

THE
EYES
ON THE
PRIZE

CIVIL RIGHTS READER

DOCUMENTS, SPEECHES, AND
FIRSTHAND ACCOUNTS FROM
THE BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE,
1954-1990

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which God binds man to himself and man to man. Such love goes to the extreme; it remains loving and forgiving even in the midst of hostility. It matches the capacity of evil to inflict suffering with an even more enduring capacity to absorb evil, all the while persisting in love.

By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.

6. "Bigger than a Hamburger"

Ella J. Baker

Ella Baker had graduated from Shaw University in the 1920s and spent many years as an activist in movements to bring about social change. Active during the 1930s in Harlem's Young Negroes' Cooperative League and later a member of the NAACP's field staff, she would leave her post as director of SCLC's headquarters to accept a job with the YWCA shortly after the April conference at Shaw. Her growing disenchantment with the cautiousness of the established civil rights groups led her to encourage black students to form their own independent organization rather than affiliate with the SCLC. After SNCC's founding, she continued to advise its staff. This June 1960 article by Miss Baker originally appeared in the Southern Conference Educational Fund's newspaper, The Southern Patriot.

RALEIGH, N.C.—The Student Leadership Conference made it crystal clear that current sit-ins and other demonstrations are concerned with something much bigger than a hamburger or even a giant-sized Coke.

Whatever may be the difference in approach to their goal, the Negro and white students, North and South, are seeking to rid America of the scourge of racial segregation and discrimination—not only at lunch counters, but in every aspect of life.

In reports, casual conversations, discussion groups, and speeches, the sense and the spirit of the following statement that appeared in the initial newsletter of the students at Barber-Scotia College, Concord, N.C., were re-echoed time and again:

We want the world to know that we no longer accept the inferior position of second-class citizenship. We are willing to go to jail, be ridiculed, spat upon and even suffer physical violence to obtain First Class Citizenship.

By and large, this feeling that they have a destined date with freedom, was not limited to a drive for personal freedom, or even freedom for the Negro in the South. Repeatedly it was emphasized that the movement was concerned with the moral implications of racial discrimination for the "whole world" and the "Human Race."

This universality of approach was linked with a perceptive recognition that "it is important to keep the movement democratic and to avoid struggles for personal leadership."

It was further evident that desire for supportive cooperation from adult leaders and the adult community was also tempered by apprehension that adults might try to "capture" the student movement. The students showed willingness to be met on the basis of equality, but were intolerant of anything that smacked of manipulation or domination.

This inclination toward group-centered leadership, rather than toward a leader-centered group pattern of organization, was refreshing indeed to those of the older group who bear the scars of the battle, the frustrations and the disillusionment that come when the prophetic leader turns out to have heavy feet of clay.

However hopeful might be the signs in the direction of group-centeredness, the fact that many schools and communities, especially in the South, have not provided adequate experience for young Negroes to assume initiative and think and act independently accentuated the need for guarding the student movement against well-meaning, but nevertheless unhealthy, over-protectiveness.

Here is an opportunity for adult and youth to work together and provide genuine leadership—the development of the individual to his highest potential for the benefit of the group.

Many adults and youth characterized the Raleigh meeting as the greatest or most significant conference of our period.

Whether it lives up to this high evaluation or not will, in a large measure, be determined by the extent to which there is more

effective training in and understanding of non-violent principles and practices, in group dynamics, and in the re-direction into creative channels of the normal frustrations and hostilities that result from second-class citizenship.

7. "A Conference on the Sit-Ins"

Ted Dienstfrey

Ted Dienstfrey, a white student at the University of Chicago, attended the conference at Shaw University as one of the representatives from northern schools. His article from which these excerpts were taken appeared in Commentary magazine in June 1960.

It is with a desire to do *something* that many Northern white college students look at the sit-in movement of their Southern Negro counterparts. . . . That the Northern response has been almost unanimously favorable is no surprise: of all the current social and political issues—the cold war, disarmament, the draft, planned obsolescence, the double standard—integration is the only one which does not have to be discussed. We all agree that segregation must end; we only disagree on when it will end, on what will end it, and who is responsible for ending it.

We have had our student government pass resolutions decrying the present situation, and we have sent many telegrams stating our position. Several times we have tried unsuccessfully to pressure the University into enforcing desegregation on its off-campus real estate holdings. We have circulated and signed petitions addressed to city, state, and national legislatures and executives asking them to pass and *enforce* various anti-segregation ordinances and laws.

In April 1959, we participated enthusiastically along with 25,000 other students in the Youth March for Integration. (Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., in the May *Progressive*, claims that there were 40,000 in the march; 25,000 was the figure the police

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