

Sit-Ins Stand Out 20 Years Later

AN APPEAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

We, the students of the six affiliated institutions founding the Atlanta University Center... Clark, Morehouse, Morris Brown, and Spelman Colleges, Atlanta University, and the Interdenominational Theological Center... have joined our hearts, minds, and bodies in the cause of gaining those rights which are inherently ours as members of the human race and as citizens of these United States.

We pledge our undivided support to those students in this nation who have recently been engaged in the significant movement to secure certain long-awaited rights and freedoms. This protest, like the bus boycott in Montgomery, has awakened many people throughout the world. Why? Because they had not quite realized the necessity of speed and purpose which motivates the thinking and action of the great majority of the Negro people. The students who instigated and led the sit-ins of 1960... were the beginning of a new era of protest that has changed the nation today.

We do not intend to wait passively for those rights which are already legally and morally ours to be denied us by an unelected and unrepresentative few. We must be active, and we must be active in the right, purposeful, and just way. We must be active in the cause of freedom and justice for all people. We must be active in the cause of the Negro people who are being denied their rights as citizens of these United States. We must be active in the cause of the Negro people who are being denied their rights as citizens of these United States.

Among the injustices and inequities in Atlanta and in Georgia which we protest, the following are outstanding examples:

(1) Education

In the Public School System, facilities for Negroes and whites are separate and unequal. Besides systems which are about half of the Negro Public Schools, and many Negro children have to make a long trip in order to reach a school that will admit them. On the university level, the state will pay a Negro to attend a school out of state rather than admit him to the University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, the Georgia Medical School, and other top supported public institutions.

According to a recent publication, in the fiscal year 1958 a total of \$173,257.18 was spent in the State of Georgia for higher education for whites only. In the Negro State Colleges only \$2,801,177.76 was spent. The publicly supported institutions of higher education are segregated, except that they deny admission to Negro Americans.

(2) Jobs

Negroes are denied employment in the majority of city, state, and federal governmental jobs, except in the most menial capacities.

(3) Housing

White Negroes constitute 22% of the population of Atlanta, they are housed in less than 10% of the area of the city. Statistics also show that the bulk of the Negro population is packed into the more undesirable and overcrowded areas of the city.

a. Lack of adequate and decent housing facilities for the Negro population of the city.
b. Paying a proportionately higher percentage of income for rental and purchase of generally lower quality property.
c. Harassed by physical and direct or indirect racial restrictions in its efforts to secure better housing.

(4) Voting

Continued to statements made in Congress recently by several Southern Senators, we know that in many counties in Georgia and other Southern states, Negro college graduates are denied the right to vote and are not permitted to register.

(5) Hospitals

Compared with hospitals for other people in Atlanta and Georgia, those for Negroes are unequal and totally inadequate.

Reports show that Atlanta's 14 general hospitals and 9 related institutions provide some 6,000 beds. Except for some 430 beds at Grady Hospital, Negroes are denied the 5,570 beds in these general hospitals. Some of the long-staying Negroes were kept in hospital beds.

(6) Movies, Concerts, Restaurants

Negroes are barred from most downtown movies and restaurants.

(7) Law Enforcement

There are grave inequities in the area of law enforcement. The Negroes are mistreated by officers of the law. An insufficient number of Negroes is employed in the law-enforcing agencies. They are seldom promoted. Of 120 policemen in Atlanta only 25 are Negroes.

We have briefly mentioned only a few situations in which we are discriminated against. We have understood neither the magnitude of the problems. These social ills are seriously plaguing Georgia, the South, the nation, and the world.

We Demand That:

- (1) The practice of racial segregation is not in keeping with the ideals of Democracy and Christianity.
(2) Racial segregation is nothing more than the organized fear that segregation of the human dignity...
(3) In times of war the Negro has fought and died for his country, yet he still has not been accorded first-class citizenship.
(4) In spite of the fact that the Negro people have shown all forms of civic and active participation in city, county and state government at the level where they are accepted.
(5) The moral, economic, and political progress of Georgia is retarded by segregation and prejudice.
(6) America is fast losing the respect of other nations by the poor example which she sets in the case of race relations.

