For Immediate Release

Contact:

Tara Mitchell Mielnik

Metropolitan Historical Commission

615/862-7970

Tara.mielnik@nashville.gov

Linda Wynn

Tennessee Historical Commission

615/532-1550

Linda.wynn@tn.gov

Civil Rights Activist Diane Nash returns to Nashville to discuss Sit-in Movement

NASHVILLE -- January 2010

On February 10, join Tennessee State University's College of Arts and Sciences and the Metropolitan Historical Commission for a celebration of the contributions of African Americans to Nashville and Tennessee history. For twenty-nine years, this award-winning conference has brought together historians, students, educators, community leaders, and others interested in African American history and culture.

Tennessee State University's Avon N. Williams, Jr. campus in downtown Nashville, will host this year's conference, honoring the fiftieth anniversary of the Sit-In Movement in Tennessee. This year's program features presentations by historians from Memphis, Knoxville, and Nashville examining the Sit-In Movement in each of those cities, as well as a special guest lecture by noted civil rights activist, Diane Nash. The Fisk University Choir and the Tennessee State University Forensics Team will give special performances. The \$18 conference registration fee includes a lunch buffet and the recent additions to the *Profiles of African-Americans in Tennessee* series.

Please make plans to join us for this exceptional program. The full program brochure is available on line at www.nashville.gov/mhc, and registration information is available by calling the Metropolitan Historical Commission at 615/862-7970. Preregistration is strongly recommended. If you have questions, please call 862-7970.

Date: February 10, 2010 Time: 8:30 am – 3:30 pm

Location: TSU Downtown Campus, 10th Avenue North, Nashville, TN

Fee: \$18.00 (includes lunch)

Make checks payable to: TSU Foundation – TSU/MHC Conference

Mail registration and payment to: MHC

Sunnyside in Sevier Park 3000 Granny White Pike Nashville, TN 37204

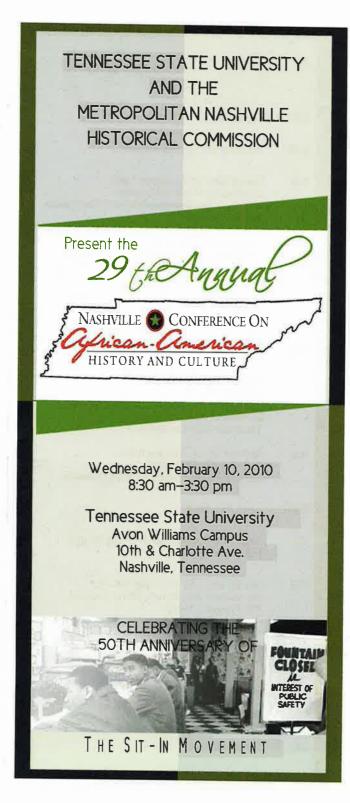
Registration deadline: Januar

January 29, 2010

NASHVILLE CONFERENCE ON

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Metropolitan Historical Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
3000 Granny White Pike
Nashville, Tennessee 37204



Join Us!

Join Tennessee State University's College of Arts and Sciences and the Metropolitan Historical Commission for a celebration of the contributions of African Americans to Nashville and Tennessee history. For twenty



-nine years, this award-winning conference has brought together historians, educators, students, community leaders, and others interested in African-American history and culture.



This year's conference celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the Sit-In Movement with special recognition of the legacy of the Nashville Sit-In Movement. Featured performances by the TSU Forensic Team and the Fisk University Choir will explore this legacy through drama and song. Special guest

Diane Nash will provide her personal reminiscences of this significant time in our shared history.

Your conference registration fee includes admission to all sessions, a lunch buffet, recent additions to the Profiles of African-Americans in Tennessee series, and other educational materials.

Special Guest Dr. Diane Judith Nash

Noted lecturer, fair housing advocate, and activist for human and civil rights, Diane Nash will be the special guest speaker at this year's conference. Dr. Nash was a student leader during the Nashville Sit-Ins and was a founder of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) while a student at Fisk University.



