

This work aims at examining the origins of the civil rights coalition between African Americans and American Jews, its achievements and its fall following the rise of radicalism among African Americans and other historical developments in the late 1960s. It is clear that the abolition of slavery alone did not bring about social, economic and political integration of African Americans. Black codes and unwritten discriminatory customs prevented them from securing their rightful and equal place among white Americans. In order to fight racism and discrimination and support integration more effectively, African Americans started to organize in a number of organizations including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). However, because they lacked leadership, funding as well as organizational skills, they needed an ally and American Jews proved to be a dexterous one.

There were a number of things that African Americans and Jews shared at that time: none of the two ethnic groups had a homeland in the sense that for example Italian Americans did before World War II. African Americans recognized and understood the fact that Jews had been living in poor conditions and under a constant threat to their lives in Europe. Furthermore, they identified with the biblical story of the Jewish escape from Egypt and in their spirituals called the Ohio River, which freed slaves had to cross to escape from the South, to the Jordan River.