It is unfortunate that the Negro is being forced to fight, in any way, for what is due him and is freely accorded other Americans. It is unfortunate that even today some people should hold to the erroneous idea of racial superiority, despite the fact that she would a just meaning toward an integrated humanity.

The time has come for the people of Atlanta and Georgia to take a good look at what is really happening in this country, and to stop believing those who tell us that everything is all right, and that the Negro is happy and satisfied.

It is to be regretted that there are those who still refuse to recognize the overriding supremacy of the Federal Law.

Our churches which are ordained by God and claim to be for the benefit of all people, foster segregation of the races in the past of meeting Sunday the most segregated day of the week.

We, the students of the Atlanta University Center, are driven by past and present events to assert our feelings to the citizens of Atlanta and to the world.

We, therefore, call upon all people in authority—State, County, and City officials, all leaders in our churches, synagogues, and business men, and all people of good will to assist these students and uphold these injustices. We must say to all leaders that we plan to see every legal and non-violent means at our disposal to secure full citizenship rights as members of the great Democracy of our

Willie Mays, President of Student Body For the Students of Atlanta University; James Felder, President of Student Government Association For the Students of Clark College; Marion D. Bennett, President of Student Association For the Students of Interdenominational Theological Center.

Don Clarke, President of Student Body For the Students of Morehouse College; Mary Ann Smith, Secretary of Student Government Association For the Students of Spelman College; Roslyn Pope, President of Student Government Association For the Students of Spelman College.

This appeal was a full-page ad in the March 9, 1960 editions of The Atlanta Constitution, The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Daily World.

By KEITH GRAHAM, Reporter, Intown EXTRA, and ALEXIS SCOTT REEVES, Editor, Intown EXTRA.

"We kept telling ourselves, 'We're after more than a hamburger.'" — Julian Bond.

The full-page ad, which greeted readers of the Atlanta Constitution on the morning of March 9, 1960 was headlined "An Appeal for Human Rights."

Signed by a student leader from each of the six institutions in the Atlanta University Center, it announced that local collegians planned to use "every legal and non-violent means at our disposal to secure full citizenship rights as citizens of this great democracy of ours."

"Every normal human being wants to walk the earth with dignity," said the appeal which also appeared in that afternoon's Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Daily World. "In essence, this is

the meaning of the sit-down protests that are sweeping this nation today."

The ad had been carefully drafted by the students at the request of their college presidents. The presidents had learned that their charges planned sit-ins like the highly publicized ones of Feb. 1 in Greensboro, N. C.

The attitude of the local college administrators was "somewhat mixed," Morehouse College President Emeritus Benjamin Mays recalled last week. But, said Mays, "There was one place where we were all together. Before the students did anything, we wanted to make it clear what we were striking about or grumbling about or protesting about." The administrators not only got together the money for the ad, Mays said. They also "OK'd" it, "read it and were in full accord with it."

The appeal, drafted in part by students Roslyn Pope and Julian Bond, began with an eloquent statement of purpose that made it clear that more than

a chance to eat a hamburger at a lunch counter was at stake. It moved on to a litany of specific complaints. Inequalities in education, employment, housing, voting, hospital services, entertainment and eating facilities and law enforcement were addressed.

Nine days later, on March 15 — or as the students pointedly noted "the Ides of March" — some 250 students entered whites-only cafeterias at city hall, the Fulton County administration building, two federal facilities and bus and train stations around the city and asked to be

On the day of King's arrest at the Magnolia Room, a reporter asked a female student, who was also sitting in, how long she planned to sit. "We are waiting until freedom comes," she said. "We are waiting until freedom comes."