PRESORT STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 2673
NASHVILLE, TN

Hanning, Committee:

Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., Conference Co-Chair Fisk University

Linda T. Wynn, Conference Co-Chair Tennessee Historical Commission and Fisk University

Yildiz Binkley, Tennessee State University
Pamela Bobo, Tennessee State University
Crystal deGregory, Vanderbilt University
Gloria Johnson, Tennessee State University
Michael McBride, Tennessee State University
Gloria McKissack, Tennessee State University
Tara Mitchell Mielnik, Metropolitan Historical Commission
Sharon Hull Smith, Tennessee State University

Corporate Sponsors:





Financial Supporters:

Alkebu-Lan Images
Aramark
Cameron Alumni Group
Frierson Foundation
Friendship Baptist Church
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
Tennessee Historical Society
Spruce Street Baptist Church
TSU Friends of the Library

2010 Progra 8:30 Registration Welcome and Opening Remarks 9:00 9:15 Making Room at the Justice Table: Overview of the Sit-In Movement Linda T. Wynn, Tennessee Historical Commission and Fisk University 9:30 Long Negotiations, Short Sit-Ins: Desegregation of Knoxville's Lunch Counters Dr. Cynthia Fleming, University of TN-Knoxville Jefferson's Wolf Released: Militancy and the 10:10 Memphis Sit-Ins George Graham Perry, III, TN State Museum 10 40 Break 11:00 Remarks and Special Presentations Karl Dean, Mayor Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County Dr. Melvin N. Johnson, President Tennessee State University 11:30 Nashville Sit-Ins, Then and Now: Reflections of Participants Gloria McKissack, Tennessee State University 12:00 Lunch (provided) 1:30 Singing for Freedom: Songs of the Struggle Fisk University Choir 1:50 We Sat Down. So We Could Stand for the Solution: The Nashville Sit-In Movement TSU Forensics Team Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Institutional 2::15 Responses to Student Activism in Nashville Crystal deGregory, Vanderbilt University 2:35 Special Guest Lecture Using Lessons of the Sit-Ins to Look to the Future Dr. Diane Nash 3:15 Closing Remarks



Registration fee is \$18.00.

Make checks payable to: TSU Foundation: TSU/MHC Conference

Mail to:

Metro Historical Commission 3000 Granny White Pike Nashville, Tennessee 37204

Registration form and fee MUST be received by January 29, 2010.

Name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
Email address	
Phone	

Questions? Call us at 615-862-7970 Preregistration is strongly encouraged. Registration cannot be taken over the phone.



THE SIT-IN MOVEMENT

29th Conference on African American History and Culture February 10, 2010

8:30 a.m.

Registration Begins

9:00 a.m.

Welcome

Dr. Gloria G. Johnson, Interim Dean TSU College of Arts and Sciences

Ms. Linda T. Wynn, Conference Co-Chair Dr. Tara Mitchell Mielnik, Program Coordinator

Metropolitan Historical Commission

9:15 a.m.

Making Room at the Justice Table; An Overview of the

Sit-in Movement

Ms. Linda T. Wynn, Assistant Director for State Programs

Tennessee Historical Commission Instructor of History, Fisk University

9:30 a.m.

Long Negotiations, Short Sit-Ins: Desegregation of Knoxville's Lunch

Counter

Dr. Cynthia Fleming, Professor of History University of Tennessee —Knoxville

10:10 a.m.

Jefferson's Wolf Released: Militancy and the Memphis Sit-ins

Mr. George Graham Perry III, Curator of Social History

Tennessee State Museum

Ph.D. Candidate, University of Memphis

10: 40 a.m.

Break

11: 00 a.m.

Remarks:

The Honorable Karl Dean, Mayor

Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County

Dr. Melvin N. Johnson, President Tennessee State University

Special Presentations Dr. Forrest E. Harris, President

American Baptist College

The Honorable Hazel O'Leary, President

Fisk University

Dr. Wayne J. Riley, President Meharry Medical College

Dr. Melvin N. Johnson, President Tennessee State University

11:30 a.m.

Nashville Sit-Ins Then and Now: Reflections of Participants

Ms. Gloria McKissack, Instructor of History

Tennessee State University

12:00 noon

Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Singing for Freedom: Songs of the Freedom Struggle

Fisk University Choir

Dr. Christopher A. Duke, Director

1:50 p.m.

We Sat Down, So We Could Stand for the Solution:

The Nashville Sit-In Movement

TSU Forensics Team

Ms. Kimberly LaMarque, Director

2:15 p.m.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Institutional Responses to Student

Activism in the Nashville Sit-in Movement Ms. Crystal A. deGregory, Ph.D. Candidate

Vanderbilt University

2:35 p.m.

