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As we revisit the pivotal early months of 1968, we are privileged to be able to consult the *Memphis World*, a Black newspaper published in Memphis and available through the Rhodes digital archives. Every week, we'll share the issue of the *Memphis World* from 50 years ago as it documented a city, nation and globe in transition. Not only does it give us a glimpse into the history that produced the Sanitation Strike and brought Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to our city, but it demonstrates that these world-changing moments were part of much longer and broader contexts. As we reckon with the #MLK50 moment and beyond, the *Memphis World* offers us a critical resource.

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February 24, 1968

In the early days of the Sanitation Strike, the *Memphis World* reveals the growing support for the effort among the official and unofficial networks of Black political activism in Memphis. As detailed in the cover story, which blazes across the center of the front page, the striking workers earned the official support of two key community organizations: the NAACP and the local Democratic Party. Believe it or not, neither endorsement was necessarily automatic. The Memphis branch of the NAACP had been known as a cautious organization devoted to legal remedies for discrimination and avoiding direct-action protests. But, a few years earlier, an influx of young members – many of whom were women, and many of whom were new arrivals in Memphis – pushed the organization to embrace the confrontational campaigns that propelled the Civil Rights Movement. The Shelby County Democratic Club reflected a moment of transition for the Democratic Party in Memphis and elsewhere, as the party's former white base (known as the "Dixiecrats") departed for the Republican Party and were replaced by African American leadership and rank-and-file. The Sanitation Strike allowed both organizations to push for greater power through a linked strategy of political pressure and civil disobedience. Pushed to act by working-class Black Memphians, the leadership of both organizations hurried to catch up.

Even as local developments drew increasing attention, the *Memphis World* also kept one eye on international politics as the global fight against racism and colonialism continued to accelerate. One of the key elements spotlighted in this issue is Syria's decision to join several African nations in boycotting the Mexico City Olympics due to the presence of athletes from apartheid-era South Africa. The boycott of nations like Ghana, Mali and Ethiopia (many of whom had only recently liberated themselves from European domination) reflected not just particular anger at international support of the apartheid regime, but also a global campaign for racial justice that both shaped and reflected the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in the United States. The *Memphis World's* interlocked attention to local, national and international struggles for justice isn't just coincidental or a desire to fill column space. It reflects the connections felt by activists in Memphis with their counterparts around the world.