

Primary Sources

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

AN APPEAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

[March 9, 1960, as preparation and explanation of the sit-in campaign they were about to launch, students organized the Committee on Appeal for Human Rights and ran the following appeal as a paid advertisement in three Atlanta daily newspapers. The [sit-ins](#) began 6 days later.]

<http://www.crmvet.org/docs/aa4hr.htm>

We, the students of the six affiliated institutions forming 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 of the human race and as citizens these United States.

We pledge our unqualified support to those students in this nation who have recently been engaged in the significant movement to secure certain long-awaited rights and privileges. This protest, like the bus boycott in Montgomery, has shocked many people throughout the world. Why. Because they had not quite realized the unanimity of spirit and purpose which motivates the thinking and action of the great majority of the Negro people. The students who instigate and participate in these sit-down protests are dissatisfied, not only with the existing conditions, but with the snail-like speed at which they are being ameliorated. Every normal being wants to walk the earth with dignity and abhors any and all proscriptions placed upon him because of race or color. In essence, this is the meaning of the sit-down protests that are sweeping this nation today.

We do not intend to wait placidly for those which are already legally and morally ours to be meted out to us at a time. Today's youth will not sit by submissively, while being denied all of the rights, privileges, and joys of life. We want to state clearly and unequivocally that we cannot tolerate in a nation professing democracy and among people professing democracy, and among people professing Christianity, the discriminatory conditions under which the Negro is living today in Atlanta Georgia — supposedly one the most progressive cities in the South.

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

(1) EDUCATION

In the Public School System, facilities for Negroes and whites are separate and unequal, Double sessions continue in about half of the Negro Public Schools, and many Negro children travel ten miles a day 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 tax-supported public institutions.

According to a recent publication, in the fiscal year 1958 a total of \$31,632,057.18 was spent in the State institutions of higher education for white only. In the Negro State Colleges only \$2,001,177.06 was spent.

The publicly supported institutions of higher education are inter-racial now, 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:

While Negroes constitute 32% of the population of Atlanta, they are forced to live within 16% of the area the city.

Statistics also show that the bulk of the Negro population is still:

- a. locked into the more undesirable and overcrowded areas of the city;
- b. paying a proportionally higher percentage of income for rental and purchase of generally lower quality property;
- c. blocked by political and direct or indirect restrictions in its efforts to secure better housing.

(4) VOTING:

Contrary to statements made in Congress by several Southern Senators, we know that in many counties in Georgia and other southern states, Negro college graduates are declared unqualified to vote and are not to register,

(5) HOSPITALS:

Compared with facilities 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 4,000 beds. Except for some 430 beds at Grady Hospital, Negroes are limited to the 250 beds in three private Negro hospitals. Some of the hospitals barring Negroes were built with federal funds.

(6) MOVIES, CONCERTS, RESTAURANTS:

Negroes are barred from most movies and segregated in the rest.

Negroes must even sit in a segregated section of the Municipal Auditorium.

If a Negro is hungry, his hunger must wait until he comes to a "colored" restaurant, and even his thirst must await its quenching at a "colored" water fountain.

(7) LAW ENFORCEMENT:

There are grave inequalities in the area of law enforcement. Too often, Negroes are maltreated by officers of the law. An insufficient number of Negroes is employed in the law-enforcing agencies. They are seldom, if ever promoted. Of 830 policemen in Atlanta only 35 are Negroes.

We have briefly mentioned only a few situations in which we are discriminated against. We have understated rather than overstated the problems. These social evils are seriously plaguing Georgia, the South, the nation, and the world.

WE HOLD THAT:

- (1) The practice of racial is not in keeping with the ideals of Democracy and Christianity.
- (2) Racial segregation is robbing not only the segregated but the segregator of his human dignity. Furthermore, the propagation racial prejudice is unfair to the generations yet unborn.
- (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 pays his share of taxes, he does not enjoy participation in city, county and state government at the level where laws are enacted.

(5) The social, economic, and political progress of Georgia is retarded by segregation and prejudices.

(6) America is fast losing the respect of other nations by the poor example which she sets the area of race relations.

It is unfortunate that 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 despite the fact that the world is fast moving 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 fine and equal, and that the Negro is happy satisfied.