Using Lessons of the Sit-Ins to Look Toward the Future

Dr. Diane J. Nash, Civil and Human Rights Activist

Student Leader, Nashville Sit-in Movement

3:15 p.m.

Closing Remarks

Dr. Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., Conference Co-Chair

CORPORATE SPONSORS

AT & T

Cracker Barrel Foundation

FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

Alkebu-Lan Images

Aramark

Cameron Alumni Group

Frierson Foundation

Friendship Baptist Church

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

Tennessee Historical Society

Spruce Street Baptist Church

TSU Friends of the Library

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Conference Co-Chairs

Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., Fisk University

Linda T. Wynn, Tennessee Historical Commission/Fisk University

Yildiz Binkley, Tennessee State University

Pamela Bobo, Tennessee State University

Crystal A. deGregory, Doctoral Candidate, Vanderbilt University

Gloria C. Johnson, ex-officio, Tennessee State University

Michael McBride, Tennessee State University

Gloria McKissack, Tennessee State University

Tara Mielnik, Metropolitan Historical Commission

Sharon Hull Smith, Tennessee State University

TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY AND THE METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE HISTORICAL COMMISSION PRESENT THE

29 th Annual

NASHVILLE CONFERENCE ON Chican-Comenican HISTORY AND CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2010
8:30 AM-3:30 PM
TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY, AVON WILLIAMS CAMPUS
10TH & CHARLOTTE AVE.NUE * NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

CELEBRATING THE 50 F ANNIVERSARY OF



The Sit-In Movement

Special Guest Dr. Diane J. Nash

A native of Chicago, Illinois, Diane Judith Nash is known for her leadership role in the Nashville student sit-in movement, where she enabled a southern mayor to confront his own racial views when she posed the perceptive question to then-Mayor Ben West about his personal beliefs regarding the city's segregated lunch counters. Nash possessed an unwillingness to accept the South's segregated code of behavior for American Blacks and went beyond Tennessee's borders to combat America's apartheid system of racial segregation. Because of her commitment to dismantle Jim Crow across the South, she became a leading light in the founding and initial development of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), an ardent advocate of the 1961 Freedom Rides, and a major player in the voter registration drives of the South.

Born in 1938, reared in a Catholic home, and educated in both the parochial and public schools of Chicago, upon being graduated from Hyde Park High School, Nash entered Howard University in Washington, D. C., where she intended to study English. In 1959, she transferred to Nashville's Fisk University and came face—to—face with the 'blatant tracial' segregation that existed in the South.' Because of being affronted and feeling subjugated by Nashville's southern racial customs, she became engaged in the

Nashville movement to redress the city's civil wrongs superimposed upon its black citizens.

Seeking to rectify the South's code of racial segregation, the young college student began attending nonviolent workshops conducted by the Reverend James M. Lawson, under the alliance of the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference, an affiliate of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Although skeptical at first about the espoused Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence, she became inculcated with and a passionate supporter of its protest ideology.

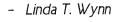
Nash refused to give agency to America's oppressive social systems and embarked upon a mission to secure equality, justice, and social change through direct nonviolent action. She and others who participated in one of the nation's most profound social movements wanted for their people the same rights accorded to

Americans of European decent.

One of the most courageous, innovative, and steadfast leaders of the student Civil Rights Movement, Nash was an insightful tactician as well; her ideas were instrumental in initiating the 1963 March on Washington. She was one of six women honored with an award on 28 August, the day of the massive march. Two years later, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave her and James Bevel the Rosa Parks Award, SCLC's highest honor. Among other awards and honors, in 2003, Nash received the "Distinguished American Award" from the John F. Kennedy Library and Foundation, and in 2004, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum gave her LBJ Award for Leadership in Civil Rights.

Fisk University acknowledged the contributions of its former student, Diane Judith Nash, an agent of social change, a civil rights leader, and social activist, made to the struggle for civil and human rights. On 7 May 2007, the university awarded her with an Honorary Doctorate of Human Letters for her unyielding pursuit of justice for African Americans crippled by state-sponsored segregation and for her never-ending quest to contribute to the moral enlightenment of America. The following year, the National Civil Rights Museum

presented her with its Freedom Award. In November of 2009, Nash was honored in Selma, Alabama, during the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute's Annual Membership Banquet. She was also awarded the Key to the City. The same year, AT & T recognized her contributions as a civil rights leader when it selected her to represent the month of February for its 2010 African American Calendar for the state of Tennessee.



