

JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

700 PELHAM ROAD N.

JACKSONVILLE, ALABAMA 36265-9982

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

TELEPHONE: (205) 782-5632

Gift and Release Agreement:

We Hilda W. Norton and Ryan A. Krzywicki
(Interviewee) (Interviewer)

Do hereby grant permission to Jacksonville State University to copy the tape of the interview conducted at _____ on the date(s) of _____ for the oral history collection being compiled at Jacksonville State University.

This collection will be maintained by Jacksonville State University for research into the history of Northeast Alabama and the South. We further grant researchers permission to quote from the interview on this tape.

Hilda W. Norton
(Interviewee's signature)

Date Sept. 8, 1995

(Address)

(Telephone)

Ryan A. Krzywicki
(Interviewer's signature)

Date Sept. 10, 1995

9211 JSU
(Address)

JACKSONVILLE, AL 36205

205 782 7496
(Telephone)

Interviewee Background Information

Name: Viola M. Norton
Address: 6175 Misket Lake Rd.
Phone Number(s): ~~617-5498~~ 782-5498
Approximate age or date of birth: Senior Citizen
Mother's name: Dora B. Johnston
Father's name: Fred A. Williams
Places lived and when: Mainly in the Gradedown/Anniston area

Education: College - - Master's Degree

Religion: Protestant

Business, political and social memberships (past and present):
Teachers' professional groups in the past

Present occupation: teacher (on special contract)
Former occupation(s): teacher

Special skills: _____
Major Accomplishments: _____

Local events in which you have participated: _____

State and/or regional events in which you have participated: _____

National events in which you have participated: _____

International events in which you have participated: _____

Natural born U.S. citizen? Yes/No
Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No Date: _____
Country from which you emigrated: _____
Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in your possession: _____

Individuals you recommend who might be candidates for an oral history interview: _____

Additional information: _____

My interviewee's name was Hilda W. Norton.

She filled out the name portion on her chronology sheet and claimed that the other questions, she had no recollection to give fair answers. I have already discussed this with you, so I hope I will not be penalized for being less her chronology.

Ryan Kruzinski

21 Nov. 1995

the big paper

Table of Contents for the interview with Hilda Norton

- Questions on the repellation of section 256 of the Alabama constitution.
 - Questions regarding the impact that the "Brown" case is, was, and what it was feared to be.
 - Questions on the social aspect of the time in Alabama.
 - Questions on leaders of the time, on both sides.
 - Conversation and related topics discussed at random.
 - Questions in specific related to: Bull Connor, "Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka", Martin Luther King, Jr., Goerge Wallace, etc...of specificities and directly named and defined events.
- In the interview, several topics came to light at times that were ahead of, or heading back to questions I was getting to or passed, so that the table of contents submitted maintains minimal order, rather a simple overview.

List of questions for Interview

1. Let me set the scene for you. Jim Folsom is governor. It's 1954. Politically, the state is surrounded with questions of how to circumvent the anticipated "Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka". The lawmakers wanted to keep the school segregated. What were you doing at the time--and how did you feel about the issue?
2. The civil rights issue in the schools was...brought up to children, brought up to faculty members in closed quarters, not talked about at all.
3. During the de-segregation, despite the numerous road blocks you felt...you saw...from whites...from blacks...
4. Most of your opinion on the civil rights issue comes from...
5. When the Birmingham bombings occurred you were...and felt...how did you feel whites felt about it...blacks...
6. Remember the famous George Wallace incident in the schoolhouse door? Were you teaching college then? How did [the place you taught] react?
7. When did blacks first come to Jacksonville State University? Were you here? How did you feel? Your colleagues?
8. Were all places that you know of in Alabama divided on the race issue?
9. Do you consider race a problem today? where? why?
10. How did you feel about Martin Luther King? Any recollection? See him speak? Been to a rally?
11. The bus boycott in Montgomery. Your views, what do you remember?
12. Recollect on "Bull" Connor--was he as unjust as depicted? Do you feel his antics were preposterous, so to speak?
13. Being in English such a long time, and knowing what feeling it takes to write...how were you effected as a reader by King's speeches or the Letter From A Birmingham Jail?
14. What kinds of propaganda did you see, junk mail, billboards, posters, rallies for white supremists, black rights. From 1950's to 1970's if any?

