

Jamia Laude

Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet High School

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In 1967, speaking to the National Association of TV and Radio announcers, Martin Luther King Jr. said “For better or for worse, you are opinion-makers in the community and it is important that you remain aware of the power which is potential in your vocation”. Martin Luther King’s life and work is a testament to the importance of Black press and speaking for yourself and your community.

In this quote Dr. Martin Luther King Jr emphasizes the importance of Black press. He acknowledges that journalists are the “opinion makers” of a community. They hold the power to influence the public on how they perceive a person or a topic in any way they choose. “For better or worse” they can change how people think. Black press has the option to speak out for their communities — To spread awareness about different concerns and issues. It is important as a journalist to know your position and platform. It is important for journalists and especially Black journalists at the time, to know that they have power, potential, and a voice. It is also important for white journalists to be responsible and not spread misinformation. Journalists have great power over how the public thinks and can greatly impact someone’s life. Which in the case of Martin Luther King, it did.

For young Black aspiring journalists, such as myself, One of the biggest incentives to become a journalist is the accurate representation of Black people in the media. Dr. King was heavily denounced in the media. Martin Luther King in his time was called “too radical” and “an extremist”. To which he responded “Was not Jesus an extremist for love: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” ... And Thomas Jefferson: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ...” So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be”. Black Journalists during the Civil Rights movement told the stories of the violence and hate targeted at Black Americans during the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. King created relationships with Black owned newspapers such as Jet, Ebony, Atlanta Daily World, and more. Black newspapers portrayed him as an activist, a preacher, and a genius. They told the world about his principles and his morals. While others might have portrayed him as a man without any.

Dr. King said “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character”. Black journalists have the chance to portray Black leaders as more than what other people view them.

Martin Luther King Jr was an activist, a highly intellectual individual, a philosopher, a minister, and an extremist. He was an extremist for love, justice, and equality. He used media and journalists to express his dream.