201	10 Progran
8:30	Registration
9:00	Welcome and Opening Remarks
9:15	Making Room at the Justice Table: Overview of the Sit-In Movement Linda T. Wynn, Tennessee Historical Commission and Fisk University
9:30	Long Negotiations, Short Sit-Ins: Desegregation of Knoxville's Lunch Counters Dr. Cynthia Fleming, University of TN-Knoxville
10:10	Jefferson's Wolf Released: Militancy and the Memphis Sit-Ins George Graham Perry, III, TN State Museum
10:40	Break
11:00	Remarks and Special Presentations Karl Dean, Mayor Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County Dr. Melvin N. Johnson, President Tennessee State University
11:30	Nashville Sit-Ins, Then and Now: Reflections of Participants Gloria McKissack, Tennessee State University
12:00	Lunch (provided)
1:30	Singing for Freedom: Songs of the Struggle Fisk University Choir
1:50	We Sat Down, So We Could Stand for the Solution: The Nashville Sit-In Movement TSU Forensics Team
2::15	Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Institutional Responses to Student Activism in Nashville Crystal deGregory, Vanderbilt University
2:35	Special Guest Lecture Using Lessons of the Sit-Ins to Look to the Future Dr. Diane Nash

Closing Remarks

3:15



Timeline of the Mashirle Movement

1958 - The Reverend Kelly Miller Smith, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, and other Nashville ministers establish the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference (NCLC), an affiliate of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) founded by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1957. The NCLC ushered in a new day by dismantling Southern mores that allowed blacks as consumers of goods on an equal basis, but not as equal consumers of services.

March 26–28 – NCLC with the assistance of the Fellowship of Reconciliation—a Christian pacifist organization headquartered in New York, held a workshop with Glenn Smiley, the Reverend James Lawson, and Anna Holden of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), serving as leaders. The Reverend Ralph Abernathy, who had been a leader in the Montgomery, Alabama Bus Boycott was the guest speaker.

May 1958 – The Reverend James Lawson is accepted into Vanderbilt University's Divinity School. Lawson becomes active in NCLC and because he is well-versed in the Gandhian philosophy of direct-nonviolence, the Reverend Smith appointed him as chairman of the Project Committee. Students from Fisk University, Tennessee Agriculture and Industrial State University (now Tennessee State University), American Baptist College (ABC), and Meharry Medical College join the workshops. The Reverend C. T. Vivian assisted Lawson in instructing participants how to protect themselves in the midst of violence and to be creative in difficult situations.

1959 - Early in 1959, the NCLC decided that the time had come to desegregate the downtown eating facilities, since downtown-eating facilities illustrated the hypocrisy of the economic system.

Leaders of NCLC attempt to negotiate with representatives of the two larger department stores, Cain-Sloan and Harvey's, but store managers would not change the status quo for fear they would lose more business than they would gain.

Leaders of NCLC had verbal confirmation of the stores' policies regarding racial segregation, but felt that the stores' governing principle of segregation should be tested in an "action" situation. They not only looked at those who perpetuated the system of segregation, but also at those who complied with the system. In its opinion all who participated in the charade were in accord with the system of racial segregation.

1959 – In November and December, black leaders of NCLC and students John Lewis, Diane Nash, James Bevel, Marion Berry, along with other participants conduct 'test' sit-ins at Harvey's and Cain-Sloan department stores to confirm Nashville's exclusionary custom of racially segregated lunch counters.

Lawson's workshops on nonviolence continued and the group planned to oppose vigorously the policy of racial segregation with continuous sit-ins beginning in 1960. Before the Nashville students could execute their plans, students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College staged a sit-in and capture media attention.

1960 – February 1, Ezell A. Blair, Jr., David Richmond, Joseph McNeil, and Franklin McCain from North Carolina A and T College sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina.

February 13 – 124 students from American Baptist, Fisk University, and Tennessee A & I State University launched their first full-scale sit-ins. They convened at the Arcade on Fifth Avenue, North; at approximately 12:40 p.m., small groups of two and three entered Kress's, Woolworth's, and McClellan's stores, all located on 5th Avenue, North. They made small purchases and within minutes occupied all vacant lunch counter seats. By 2:30 p.m., all three retail outlets had closed their lunch counters, and the students left without incident.