15. Have you ever known a Klansman? (tons of questions)
16. Did you ever feel personally threatened as a white? For your job during the "Brown" decision?
17. Do you feel that effective measures have been taken that have erased any problems on campuses in Alabama concerning blacks and whites?
18. I noticed that the school teachers' salaries for whites tended to be higher than that of blacks. Did you know? Did you speak of it? Until the "Brown" decision then...?
19. Did you ever teach for a black school?
20. Were there any area antics that you could recall in Gadsen luckily for reputations sake never made the national headlines?
21. Could you recall some of the Governors that you voted for at the time of the de-segregation-bombings-bus boycotts; burnings- Did you ever feel that in no way the violence would stop?
22. How do you feel about the decision to repeal 2 sections of section 256 of the state constitution? (state no-pay for public education)
23. Growing up did you feel...about blacks...race...when you went to college?
24. Do you find it ironic that Bibb Graves was in the KKK? George Wallace's name on Martin Hall?
25. Describe the decade of the 50's, 60's, 70's, from a whit teacher looking at black students, and black students looking back at you.
26. Do you feel the attitudes of the people were in general,...about being in the same places as eachother?
27. In passing each day I hear the word nigger at least three times, how many do you? at all? In 1955? '65? '75?

A 23 Year Old Yankee Liberal's Depiction of
the Civil Rights Movement

-1995-

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During the decades of the 1950's and the 1960's, the state of Alabama saw most of the forerunners of the Civil Rights Movement. What is interesting to note is that while this was prevalent elsewhere in the nation, Alabama refused to recognize these people and their leaders and their cause. Several key incidents touched the hearts of many around the nation and the world, and yet Alabama felt no remorse, and no reason to recognize what others saw as a real issue to be discussed.

Through a series of events in the Civil Rights Movement, the eye can see a mass of persons, and their plight for the same rights as the whites who made them. These events will be covered in this paper, as well as one insiders remarks about situations taken from present day recollection.

The origins of the Civil Rights Movement go back to the year 1865, the year the Civil War ended. President Abraham Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all the slaves in the nation from undue servitude. From that moment forward, southern states, especially Alabama, began their long arduous fight to maintain their so called supremacy and hold onto the life and customs that they so endeared.

Of the Civil Rights Movement, the topics of School De-segregation, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Freedom Rides, the events at Birmingham and Tuscaloosa in the spring of 1963, the March on Washington, and Selma and the Voting Rights Act, will all be covered and commented and tried to be relayed from the eyes of a 23 year old on the 130 year old cause.

From "Plessy" to "Brown"

On May 6, 1896, the separate but equal doctrine was administered by the Supreme Court of the United States. This case, known as Plessy vs. Ferguson was the infamous decision that played a role in Civil Rights until the middle of the 20th century. The case stated that as long as facilities are equal, the fact that they are separate does not constitute infringement of Civil Rights. The doctrine was effective until May 17, 1954 when the Court unanimously overturned it, opting for a

repellation of any separate but equal facilities. The case that overturned the "Plessy" case became known as "Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas".

During the 1930's, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) came into existence. Headed by chief counsel Charles Houston, the NAACP attacked the "Jim Crow" system of schooling. The first case came when the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case of Missouri vs. Canada in 1938. In this case, a black man in the state of Missouri (Lloyd Lionel Gaines) had wanted to go to a law school. The state said that they would plan to build a law school for Gaines on the grounds of the all-black Lincoln University, in order that he may not attend the all white law school pre-existing. Houston argued that just because a school was built, that it didn't necessarily mean it was a law school, and that "Plessy" said the facilities must truly be equal. Subsequently, Gaines was permitted to attend the Missouri School of Law. This case is significant in that it spawned several views and persons over the next 14 years who are to be in the forefront or behind the scenes, to the ultimate hearing of "Brown" before the same court.