Charges included violations of a recently adopted state anti-trespassing law and anti-assembly legislation originally drafted to control the Ku Klux Klan.

Eventually conspiracy charges were also brought against those arrested plus some signers of the "Appeal" advertisement who had not been at the scene of the sit-ins.

The first Atlanta sit-ins were the start of a concerted campaign that led to other demonstrations, picketing and a boycott of Rich's department store. The efforts of the student demonstrators, or "agitators" as their foes labeled them, also indirectly affected the outcome of the 1960 Presidential campaign.

When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. joined students sitting in at Rich's Magnolia Room Oct. 19, 1960, he was arrested and later sent to DeKalb County for violating his probation stemming from earlier charges of driving without a license. While King was in jail, students dashed off messages to both Vice President Richard Nixon and his challenger in the November presidential election, John Kennedy. Nixon did not respond, but Kennedy's brother, Robert, called Atlanta to inquire about the handling of King's arrest.

Robert Kennedy quickly patched things up with miffed white Georgians by saying his inquiries weren't meant to be "interference," but the idea that the Kennedys were at least concerned about civil rights had been firmly planted.

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Freedom was a tall order, but the demonstrations did result in a compromise settlement in March of 1961 that led to the desegregation of Atlanta

lunch counters later that year. When 177 counters in 75 stores officially opened their services to blacks in late September 1961, Atlanta became the 104th city to desegregate lunch counters since the start of the sit-ins in February of 1960.

The list of participants in the Atlanta sit-ins of 20 years ago is long: John Mack, now executive director of the Los Angeles Urban League; Michael Davis, a Baltimore reporter; Morris Dillard, an assistant general manager with MARTA; Marian Wright Edelman, D.C. bureau director of UNESCO; Marion Bennett, a minister in Las Vegas, and former South Carolina legislator James Felder.

There are many others: Joe Pierce, Carolyn Long Banks, Wilma Long Blundings, Frank Holloway, Lydia Tucker Brown, Johnny Parham, Leon Green, Frank Smith, Charles Black, and though not students, their attorney Donald Hollowell, now regional director of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; faculty advisors M. Carl Hollman, now executive director of the National Urban Coalition and the late Whitney Young, who went from Atlanta University to direct the national Urban League.

Intown EXTRA talked with four leaders of the Atlanta sit-ins last week to see how it affected their lives.

Julian Bond

Twenty years after being arrested for trying to eat at Atlanta's city hall cafeteria, Georgia State Sen. Julian Bond is instantly recognized wherever he goes.

Although he turned 40 last month, he still has his youthful good looks. His sharp wit and ability to articulate his viewpoints have made him a favorite on the lecture circuit where he makes the bulk of his income.

A prep school graduate whose father was a college president and whose brother now serves on the Atlanta city council, Bond had vague ambitions of becoming a writer before he got involved in the Atlanta sit-ins. Reluctant to become active when first approached by fellow Morehouse College student, Lonnie King, Bond has gone on to become one of the most consistently outspoken critics of the status quo in America.

Although the arrest in the first Atlanta demonstration was his only one, he was involved in the movement as a publicist until his election to the State House of Representatives in 1965. Today, he said, he misses the movement days "a great deal. . . It was all encompassing. It filled your whole life."

The civil rights movement for Bond, who gained fame for his later work with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, was a kind of

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'domestic Peace Corps' experience. His generation of college students, he said, was an "aberration" from the norm for college students and proved that people did not have to be lawyers or civil rights professionals to "advance the race."

The students of the early '60s failed, however, to "institutionalize" their movement, he said. A junior at Morehouse when he first got involved, Bond said the students "had a hard time gearing up again in the fall. We kept telling ourselves 'We're after more than a hamburger' but when it (the local boycott) ended that's about all we got."

Eventually, however, the victories were to prove "immense," he said. The student movement here and in other cities led to the formation of SNCC on Easter weekend of 1960 and "SNCC in turn went on to transform the South."

