

White Moral Blindness  
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The political inaction of the white moderate was a constant concern for black civil rights activists in the United States. According to black “intellectualists”, such as Ida B. Wells, individuals fail to engage in political action to end racism because they lack *propositional moral knowledge* that an action, such as lynching, is morally wrong. In contrast, black “emotionalists,” such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Frederick Douglass, held that political inaction occurs when individuals lack the right sorts of emotions and desires. I argue that Martin Luther King, Jr. offered a position that differed from what black thinkers standardly offered as a model of how political motivation works. King believed the white moderates failed to engage in political action because they lacked *phenomenal moral knowledge* – knowledge of what it is like to be victimized by a particular wrong such as racial segregation. King believed that, without this knowledge, the right sorts of emotions and desires were unlikely to be activated. The strength of King’s view is that it ties together what is right in both of the first two views to establish a novel and coherent theory of political motivation.