February 18 – Approximately 200 students conducted the second sit-in, selecting the same three lunch counters and W. T. Grants (now the site of the Nashville Public Library). In each case, management immediately closed the counter.

February 20 – 350 students struck the same lunch counters at 11:45 a.m. The protesters converged on Walgreen's at 1:30 p.m. and management immediately displayed a prepared sign: "CLOSED IN THE INTEREST OF PUBLIC SAFETY." While the students were sitting –in at Walgreen's, a group of whites began verbally harassing Carol Anderson, a white protester attending Fisk University. Police cleared the store.

The Walgreen's episode caused Nashville students to formulate rules of conduct for demonstrators, which became the code of behavior for later protest movements across the South.

February 23 – Students Bernard LaFayette (ABC); Curtis Murphy (A & I), and Julia Moore (Fisk), representing Diane Nash, met with Chief of Police Douglas Hosse. They asked that law enforcement officials be placed inside of each store to thwart the possibility of violence advanced by hecklers. Hosse refused the request on the premise that it would disrupt business.

Riots break out in Chattanooga during lunch counter sit-ins. Several whites are arrested.

February 27 - 400 students sit-in and Cain Sloan was added as a site. Violence meets students on this day as hostile whites badger them. Eighty-one protesters were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct.

February 29 – The trials of the students began. More than 2500 people gathered around the courthouse as attorneys from Black community defended the students. Each student was found guilty and fined \$50, which they refused to pay, choosing to serve 33 1/3 days in the county workhouse.



Group of black ministers meet with Mayor Ben West at First Baptist Church, with the Reverend C. T. Vivian presiding. Mayor West states that he is going to uphold the law and that applied to all races. Lawson responded that 'apparently the law was being used as 'gimmick' to keep the Negro in his place and, that being the case, a minority group was justified in defying said law."

March 2 – 350 students staged another sit–in protest, which included Greyhound and Trailways bus stations and Harvey's department store.

March 3 - Vanderbilt University expels the Reverend Jim Lawson for his participation in the Nashville sit-in movement.

Mayor West appoints biracial committee to examine the issue and to make recommendations.

March 16 – Four students from Fisk University sit–in at the Post House Restaurant in the Greyhound bus terminal, they took seats and placed orders. After being served, they were beaten by whites.

March 25 - Sit-ins resume and a crew from the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) arrived in Nashville to film a documentary. 'Anatomy of a Demonstration,' which covered the workshops on non-violent resistance. Governor Buford Ellington charged that the sit-in was 'instigated and planned by and staged for the convenience of CBS.

April 4 – Local newspapers report on the economic boycott of all Nashville downtown stores. The boycott or economic withdrawal lasted approximately seven weeks with a 98% success rate.



April 5 – The mayor's seven-member biracial committee made its report. The committee recommended that the merchants divide their lunch counters into two sections, one for whites and one for Blacks. Student protest leaders and the NCLC rejected the committee's recommendation.

April 11 – Blacks protested against segregation in downtown Nashville. Law enforcement authorities arrest two whites.

April 12 – Students launched a sit-in with a new approach; integrated groups sit-in, while larger groups picketed outside. Student protesters are arrested. McClellan's on Fifth Avenue, North was evacuated after a bomb threat was received.

April 15–17 – The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) is founded in Raleigh, North Carolina at Shaw University. James Lawson of the Nashville sit-ins gives the keynote address, emphasizing both the need for immediate direct–action (as opposed to

slow court cases) and the power of direct nonviolent resistance. Marion Barry of Fisk University in Nashville is elected as SNCC's first Chairman.

April 19 – An early morning explosion damages the home of Attorney Z. Alexander Looby, defense counsel for the students, a city councilman, and a leading figure in desegregation movements throughout Tennessee.

By mid-day at least 4,000 protesters, including some whites, marched silently, in defiant columns to city hall. The Reverend C. T. Vivian and Diane Nash cause Mayor West to affirm that lunch counters should be desegregated.

April 20 - Front-page headline of the Tennessean reads, 'Integrate Lunch Counters, Mayor'

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., addressed a crowd of approximately 4,000 at Fisk University. King prefaced his talk by saying that

the movement here is one of the best organized and best disciplined of the movements in the southland today."