Now on the national board of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and president of the local chapter, Bond lamented the lack of involvement of today's students. In his lectures on campuses, he said, he tells students "they should be spending some of their college career in 'good work.'" He suggests they tutor, work on voter registration, set up neighborhood crime patrols and get involved with the NAACP. He thinks it is important that students be active. "Then you've got them for the rest of their lives," he said.

But he is not optimistic about the 1980s. Jobs and political power will be the key issues, he said, but while the number of black registered voters is climbing, the percentage voting declines. "Unless you've got a strong political base in my view," he said, "you're not going to make economic gains."

Ben Brown

Like Julian Bond, Ben Brown, 39, eventually wound up in the Georgia legislature. Bond, however, never jumped on the Jimmy Carter bandwagon and is currently supporting Ted Kennedy for president. Brown, on the other hand, became an early supporter of Carter and eventually won a job on the Democratic National Committee. Currently he serves as national deputy chairman of the Carter-Mondale re-election committee.

Like Bond, he was a junior when the sit-ins started. Then vice president of the Clark College student body, he served as president the following year and was one of the students arrested at Rich's Magnolia Room on the same day as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The arrest was one of three for Brown, who has gone on to become a smooth-talking politico. Shouting into a telephone from a noisy upstate New York restaurant, he told Intown EXTRA last week that his movement days were "quite stimulating" and caused him to change his career plans. He had planned to study social work but went to law school at Howard University instead.

Like Bond, he said he "was caught up in the spirit" of the times. Brown

said he does not miss the movement because "that spirit has grown within me and I've tried to radiate it ever since."

Brown agreed that his generation of students "was not typical," and he said he wishes the current crop of collegians would become more active. But he said he would not be so "presumptuous" as to say what directions their activism should take.

Today's apathy is partly due to a 'blurring of the lines,' said King. 'We don't have a clear enemy.' Because some blacks are more visible in key roles, he added, many blacks now suffer from 'the delusion of inclusion.'

Lonnie King

If any one person could be called the key leader of the 1960 sit-ins, it would probably be Lonnie King.

Now "43 going on 20," King was a Navy veteran and a little older than his Morehouse College classmates in the demonstrations. Interviewed last week at the coffee shop of Dunfey's Royal Coach, he said he and most of the other activists never wanted to be professional civil rights fighters. King, who is no relation to Dr. Martin Luther King, had intended to seek a Ph.D. in economics before getting "positively sidetracked" into the movement.

Although he had not intended to become a pro, he did exactly that, working for several years as a civil rights specialist for the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. He now heads his own business, Onyx Corp., a research, development and consulting firm.

While King's name is heard more than any other in connection with the Atlanta sit-ins, he emphasized that several other leaders and many "foot soldiers" deserve the credit. In addition, he noted that the Atlanta movement was part of a bigger movement that was kicked off in 1909 with the founding of the NAACP. The "spontaneous combustion" of the '60s was fueled by many factors, he said, including a series of legal victories won by the NAACP, a gradual rise in consciousness of blacks stimulated especially by the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 1954, increased mass communications and a new-found willingness of the black middle class to take a chance.

The son of a maid, King said students were freer to initiate the sit-ins because they had no jobs to lose.

Like Bond, he lamented the failure to institutionalize the movement. He compared it to a relay race. The first runners ran a strong lap, he said, but some of the subsequent classes of college students stumbled when they were passed the baton. "I don't think there's even a race that our people are involved in now," he said.

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some blacks are more visible in key roles, he added, many blacks now suffer from "the delusion of inclusion."

In the '80s, King said, "we've got to move beyond the concept of public accommodations and public access . . . to economic levels." He said he is concerned not just with jobs for minorities but with broader economic growth and development. Black people are still likely to be discriminated against when they apply for a loan to develop a business, said King.

