cultural impact of the bombing uncovers how local Atlanta events affected the nation and caused key players in the Civil Rights Movement to come together in solidarity and take a firm stance against social injustices and inequalities.

Method: Historical methods and network analyses are utilized in order to fully capture the roles of key players in the event as well as the ways in which they were connected by the event. These methods are instrumental in highlighting the wider social impact of the event on the Atlanta community and the Civil Rights Movement.

Results: The study shows that this specific discriminatory act actually had a positive social and cultural impact on the Atlanta community. The bombing created an opportunity in which citizens expressed their opposition to racial discrimination and inequality. Further, the bombing strengthened the Civil Rights Movement by providing an opportunity for interfaith coordination in the efforts to fight racial hierarchies and social injustices.

Conclusion: The bombing that occurred on October 12, 1958 proved to be a significant historical event that served as a catalyst for social change during the Civil Rights Movement in Atlanta and in the nation as a whole. In reaction to the bombing, leaders such as Rabbi Jacob Rothschild, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, President Dwight Eisenhower, Ralph McGill, and Mayor William Hartsfield and institutions such as the FBI and the United Press International joined together in solidarity to combat a socially-constructed idea of racial inequality.

10 Key Words: Civil Rights Movement, The Temple, Atlanta, bombing, Rabbi Rothschild, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., racial discrimination, Judaism, anti-Semitism, Southern History