Sit-in protests continue. Downtown merchants reluctantly negotiated with leaders of the Black community to resolve the economic and racial problems. The merchants requested that the negotiators for Black Nashvillians be representative of the black community. The conferees for the black community included Rodney Powell, a student at Meharry Medical College; Diane Nash, a junior at Fisk

University: the Reverend Kelly Miller Smith; and Coyness Ennix, an attorney and member of the school board. Greenfield Pitts, of Harvey's department store and head of the Chamber of Commerce Retail Merchants Division, was the chief negotiator for the merchants.

Negotiation began the second week of April and, by the end of the first week of May, "The Nashville Plan" was laid out for settlement of the sit-in crisis. The plan was simple: only small groups of blacks were to ask for service and the merchants would have their employees fully prepared for the event. Plain-clothes policemen also were to be on hand to take care of any trouble that might develop and a corps of white United Church Women were sent to mingle with the control groups and "give the appearance of normalcy."

May 10 – Six of the seven-targeted stores led by Cain-Sloan and Harvey's served blacks at their lunch counters. The four other stores included Woolworth's, Kress, McClellan's, and Walgreen's. Black patrons, seated next to white supporters and observed by the United Church Women, who were ready to lend any needed support, entered the stores first, then sat down and requested service.

W. T. Grant declined to join the other stores in the settlement. Although students and their supporters refrained from any further sit-in demonstrations downtown for 'a reasonable period of time,' the economic boycott against W. T. Grant continued.

May 18 - All controls were removed.

May 30 - Twelve of sixteen Divinity School faculty tendered their resignations, and Vanderbilt University endured national embarrassment because of its attempt to repress Lawson and the sit-in movement.

June 8 - Grant's opened its lunch counters on a desegregated basis.

June 13 - City Judge Andrew Doyle retired cases against sixty-three students, all resulting from sit-in demonstrations.

June 15 - Merchants and representatives of the Nashville sit-ins met to evaluate the integration of the lunch counters. The merchants said they had been wrong in predicting dire consequences to desegregation. Food service decreased slightly and a few employees resigned rather than work in a desegregated lunchroom. Merchants also reported no effect on retail sales.

The desegregation of the seven lunch counters in the spring of 1960 did not end the sit-in movement in Nashville. In November sit-ins resumed, as racist practices were still customary in most eating establishments and institutionalized racism remained intact.

Information for this timeline is taken from Wynn, Linda T. 'The Dawning of a New Day: The Nashville Sit-Ins, February 13-May 10, 1960,' Tennessee Historical Quarterly, Spring 1991.

- Linda T. Wynn, Tennessee Historical Commission and Fisk University

Nashville Sit,-Ins (1959-1963)

Contrary to popular belief, the 1960s was not the firs't time that American Blacks sat-in to protest unequal treatment at lunch counters and other public accommodations, not even in the South. In 1866 blacks in Tennessee staged their first 'freedom rides,' by boarding streetcars operated by a private Nashville streetcar company, paying the fare, and refusing to sit in the 'colored section.' Later, when the United States Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1875 that guaranteed equal access to public accommodations, black Nashvillians tested the act with sit-in demonstrations in March, the same month that the act was passed.

Believed to be a new tactic to combat racial segregation, earlier protest actions of this type by American blacks have been forgotten. Established in 1942 in Chicago, Illinois, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which was an interracial group, used Gandhian tactics of direct nonviolent action in the struggle for racial equality. During the 1940s, it organized sit-ins and pickets to protest racial segregation in public accommodations and successfully desegregated some public facilities in the North.

Mary Church Terrell, who was well into her eighties, led a successful crusade to desegregate eateries in the District of Columbia. In February 1950, she and three other colleagues (one white and two blacks) entered the Thompson Restaurant and were refused service. When Church and her associates were denied service, they filed a lawsuit. While awaiting the court's decision in the District of Columbia v. John R. Thompson Co. case, Terrell targeted other restaurants, this time using factics such as boycotts, picketing, and sit-ins. Her direct action campaign proved successful. On 8 June 1953, the United States Supreme Court rendered its decision and affirmed that segregated eating establishments in the nation's capital were unconstitutional.

Although the four male students at North Carolina A & T in Greensboro, North Carolina, are given credit for beginning the sit-in



movement on 1 February 1960, according to Aldon Morris' Origins of Civil Rights Movements: Black Communities Organizing for Change, in at least fifteen cities-St. Louis, Missouri; Wichita and Kansas City, Kansas; Oklahoma City, Enid, Tulsa and Stillwater, Oklahoma; Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky; Miami, Florida; Charleston, West Virginia; Sumter, South Carolina; East St. Louis, Illinois; Nashville, Tennessee; and Durham, North Carolina; —civil rights activists conducted sit-ins between 1957 and 1960, demonstrating that the civil rights movement was not just a southern occurrence, but also a national one. Notwithstanding, the Greensboro sit-ins are important because they denote a link in a chain of previous sit-ins and Nashville, Tennessee was one of the links in that chain.