In 1946, Thurgood Marshall, Houston's successor set up the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. The fund set up specifically for the purpose of the associations legal matters. In 1950, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the cases of "Sweat vs. Painter", and "McLaurin vs. Oklahoma State Regents". Represented by the NAACP, these cases were similar to "Missouri" in that they were two graduate students that wanted to gain admission to all white graduate schools, as they had not been granted admission according to their race. Although it did not overturn "Plessy", the court ruled that if a school was to be separate but equal, if not an authentic replication of this statute, the effort was unconstitutional.

Marshall then led a conference in New York City that launched an all-out opposition and eventual overturning of "Plessy". Attended by 43 lawyers and 14 NAACP branch and state

conference presidents. This group sought to end segregation. They felt that blacks were entitled to "equal protection of the laws" guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. They felt that in segregation this was not possible, and their crusade against it would begin.

In 1952, the Supreme Court agreed to hear five cases dealing with Civil Rights to be argued by NAACP. The five cases were, "Davis vs. County School Board", from Virginia; "Bolling vs. Sharpe", from Washington, D.C.; "Gebhart vs. Benton", from Delaware; "Briggs vs. Elliot", Clarendon County, Virginia; and "Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka", which would become the nameplate of the cases. Each of these cases had already been tried or were to be represented under "Brown", because it was felt that they would not win in the federal district courts of their respective states. An overview of these cases leads to the Supreme Courts decision which was delivered on Monday, May 17, 1954. The day came to be called "Black Monday" by the white supremists and staunch segregationists. In their findings, the court unanimously decided to overturn the "Plessy" decision of "separate-but-equal". The opinion was read by Chief Justice Earl Warren. The heart of this decision is found in two sentences: "We conclude, unanimously, that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate-but-equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

The statute set by "Brown" had placed an umbrella of fear over the white lawmakers in the state of Alabama. Some of this was "protection of the white womanhood"¹ by the men of the state, and to most it was the fear of the upheaval to the social traditions and mores of the time. The state seemed to want to hold on tightly to the antebellum period of their history to where they would live happily in the past. Henceforth, this report will now cover the effects of this case and it's related topics on the state of Alabama, switching from the national level.

¹HildaNorton:Interview

withauthor,TapeRecord;Jacksonvill,Alabama,15November1995.

Alabama Before and After

Preceding the "Brown" case, the Alabama state legislature was run more or less by anti-segregationists. They felt it was not the National Government's right to dictate to them that they would have to capsize their social and economic traditions and structure.

For almost five years preceding the decision, these men brooded the repercussions of the decision. They sought to allign the government with surreptitious laws that would make the move one that would never be implemented.

From the late 1940's into the 1950's, the teacher salaries for black schools had catapulted 212%, and funding for black students skyrocketed 310%. In the Alabama Legislatures' eyes, this would dictate separate-but-equal. A special counsel designed to curtail and circumvent the "Brown" decision met called the Joint Interim Legislative Committee. They talked of drastic measures that would end the threat of it's passing.

In August of 1955 the Alabama Legislature, under manipulation from the committee, passed the School Placement Law. This law stated it was up to the local school board official whether or not a student was or was not qualified to attend the school in question. The criteria for this mainly comprised of: class size, available transportation, and intensity of the curriculum. These laws were clearly reminiscent of the Black Codes, that were to keep the blacks from voting some decades earlier. It is important to note that the School Placement Law had not once mentioned race, although it was read through all over as such.

The next step the committee took was more drastic. In a move that proves to still hinder most citizens a quality education in the state of Alabama. The repellation of section 256 of the Alabama Constitution was passed. Called Senate Bill

47, this took the responsibility of the state as a financial means for the state education system away. This effected the ways teachers were to conduct their lessons, putting some of the responsibility for supplies in the hands of the teachers as they were told, " there's no money for this and there's no money for that".² This forced the teachers to buy their own supplies.

The Bill called for the dropping of race as a criterion to be admitted to any school. Also, it allowed the local school board to decide to close the schools in their jurisdiction, should integration pose a threat to the social order of the community. The bill stated that Alabama had a "policy to foster and promote the education of it's citizens, but nothing to be construed as education at public expense"³. Also it gave parents or guardians the freedom to choose which schools in particular their student was to attend.