Mary Ann Smith Wilson

A signer of the original "Appeal" when she was secretary of the student government at Morris Brown College, Mary Ann Smith (now Wilson) recently returned to Atlanta after living in California since 1961.

There was never any question about becoming involved in the movement, said Dr. Wilson, now a pediatrician with the Southside Community Health Center. "It was something I didn't have to make any decisions about," she said.

From the time she signed the appeal until her departure for California, Dr. Wilson was fully engaged in the civil rights effort. Although she did not participate in the first sit-ins, she was cited for conspiracy, and she was later arrested for an "impromptu" sit-in at the old Terminal Station.

Her younger sister, Ruby Doris Smith, also plunged into the movement and rose to the rank of executive secretary of SNCC before her death in 1967 of a form of cancer of the blood stream.

Dr. Wilson, however, dropped out of the movement in a sense after leaving Atlanta to get a master's degree at the University of California in Berkeley. Burned out by the constant involvement here, she "turned inward" and became more serious about her studies in zoology. While the famous Free Speech Movement whirred on the Berkeley campus, she worked quietly in her laboratory. She later taught junior college before going to medical school.

Once she got to California, she said, she did not miss the Atlanta movement. "For a while, I was glad it was over," she said. In the movement, she "wasn't Mary Ann, an individual who was introspective about her life. I was just part of this great cause."

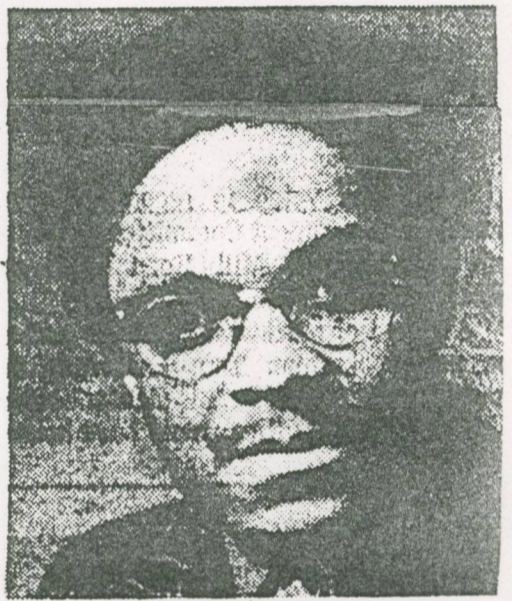
Dr. Wilson said she has wondered since "if anything else could grasp me that way," but despite her period of introspection, she has "come full circle" and at 39 has "been looking around" for "new avenues of involvement."

Now divorced and the mother of two, she said she is "an advocate of the child" and believes society is not spending enough money for basic human needs. "You still have the top people going to college," she said, "but something needs to be done to help all children develop to their optimal levels." Youngsters who don't go on to college, she added, should be taught useful skills.

Progress toward giving all children an equal start in life, she said, "is ex-



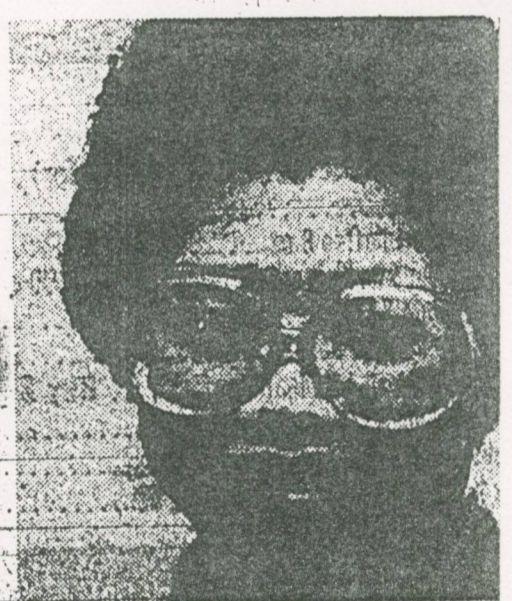
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