

Liberty University

**The Protestant Vatican: Black Churches Involvement in The Nashville Civil Rights
Movement 1865-1972**

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by

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Abstract

Black churches played a significant role in the Long Civil Rights Movement in Nashville, Tennessee, from Reconstruction to the early 1970's. A more detailed study of the history of the movement and the role that Black churches played needs to be done at the local level, to gain a better understanding of how the Nashville Civil Rights Movement developed logistically and ideologically. This dissertation assesses how the Black Church, as an institution of African American life in Nashville, shaped and directed civil rights activism in that city. Black churches provided the headquarters that established two of the most influential civil rights organizations in Nashville: the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC) and the Nashville Student Movement (NSM). These churches provided a home to many future notable national civil rights figures, including John Lewis, Diane Nash, James Bevel, Marion Barry, Bernard Lafayette, among others. Nashville churches provided activists nonviolent training and place of refuge during civil rights protests in Nashville, and a religious theology to combat social injustice. Because of the strong Christian tradition in the Black community in Nashville, it emerged as one of the best organized and powerful movements in the national struggle for civil rights.

Acknowledgments

I learned about Nashville's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement when I took Dr. Learotha Williams's African American History course in the Fall of 2013 at Tennessee State University. Dr. Williams introduced me to a public history project in Nashville called the North Nashville Heritage Project including images of the Nashville Sit-Ins. He showed me a picture of Zephaniah Alexander Looby's house being bombed near Meharry Medical College by white segregationists on April 19, 1960. This blew my mind because despite being a native Nashvillian and living in Nashville all my life, I never knew about Nashville's Civil Rights Movement. After graduating from Tennessee State University in 2016, my true calling to learn about African Americans emerged. In June 2016, I began working for Blackpast.org. The first assignment I had to write for the site was Roger Williams University, a historically black college located in Nashville, Tennessee, from 1866 to 1929. Roger Williams University's history is the focus of my writing about the University. Following writing on Roger Williams University, the rest was history, where I continue contributing to the site today. I want to thank Southern New Hampshire University for allowing me to enroll in their Master of Arts in History program. I received my master's Degree in 2019 by writing my thesis *In it for the Long Haul: The Nashville Sit-Ins, Pioneering Nonviolence Training, and National Leadership*. I appreciate all the history professors at Liberty University who helped me through my Ph.D. in History journey. Two professors in particular are Dr. Carey Roberts and Dr. Luci Vaden. Dr. Roberts advised me to focus on Nashville's black churches in my dissertation. Dr. Vaden has done well in guiding me through my dissertation journey and what direction I should go through my research. Lastly, even though they are no longer here living on this earth, to both my parents, Janet Karnley

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As the Civil Rights Movement unfolded in Nashville, Tennessee, the Black Church Community shaped and directed local Black activism. The Nashville Civil Rights Movement holds a very important place in history, both on a local and national level. Nashville Civil Rights Movement participants impacted various Civil Rights Movement events like the Freedom Rides, Birmingham Campaign, the March on Washington, Selma to Montgomery Marches, the Chicago Freedom Movement and others which led to the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Civil Rights Act of 1968. As part of Nashville's local achievements in the movement, downtown lunch counters and movie theaters desegregated in 1960 and 1961, respectively. The Nashville Operation Open City campaign, which took place between 1961 and 1964, continued the desegregated civil rights campaign in other public facilities that remained segregated, including restaurants, grocery stores, hotels, and drug stores, until the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Even after the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964, Nashville Black Churches continued to be involved in other issues in the city, including housing, urban rioting, and school busing.¹

Nashville churches such as First Baptist Church Capitol Hill, then located at 319 Eighth Avenue North, and Clark Memorial Methodist Church at Phillips Street and 14th Avenue North, held nonviolent workshops for training participants. In addition to serving as meeting houses for civil rights protest meetings, these churches also served as gathering places before and after these protests. Due to their location, black churches served as a physical center of the movement in

¹ “School Desegregation In Nashville-Davidson, Tennessee,” University of Maryland, last modified April 14, 2024, <https://www2.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/cr12d4512.pdf>.

downtown Nashville, particularly for desegregating public accommodations. The Clark Memorial Methodist Church stands at Phillips Street and 14th Avenue North near Jefferson Street, where Nashville's Black community mainly lived. Located near Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, the church neighboring these two prestigious Historically Black Colleges and Universities allowed them to recruit students to participate at the nonviolent workshops and protest demonstrations downtown.²



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²² Lee S. Perkins, "Clark Memorial United Methodist Church," Blackpast.org, November 02, 2016, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/clark-memorial-united-methodist-church-1865/>.

³ Natalie Neysa Alund, "Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement," *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

Figure 1.1 A group of about 60 demonstrators gather at First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill to get instructions for their protest Feb. 24, 1963, at the downtown YMCA to protest the association's segregation policy. The pro-integration group was led by the Nashville Christian Leadership Council.



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Figure 1.2 A group of about 60 black and white demonstrators leaves the First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill at Eighth Avenue, North, to march two and a half blocks to protest the segregation policy of the YMCA building Feb. 24, 1963.