Senate Bill 47 was supposed to solicit a surge of private funding to support white only schools, in which case the thoughts of blacks being admitted was rendered unnecessary. The law was constructed under careful scrutiny so that Blacks would never find a home in white schools. What their careful scrutiny failed to recognize was the long term effects of such dilinquency of thinking things through.

The law was interrupted by the Supreme Court late in the 1960's, when the forced implementation of the "Brown" case was put forth. Also, to this day many schools in Alabama, even some mostly white, are less the funds they need to educate their citizens so they can compete with the rest of the country in the job market.

The general concensus of the whites is they thought blacks had no need, nor did they want integration to occur. Conversely the blacks in Alabama wanted nothing more than what the whites were trying to keep them from.

²Norton;interview,auth.

³Crowther,EdwardR."Alabama's fight to maintain segregated schools".AlabamaReveiw(July1990):206-224.

From these feelings, many black leaders emerged in the civil rights movement. Previously, the black man in the United States had abided by the rules and took change when it came their way. This had been the idea of Booker T. Washington, an influential black at the turn of the century. But with the recent surging of tension from the white side of the argument, it was clear the time for rapid legislation and social change was necessary. The negro in Alabama would begin to lobby for change, and use measures such as passive resistance to promote their cause. Peace was the way, for if not, the whites would constrict them even more for wanting what was rightfully theirs.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks was ending a long day at her job at the Montgomery Fair department store, where she was a seamstress.⁶ Each day she took segregated public transit to and from work. Parks being black, had to adhere to special rules that were made only for the colored people on the buses. If there was no open seat for a white to sit in, then a black who was sitting in a seat had to vacate the seat for the white, or face a fine or imprisonment. Also, the blacks had to sit in the back of the bus, and the whites in the front. This particular day, Parks, who was an NAACP member for some time, was asked to get up as to relieve a white from having to stand. Parks refused, and was ordered off of the bus, and subsequently arrested for her "wrongdoing". What followed is the spearhead of the national Civil Rights Movement.

Local blacks were outraged at the decision of the city to jail Parks. To them it was unjust and immoral. Even some whites at the time "admired the woman for what she did."⁷ Once and for all, the blacks were going to convey their feelings of being prejudiced against.

⁶WilliamWarrenRogers,DavidWard,LeahRawlsAtkins,WayneFlint.Tuscaloosa:AlabamaHistoryofaDeepSouthState.TheUniversityofAlabamaPress;1994;735pages

⁷Norton;interveiw

Martin Luther King Jr. was the son of an Atlanta minister. King, along with former head of the NAACP Alabama chapter, E.D. Nixon (who bailed Parks out on bond) organized a meeting to discuss which actions they were to take. Nixon was quoted as saying to Parks, "With your permission, we can break down segregation on the bus with your case."⁸ Of the leaders called on, First Baptist Church minister Reverend Ralph Abernathy, and Reverend L. Roy Bennet, president of the Interdenominational Ministers Alliance, were included.

The meeting discussed a boycott of the Montgomery buses. The bus company earned 70% of its revenue from black patrons. Together, Nixon and King orchestrated an all-out boycott. Begun on December 5, 1955, it was participated in by 90% of the blacks who bussed. The night it began the leaders and many of the participants met to display the real cause. Close to 3,000 met at Holt Street Baptist Church. Their message was this, "If you will protest courageously and yet with dignity and Christian love, when the history books are written in future generations, the historians will have to pause and say, 'There lived a great people--a black people--who injected new meaning and dignity into the views of civilization.' This is our challenge and our overwhelming responsibility."⁹ That statement is a chilling and moving depiction of the cause they sought.