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

Our churches which are ordained by God and claim to be the houses of all people, foster segregation of the races to the point of making 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 civic life — ministers, teachers, and business men; and all people of good will to assort themselves and abolish these injustices. We must say in all candor that we plan to use every legal and non-violent means at our disposal to secure full citizenship rights as members of this great Democracy of ours.

WILLIE MAYS

President of Council 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 Morris Brown College

ROSLYN POPE

President of Student Government Association For the Students of Spelman College

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Statement of Purpose written by James Lawson

May 14, 1960

<http://spartacus-educational.com/USAClawsonJ.htm>

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the pre-supposition of our faith, and the manner of our action. Nonviolence as it grows from Judaic-Christian traditions seeks a social order of justice permeated by love. Integration of human endeavor represents the crucial first step towards such a society.

Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. Mutual regard cancels enmity. Justice for all overthrows injustice. The redemptive community supersedes systems of gross social immorality.

Love is the central motif of nonviolence. Love is the force by 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.

Bigger Than a Hamburger
By Ella Baker
The Southern Patriot
May, 1960

[After SNCC's founding conference at Shaw University in Raleigh, NC, Ella Baker wrote the following article that summarized the address she gave at the conference. See [SNCC Founded](#) for background]
<http://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc2.htm>

Raleigh, NC — 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.

<http://www.crmvet.org/images/imggrass.htm>



Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Position Paper: Women in the Movement

http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SNCC_women.html

1. Staff was involved in crucial constitutional revisions at the Atlanta staff meeting in October. A large committee was appointed to present revisions to the staff. The committee was all men.
2. Two organizers were working together to form a farmers league. Without asking any questions, the male organizer immediately assigned the clerical work to the female organizer although both had had equal experience in organizing campaigns.
3. Although there are some women in Mississippi project who have been working as long as some of the men, the leadership group in COFO is all men.
4. A woman in a field office wondered why she was held responsible for day-to-day decisions, only to find out later that she had been appointed project director but not told.
5. A fall 1964 personnel and resources report on Mississippi projects lists the number of people on each project. The section on Laurel, however, lists not the number of persons, but "three girls."
6. One of SNCC's main administrative officers apologizes for appointment of a woman as interim project director in a key Mississippi project area.
7. A veteran of two years' work for SNCC in two states spends her day typing and doing clerical work for other people in her project.
8. Any woman in SNCC, no matter what her position or experience, has been asked to take minutes in a meeting when she and other women are outnumbered by men.
9. The names of several new attorneys entering a state project this past summer were posted in a central movement office. The first initial and last name of each lawyer was listed. Next to one name was written: (girl)
10. Capable, responsible, and experienced women who are in leadership positions can expect to have to defer to a man on their project for final decisionmaking.
11. A session at the recent October staff meeting in Atlanta was the first large meeting in the past couple of years where a woman was asked to chair.

Undoubtedly this list will seem strange to some, petty to others, laughable to most. The list could continue as far as there are women in the movement. Except that most women don't talk about these kinds of incidents, because the whole subject is [not] discussible--strange to some, petty to others, laughable to most. The average white person finds it difficult to understand why the Negro resents being called "boy," or being thought of as "musical" and "athletic," because the average white person doesn't realize that *he assumes he is superior*. And naturally he doesn't understand the problem of paternalism. So too the average SNCC worker finds it difficult to discuss the woman problem because of the assumptions of male superiority. Assumptions of male superiority are as widespread and deep rooted and every much as crippling to the woman as the assumptions of white supremacy are to the Negro. Consider why it is in SNCC that women who are competent, qualified, and experienced, are automatically assigned to the "female" kinds of jobs such as typing, desk work, telephone work, filing, library work, cooking, and the assistant kind of administrative work but rarely the "executive" kind.

The woman in SNCC is often in the same position as that token Negro hired in a corporation. The management thinks that it has done its bit. Yet, every day the Negro bears an atmosphere, attitudes and actions which are tinged with condescension and paternalism, the most telling of which are when he is not promoted as the equally or less skilled whites are. This paper is anonymous. Think about the kinds of things the author, if made known, would have to suffer because of raising this kind of discussion. Nothing so final as being fired or outright exclusion, but the kinds of things which are killing to the insides--insinuations, ridicule, over-exaggerated compensations.