While a few blacks served on the Board of Education, the city council, and the police force, blacks and whites in Nashville were racially segregated. The pattern of racial exclusiveness prevailed in the city's schools and public facilities, including rest rooms, waiting areas, lunch counters, transportation terminals, libraries, theaters, hotels, restaurants, and neighborhoods. Jim Crow pervaded all aspects of life in Nashville and throughout the South.

In 1958 following the formation of the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference (NCLC) by the Reverend Kelly Miller Smith Sr. and others, Nashville's black leaders and students launched an attack on Jim Crow segregation. In March of that year, NCLC members held a workshop on nonviolent tactics against segregation. Early in 1959, the NCLC began a movement to

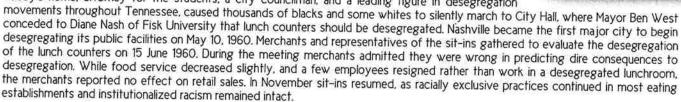
desegregate downtown Nashville. It utilized the concept of Christian nonviolence to stage the Nashville sit-in movement to combat de jure and de facto racial segregation. The Reverend James Lawson, a devoted adherent of the Gandhi philosophy of direct-nonviolent protest, trained local residents and students in the techniques of nonviolence. In November and December of 1959, NCLC leaders and college students staged unsuccessful 'test sit-ins' in an attempt to desegregate the lunch counters at Harvey's and Cain-Sloan's department stores. The Reverends Smith and Lawson, students John Lewis, Diane Nash, James Bevel, Marion Barry and others bought goods and then attempted to desegregate the lunch counters. Before the end of 1959, other college students were trained to participate in the profests. The students were from Nashville's black colleges and universities, including American Baptist Theological

College, Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and Tennessee A & I State University. The

Greensboro, North Carolina sit-in received the first publicity on February 1, 1960.

Twelve days after the Greensboro's sit-in, Nashville's students launched their first full-scale sit-ins on February 13, 1960. Throughout the spring, they conducted numerous sit-ins and held steadfastly to the concept of Christian nonviolence. In addition to Kress's, Woolworth's, McClellan's, Harvey's and Cain-Sloan's department stores, W. T. Grant's, Walgreen's and the Greyhound and Trailways bus terminals were targeted. The students' principles of direct nonviolent protest and written rules of conduct became models for later protests in the South. When the students met with white violence and arrests on February 27, the black community rallied to their support with attorneys and bail money. Approximately eight-one students who were found guilty of disorderly conduct on February 29 refused to pay the fines and chose to serve time in jail. Vanderbilt University's administrators expelled the Reverend James Lawson, a divinity student, for participating in the sit-ins.

Shortly before Easter, black Nashvillians withdrew their economic support and boycotted downtown stores, creating an estimated twenty percent loss in business revenues. To destroy radical evil, you have to be radically good, said Dr. Vivian Henderson, an economics professor at Fisk University. It is a radical evil that rules this town and it will take radical good to break it. As racial tension escalated, segregationists lashed out at civil rights activists. The April 19 bombing Z. Alexander Looby's home, attorney for the students, a city councilman, and a leading figure in desegregation



One of the best organized and most disciplined movements in the South, the Nashville sit-in movement served as a model for future demonstrations against other violations of black American civil rights. Many of the Nashville student participants became leaders in the struggle for civil rights throughout the South.

The deliberate nonviolent actions of college students across the nation caused the walls of racial segregation to crumble and made America live up to its professed principles of equality and justice for all.

- Linda T. Wynn, Tennessee Historical Commission and Fisk University

Sources:

Lovett, Bobby L. Civil Rights in Tennessee, A Narrative. University of Tennessee Press, 2005. Morris, Aldon, Origins of Civil Rights Movements: Black Communities Organizing for Change. Free Press, 1986. Wynn, Linda T. 'The Dawning of a New Day: The Nashville Sit-ins, February 13-May 10, 1960,' Tennessee Historical Quarterly, Vol. L, No.