The plan set up 48 dispatch locations, and 42 pick-up stations. The bus company began to lose \$600 a day.¹⁰ Private citizens who had blacks as employees were forced to pick them up at home. Blacks who walked were subject to ridicule, and physical violence from whites as they passed in the street. On January 30, 1956, a bomb was thrown at King's house, and two nights later at E.D. Nixons. The police arrested boycott participants. The boycott lasted until December 17, when the Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling that had overridden the city's bus segregation, and ordered the de-segregation of the city's bus system. The boycott stifled the economy in

⁸Williams, auths. Alabama

^{9,10}Crowther, Ala. Fight to Maintain Segreg.

Montgomery and called the nation's attention to Alabama, which began to hinder financial matters for the state in the area of business. At the time, King was only an onlooker as to the prejudices against his people. Throughout the boycott however, King gained prominence, influence, and a sense of his people to emerge as a true leader.

During the boycott the Southern Christian Leadership Council was formed, and became known as the SCLC. The organization worked in collaboration with the NAACP, as they both had the same cause. The NAACP was the legal aspect, and the SCLC was the leader for the groups and gatherings. Leaders in the SCLC included King, Abernathy, and E.D.Nixon. Following the boycott, King was to lead the SCLC in Atlanta, Georgia, and in his absence there was sniper fire on black passengers of buses, and the bombings of four black churches. One of the bombings was at Abernathy's home.^{11, 12}

Related to "Brown", the boycott threatened to upset the system that surrounded the social structure of Alabama. The blacks seemed as though they were looked at still as freedmen, with nothing but technical skill. The blacks wanted their chance to prove themselves worthy of their fight. Once again the U.S. Supreme Court had to issue a statement of action to be taken.

Freedom Rides

In March of 1961, a man named James Farmer began the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Farmer called for volunteers to begin inter-racial freedom rides. Road trips were taken to instigate the whites in lawmaking position to make it more costly to keep the segregation intact, so they would have no alternative but to boycott their cause in it.¹² (no pun intended) The Freedom Riders also tested the social tolerance of the citizens by using of the same waiting rooms, restrooms, and drinking fountains etc.¹³

¹¹William Rogers; auths. Alabama

^{12, 13}Wexler, Sanford; The Civil Rights Movement an eye witness history (1993)

This is important to Alabama because when the Freedom Riders traveled their trip into sections of the state, violence erupted. Ironically, most of the arrests that were made were of the Freedom Riders, who didn't try with any force to put forth their cause. It was ironically the more educated and social understanding whites that lead the havoc. The mobs attacked Freedom Riders were in Anniston, Birmingham, and Montgomery.

Birmingham and Tuscaloosa 1963

The city of Birmingham's nickname was "Bombingham". This coming after 18 unsolved bombings since 1957. On Mother's Day 1961 there was an attack on the Freedom Riders. Police Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene "Bull" Connor had purposely told his men (all white), to not interfere. Connor closed city parks on the threat of coloreds being allowed to enjoy themselves there. As you can see, Connor did his very worst to comply with the law. Although, he did arrested a city bus driver for complying with the de-segregation order. Over many incidents, some Alabama residents began to dislike the force he used," Him and his ilk, I have no feeling for men like that, there not men."¹⁴

Because of the problems race had in Birmingham, leaders of the Civil Rights Movement got together to plan their attack on the city. In January of 1963, they met at the SCLC retreat in Dorchester, Georgia. Martin Luther King, Wyatt Walker, Ralph Abernathy, and Fred Shuttleworth, worked on the project. Shuttleworth was the president of the local civil rights organization, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR). What resulted was their attack on segregation in Birmingham. They called what they planned Project C. The "C" stood for confrontation.¹⁵

¹⁴Norton;interview

¹⁵Wexler:CvilRitsMovmnt

On April third, the first of their plan took place. The first of their actions was in the form of a sit-in at local department and drugstores, restrooms, and downtown lunch counters. At the Kress department store in Gadsen, AL blacks, " Sat at the lunch counters to be served, and of course they weren't, so they lyed down on the floor in protest."¹⁶ In Birmingham, of course Connor and his rightfully biased henchmen arrived to quell the violence that his presence was to bring. By the end of the week, Connor had carried away over 150 peaceful demonstrators.

On April sixth, the SCLC led a march on city hall that had 30 participants. Police came and took them all away. Shuttleworth was the leader of that group.