This paper is presented anyway because it needs to be made know[n] that many women in the movement are not "happy and contented" with their status. It needs to be made known that much talent and experience are being wasted by this movement when women are not given jobs commensurate with their abilities. It needs to be known that just as Negroes were the crucial factor in the economy of the cotton South, so too in SNCC are women the crucial factor that keeps the movement running on a day-to-day basis. Yet they are not given equal say-so when it comes to day-to-day decisionmaking. What can be done? Probably nothing right away. Most men in this movement are probably too threatened by the possibility of serious discussion on this subject. Perhaps this is because they have recently broken away from a matriarchal framework under which they may have grown up. Then too, many women are as unaware and insensitive to this subject as men, just as there are many Negroes who don't understand they are not free or who want to be part of white America. They don't understand that they have to give up their souls and stay in their place to be accepted. So too, many women, in order to be accepted by men, on men's terms, give themselves up to that caricature of what a woman is--unthinking, pliable, an ornament to please the man.

Maybe the only think that can come out of this paper is discussion--amidst the laughter--but still discussion. (Those who laugh the hardest are often those who need the crutch of male supremacy the most.) And maybe some women will begin to recognize day-to-day discriminations. And maybe sometime in the future the whole of the women in this movement will become so alert as to force the rest of the movement to stop the discrimination and start the slow process of changing values and ideas so that all of us gradually come to understand that this is no more a man's world than it is a white world.

November, 1964

http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SNCC_women.html

Press

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/story/04_nonviolence.html

Virginia-Norfolk Journal and Guide, March 5, 1960

Behind the Headlines: Sit-Down Protest Should Always Be Non-Violent

by Gordon B. Hancock

As a means of protest against segregation and its evil concomitants, the current sit-down movement among Negro students is quite understandable...

...Nothing would be more disastrous than a cessation of protest against the unchristian and the undemocratic. These sit-down students have been taught in our great American history that resistance to tyranny is honorable and righteous...

The New York Times, April 18, 1960

Nashville Issue is Full Equality Sit-in Movement Is Prelude to Campaign by Negroes

...Seven weeks after the Negro student sit-in movement struck the city that proudly boasts the title "Athens of the South" no solution of the problem appeared on the horizon...

...But vigorous, imaginative and energetic citizens -- both white and black -- were striving to resolve the food-service issue....

...Not that Nashville citizens feel especially proud of their record thus far. "I'm sorry for what brings you here," said a professional man. And a woman wrote to *The Nashville Banner* saying:

"Nashville, the eyes of the country are upon you. Are you proud of what they are seeing? Until now I could look anyone anywhere straight in the eye and say gladly, 'I'm from Nashville, Tenn.'"

The letter was inspired by new outbreaks of minor violence that have flared up sporadically as a counterpoint to the sit-in movement...

The Los Angeles Times, April 20, 1960

Bomb Blasts Integration Leader's Home

Nashville, April 19 -- A dynamite bomb shattered the home of a Negro integration leader in Nashville today and touched off a protest march on City Hall by 2,500 Negroes demanding an end to racial intimidation and violence.

Mayor Ben West told the Nashville marchers that "you also have a responsibility. You all have the power to destroy this city so let's don't have any mobs."

West drew cheers when he said "I appeal to all citizens to end discrimination, to have no bigotry, no bias, no discrimination."

The Negro marchers, led by students, marched in columns three and four abreast, circling the Davidson County Courthouse. Then they held a prayer session on the Courthouse steps. They dispersed quietly after West's remarks.

The Chicago Tribune, May 11, 1960

**Negroes Win Dining Rights in Nashville
Secret Parleys Bring Lunch Counter Peace**

Six downtown Nashville department, dime, and drug stores opened their lunch counters to Negroes for the first time Tuesday and served them without incident under terms of a bi-racial agreement reached after weeks of secret negotiations...

...The agreement... included a local news blackout by radio and television stations and newspapers. No word of the desegregation was broadcast or published locally. Merchants and Negro leaders hoped the local blackout would forestall incidents...

..."It's a gamble," [a Nashville] store manager said. "But we felt the community is better prepared for integration than it has ever been."

Among the stores which desegregated lunch counters, one official said: "There's no turning back now. There's no trial period or anything. This is it."