

Rhodes College Digital Archives - DLynx

Memphis World, 1968 March 16th

Item Type	Text
Publisher	Memphis World Publishing Co.
Download date	2026-04-23 02:27:00
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10267/31345

Created: 2018-03-16

Author: Dr. Charles L. Hughes

Context: "This Week in 1968" email campaign for MLK50

Collection: Memphis World newspaper

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.

The following week's issue (dated March 16th) casts a spotlight on one of the key figures in that resistance. Maxine Smith, the leader of the local NAACP, is here chronicled due to her mistreatment at the hands of white police officers during her involvement in one of the many demonstrations she led during her tenure. Smith was one of many Black women who led the movement in Memphis and elsewhere, whose crucial and still underappreciated participation shaped the Movement's trajectory and fueled its daily activities. Part of those activities too often included the kind of disrespect at the hands of law enforcement that Smith outlines in her testimony. Although she thankfully avoided the sexual violence that greeted many women who were jailed during the Civil Rights period, Smith's experience – and her willingness to organize around it – indicates both her centrality to the Memphis struggle and the particular burdens faced by women-identified individuals who fought against Jim Crow during these years. Although the visit NAACP national leader Roy Wilkins won the paper's banner headline, Smith's presence reflected her central importance to the Memphis struggle then being waged in the streets, courtrooms, classrooms and elsewhere throughout the community.