The next day was Palm Sunday, and Reverend A.D. King, (MLK's brother), led a march through the streets of Birmingham. Once again the national spotlight was to be on the darker side of Alabama. With a flurry of reporters flashing bulbs on the protesters, and on the police with their nightsticks and dogs, the rest of the nation had their eyes focused on Birmingham.¹⁷

On April 10th, the city passed a state court injunction against future demonstrations. One particular Alabama Circuit Court Judge W.A. Jenkins Jr. had placed special order prohibiting 133 civil rights leaders from any sort of passive activity promoting their effort. These included sit-ins, picketing or other demonstrations.¹⁸

From this ruling, King planned a strategy that he was to give up his freedom for the cause. He stated that he was going to go to jail on Good Friday. The result of this experience inspires more than his fellow race. This effort ignited the very concious of the people in the country outside of Alabama to really feel the cause being fought from the blacks eye view. King was quoted as saying, "Here in Birmingham", "We have reached the point of no return."¹⁹

¹⁶Norton;interveiw

^{17,18}Wexler:CivilRitsMovmnt

¹⁹Baldwin,LewisV."MartinLutherKing,Jr.,Is he irrelevant":Martin Luther Kink,Garrow,DavidJ.(1989),235

On Good Friday, King led 1,000 marchers onto city hall, singing hymns and chanting "Freedom has come to Birmingham". Bull Connor arrived and arrested Abernathy, Shuttleworth, and King. While being escorted to the police van, the world was capturing the story for themselves on camera. Connor was infuriated and so was the audience of the display.

While in jail, King wrote his now famous essay, Letter from a Birmingham Jail. In the essay King answers questions of criticism submitted by ministers of his timeliness of the protest. In it he says, " I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was well timed in the view of those who have not suffered the disease of segregation."²⁰

King and Abernathy were released on bail, and tried to muster their losing support from it's followers. It seemed as though they had run out of adults that wanted to go to jail.

The children's crusade was introduced. It was a movement by King to get the message across, even if the adults were not willing to fight. It is important to note that the adults had fears of losing their jobs if they participated in the marches or demonstrations. It was not because they had no interest that they did not participate. Knowing that children would have less of a fear of getting arrested, King also believed it would provide the children with a scope to see their true heritage and purpose, aside of the hate and prejudice that would see throughout their lives.

On May third police barricaded the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. 1,000 black students assembled there. Connor of course was on the scene with his arsenal of fire hoses, police dogs, and the usual police thugs. With water dispersed strong enough to take the bark off of a tree, the police struck when the students tried to leave the building. Attack dogs were set loose, and knightstick flailing police attacked the demonstrators/children.²¹

²⁰Rogers, auths:Alabama

²¹Wexler

Lucky for Connor, the media was on hand again to witness the barage of hate action taken against the supposed lawbreakers. For the next few days the number of demonstrators increased. By May sixth, over 2,000 of them had been jailed.²²

Boycotts of stores and the turmoil surrounding the demonstrations caused a drop in sales in the city. The merchants urged Burke Marshall, who was sent from the Justice Department of the U.S., to negotiate a resolve.

The result was a four point plan that Abernathy, King, and Shuttleworth all agreed to. It was announced on May 10th. The four points of the agreement were: 1. desegregation of lunch counters, restrooms, fitting rooms, and drinking fountains in all downtown stores within 90 days; 2. placement of blacks in all previously all-white clerical and sales positions in the stores, through upgrading and rehiring, within 60 days; 3. release of prisoners;, and 4. establishment of permanent communication of white and black leaders.²²

It was apparent this was a sort of resolve for the blacks, but the whites again saw it would disrupt their daily lives. The whites seemingly had come to detest the black leaders. The KKK was meeting feverishly during the negotiations, and the day after the accord was announced, rallied just outside Birmingham. Following the rally, bombs exploded at the motel room of King's little brother, where King and his aides had been staying during the meetings. Blacks reacted by throwing rocks at police. Rioting resulted, and state troopers hit blacks with no concious or cause.

