

EDITORIALS LIKE THIS MAKE ME EVEN MORE PROUD OF MY HOME STATE. (GEORGIA).

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EDITORIAL PAGE

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The Uses of Black Power

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil-rights movement's chief apostle of nonviolence, was busy in Atlanta this week seeking a way to calm a situation that has broken into riots several times in recent days.

Dr. King's considerable talents could be put to much better use elsewhere. Atlanta already has an enviable record of progress with civil rights, not only among southern cities but in the nation as a whole. Yet it is now the scene of an ugly struggle for control, pitting Dr. King and his moderate Southern Christian Leadership followers against a more radical civil-rights wing led by Stokely Carmichael and the so-called Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

The Carmichael group, with its cry of "black power," is giving that vague term its worst possible meaning. Fanning emotions to the point of destroying property and injuring people is a far cry from the ballot-box power and the marketplace power the American Negro can use legitimately to help himself. Yet destruction is the turn the "black power" movement took in Atlanta with Mr. Carmichael's encouragement. And the damage goes far beyond a few broken windows.

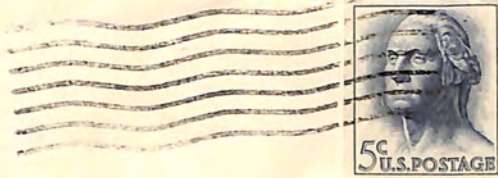
A critical vote takes place in the U. S. Senate today on ending a filibuster against a civil-rights bill that includes the fair-housing provision sought fervently by Negro leaders.

The bill's chances, never really strong, are clearly diminished by Atlanta's tragic news.

News of racial violence elsewhere is doing other harm, too. Civil-rights groups report a drop-off in contributions to finance their constructive work. Political candidates in several areas—not just the South—have been reaching for the "white backlash," hoping to ride it into office with an implied pledge to do less, not more, for Negroes. And as William S. White reported on this page the other day, fears of gangster ties with some of the rights groups is causing further disenchantment.

The setback being handed the civil-rights movement is so obvious that one wonders if the lure of publicity, the thrill of the limelight, and the heat of the fray aren't more important to this radical fringe than Negro advancement. Dr. King and other veteran leaders, Negro and white, have a good deal more to show for their less fiery efforts. The progress of many Negroes, of course, increases the frustration of those who have been bypassed so far. But the rights movement will pick up momentum again when Negroes by and large repudiate the wild-eyed revolutionaries and support—with sensible, reasoned "black power,"—those leaders who can use power effectively on their behalf.

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