The Schoolhouse Door

The University of Alabama was ordered by a federal district judge on May 21st to admit two black student. Almost immediately Governor George Wallace had said he would bar any black from desegregating the school. What followed became the famous "stand in the schoolhouse door".

Wallace planned to block the entrance of the two black students on June 11th. Vivian Malone and James Hood were the

students. Wallace was advised by businessman and university trustee, Winton M. Blount to simply state that Wallace felt that the federal government had overstepped it's boundaries, and then quietly step aside. Federal marshalls were called in to escort the students, as a babysitter of sorts was needed to keep uprisings from this at a minimum.

The whole scheme had been contrived over a series of months. Times were becoming increasingly tense in the area of having to face integration. Wallace was just one of those people who didn't want it to happen. "He knew integration, why shouldn't it?"²² When the situation came to a hilt, it took a matter of minutes. Wallace refused admittance before stepping aside. There is not much one can do with a Presidential proclamation in your face, but to obey it, and even Wallace knew that. The two students were put into registration for classes that were to begin in September.

With anticipated problems expected, National Guardsmen were sent by President Kennedy to insure safe surroundings.

Once again Birmingham takes the credit for a national headline getting reaction. On Sunday, September 15th, a bomb shook the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. In the basement were four young ladies who listened to their parents upstairs in the church talk of, "The Love that Forgives".²³ Residents of Alabama were stunned, "The terrible emotions I felt, I remember that like I remember The day JFK was shot, it was one of those moments that were crystallized."²⁴

A rally was held that afternoon in which Reverend Ferrill Griswold denounced the bombers and talked of the necessity that it was to integrate schools. Two Eagle scouts, sixteen years old each, had heard Griswolds speech that afternoon and saw two blacks riding home on a bicycle.

^{22,24} Norton; interview

²³ Rogers, auths. Alabama

Remembering what Griswold had said of integrating the schools, one of the scouts shot 13 year old Virgil Ware, one of the two blacks, who was riding on his brothers handlebars.²⁴

What needs to be pointed out is the action involving the boys was decided on by a sixteen year old. There was no adult present to egg the youth on in his attempt. It is important to note because many of the people of the time instilled in their children the same thinking that had been instilled in them. That being that the negroe was not, would not, and never would nor should be considered to be an equal of the whites. This kind of thinking so far has carried the weight of ten tons of dynamite on the concious of both blacks and whites. The simple fact the blacks were not respected enough to be talked to negotiatingly was clearly indicative of this fact. The fact that a boy just out of middle school would lack the sensitivity to see that what he was taking was a human life, not a black or white one is also an indicator.

1963 March on Washington²⁵

As not too much can be said in this report other than Alabama history, I'd like to interject a little information on the March on Washington, and then comment on the Civil Rights act that was passed apparently as an annexation of that day and it's message.

On August 28, 1963 in Washington D.C., 250,000 people of all shapes, sizes, and colors assembled in the Civil Rights march on Washington. Campaigning for jobs for minorities, and equal rights under the law, the rally was host to many national Civil Rights leaders. Among these leaders was King, who delivered his famous 'I have a dream' speech. It was said by one observer that, "That day, for a moment, it almost seemed that we stood on a height and could see our inheritance; perhaps we could make the kingdom real, perhaps the beloved community would not forever remain the dream one dreamed in agony."²⁶

²⁴Rogers

^{25,26}Wexler

The location of the march had stirred interest in many persons. The message that was sent was one that would see the Civil Rights movement become a real cause that many became aware of.

From influence put forth from the march, in addition to common sense, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into existence the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act outlawed discrimination in voting and public accommodations, and required fair employment practices.²⁷

Selma and the Voting Rights Act of 1965

In the heart of the Black Belt lays Selma. Selma is part of Dallas county. In 1964 in Selma only three percent of the eligible black voters registered. This was mainly because the blacks felt that it would serve no purpose for them to vote. In spite of all that was happening nationally, and in the parts of Alabama where all of the attention seemed to be, (Birmingham) it never seemed as though this would ever change.²⁸

After the march on Washington, King and his entourage needed to re-align to insure registered voters would be their next concentration. In Selma they found just the place to begin. Selma was where Bull Connor was born, there was a heavy cotton industry during the antebellum period, and where the first meeting of the White Citizens council met. It was found that blacks that had tried to register were denied for reasons that clearly dated to the black codes era.

It was decided a march would be organized where the offices of voter registration would be confronted. King had said, "we are no longer asking, we are demanding the ballot."²⁹ On January 2nd, their crusade began, and by the end of the month over 2,000 blacks had been arrested. To the delight of Birmingham, the national media concentrated on Selma. People were arrested, beaten, and mistreated for participating. What wasn't realized

^{27,29}Wexler

²⁸Rogers

by the arresting officers is that they were being scrutinized for their efforts nationally. The lawmakers of the area were trying to do their best to keep things the way they had been. King himself was arrested. Each new day, more people, this time not only blacks had decided to support and join the movement.

President Johnson had declared, "I should like to say that all americans should be indignant when one American is denied the right to vote. The loss of that right to a single citizen undermines the freedom of every citizen."³⁰

On Wednesday February 18th, a civil rights march was attacked by law enforcement officers, and one 26 year old Jimmy Lee Jackson was shot in the stomach, and died a week later. From this, King demanded that there be a march from Selma to Montgomery. The march was to protest police brutality, and denial of voting rights. King told his followers that he couldn't deny the fact that they may be beaten, but that the cause needed to be fought, and with no delay. The march was to begin on March 7th, and was outlawed by Governor Wallace. The march was to be from the Edmund Pettis bridge in Selma along route 80 into Montgomery. The marchers planned to deliver a petition of grievances to Governor Wallace.

Since the march was illegal, when the group of 600 got to the end of the Edmund Pettis bridge, they were met by a slew of state troopers, who ordered the marchers turn around and return to their church. Of course they did not comply, and of course violent action was taken on the peaceful demonstrators, and of course the media was there to capture the whole situation in all of it's glory. Sympathizers from the north began to arrive in Selma to join the cause. In several cities around the nation, sympathy marches were commonplace. The march resumed on March 9th. This time they were stopped by state troopers, but instead of being beaten they were given permission to pray. In that group there were 1000 blacks, and over 450 whites.

³⁰Wexler

That night, 38 year old Reverend James J. Reeb, was dining out. When he left the restaraunt, he and the other two diners with him were attacked by local whites. Two days afetr the attack, he died. This was a national outcry, and on March 15, 1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson announced he would send a voting rights bill to Congress that would, "strikedown all restrictions used to deny the people the right to vote." That evening, he addressed 70,000,000 viewers at home in front of their televisions. He told them it was wrong to deny your fellow citizens the right to vote. He called on the events of Selma as an example of a turning point in America, equal to that of Concord, Lexington, and Appomattox. He said, "At times history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom." He went on to say, "...so it was last week in Selma, Alabama."³¹

Tools to Work With

From the initial beginning with "Brown" the move began progressed and overcame. With voting rights, de-segregation, and the principles of equality instilled in the minds of the citizens and government, the time came for the results prove themselves. The civil rights movement had aquired tools to work with. They had triumphed the laws and resentments by passively resisting, and resolutely protesting. The turning point and time and place all belonged to the blacks and the whites. The future was to prove to this day to be trying at times. That is expected from a near revolution. The blacks had emerged a class, no longer portrayed by the law or themselves as sub-human. They had taken up betrayal against their agressor and victored on human principle. The black people are a great people with different views on life and it's meaning, but that should not hinder one's advancement or decline, especially at the hands of another.

It is so hard to recreate a moment, or a mood that it carries. This was to depict the trials of a powerless society, in it's struggle for equal rights when a state was going through

³¹ Wexler

it's own powerless struggle. The 1950s and the 1960s proved trying times for Alabama. With social mores and traditions challenged, the affected reacted with just cause and each side should be understood. The state continues to unite and divide over the same issue, although it seems it may be starting to dwindle. For the civil rights movement, it's still here, as are prominent memories of it's beginnings. These memories, with it's truths and realities will carry the cause for longer than life exists