First Baptist Church Capitol Hill and its congregants led by Kelly Miller Smith Sr., participated in nonviolent workshops, but the church's main contribution to the movement was

⁴ “Lost Nashville: “First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement.” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

its support of Nashville Sit-Ins, the Open Theater Movement, and Nashville Open City protests.⁵ Smith and congregants from the church protested downtown lunch counters including Woolworth and Walgreens. Congregants protested other racially segregated public accommodations, including the Crescent, Paramount, Tennessee, and Loew theaters in downtown Nashville.⁶ Restaurants included Krystal and B&W Cafeteria along with stores like H.G. Hill and Wilson-Quick Pharmacy. First Baptist Church Capitol Hill also provided the place of refuge before and after civil right protests in Nashville. The church held personal meetings with Nashville politicians like Raphael Ben West discussing issues in the city.⁷ Clark Memorial Methodist Church held the annual Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) meeting in September 1961, culminating in the theme of *The Deep South In Social Revolution* and discussing philosophy of nonviolence in the Civil Rights Movement.⁸ In this way, Black churches in Nashville helped use a Christian ideology to shape responses to social injustices, not just in Nashville, but on national scale an organizations worked to combat racial discrimination nationwide.

One organization that proved paramount to the Nashville movement was, the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC), which was established by Kelly Miller Smith Sr on

⁵ “Lost Nashville: “First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement.” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

⁶ Ricky Rogers, “Lost Nashville: The four Church Street Movie Theaters,” *The Tennessean*, November 26, 2019, <https://www.tennessean.com/picture-gallery/news/local/2019/11/27/lost-nashville-church-street-movie-theaters-downtown-nashville/4240655002/>.

⁷ James Talley, "Judge Harris Ouster Sought." *The Tennessean*. March 01, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111999041/?terms=Judge%20Harris%20ouster%20sought.%22&match=2>.

⁸ “Annual Meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Council.” The Civil Rights Movement Archive. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6109_sclc_convention.pdf.

January 18, 1958. Smith gathered other Black Nashville ministers at the Capers Memorial CME Church to form the organization, and Smith served as the Council's first president. The NCLC's aimed to unite Christian clergymen and laymen of all denominations in the common venture of spreading the ministry of reconciliation and love in a society of racial injustice.⁹ Smith's inspiration of the organization included a number of factors, including the Montgomery Bus Boycott, SCLC, and *Robert W. Kelly, et al. v. Board of Education* that led to the desegregation of Nashville Public Schools and the resistance among white segregationists of the case. Being inspired by the establishment of the SCLC, Smith told King that he would go back to Nashville and establish a civil rights organization similar to the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and SCLC. Their purpose was also to apply the central tenets of their faith to the problems of injustice and persecution and segregation. The NCLC wanted to attack social problems in the city of Nashville while operating within the context of the Christian faith.¹⁰

In 1959, the NCLC project committee chair Reverend James Lawson, an Ohio native, began holding workshops on nonviolent direct action at Clark Memorial Methodist Church. In these nonviolent workshops, called "Movement Schools," participants received nonviolent training in the churches. Lawson argued and believed that people in the United States were one group of people instead of separated groups. Therefore, Americans did not need to segregate, and Lawson thought nonviolence was the solution to the world problems regarding conflict and war. The Christian principles which Lawson used were based on nonviolence to train students for the

⁹ "Toward The Beloved Community: Story of The Nashville Christian Leadership Council," Civil Rights Movement Archive, last modified April 17, 2024, https://www.crmvet.org/docs/61_nclc.pdf.

¹⁰ *Nashville Christian Leadership Council. Toward The Beloved Community: The Story of The Nashville Christian Leadership Council*. Nashville: 1961.

Nashville Sit-Ins. Gandhi's ideas of peaceful resistance against the British was what Lawson saw as a tactic which African Americans in Nashville could use against whites. Lawson believed that nonviolence would end segregation in the South similar to how Gandhi used this tactic in British colonization. In addition to college students, local pastors, and priests, attended the Movement Schools workshops. The workshops advocated for nonviolent methods to desegregate public facilities. Leaders of the NCLC held mass meetings at churches to raise money for bail, to recruit lawyers to represent the students, and to promote an economic boycott designed to reinforce the students' demand that lunch counters be desegregated.¹¹ The purpose of the NCLC was to apply the central tenets of the Christian faith to the problems of injustice and persecution and segregation. The NCLC efforts try to also capture the loyalty of the many people of the city through Christian action which makes the Kingdom of God possible rather than a future kind of hope.¹²

In March 1958, Lawson attended a workshop meeting at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church called "Christian Nonviolence" and began working with the NCLC. The meeting at the church began with Lawson discussing nonviolent tactics for fighting segregation at Nashville's public accommodations. The purpose of the workshop was to "deal with any violence can be met and defeated by the Christian concept of love."¹³ The three-day

¹¹ Isaac, L.W., Cornfield, D.B., Dickerson, D.C., Lawson, J.M. & Coley, J.S. (2012) "Movement Schools" and Dialogical Diffusion of Nonviolent Praxis: Nashville Workshops in the Southern Civil Rights Movement, *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 34, 155-184.

¹² *Nashville Christian Leadership Council. Toward The Beloved Community: The Story of The Nashville Christian Leadership Council.* Nashville: 1961.

¹³ *Nashville Christian Leadership Council. Toward The Beloved Community: The Story of The Nashville Christian Leadership Council.* Nashville: 1961.

workshop meeting was held using nonviolent tactics to challenge segregation in Nashville led by Lawson.¹⁴

In addition to being a civil rights activist, and a methodist minister, Lawson belonged to the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and CORE, organizations that advocated nonviolent resistance to racism. During his travels to India, Lawson studied satyagraha, a form of nonviolent resistance developed by Mohandas Gandhi. Lawson mentored Nashville civil rights participants using satyagraha, including adults and young college students at Vanderbilt University, as well as four historically black colleges and universities in Nashville, including Fisk University, Tennessee State University, Meharry Medical College, and American Baptist College. Clark Memorial Methodist Church near Fisk University emerged as the site of Lawson's nonviolent workshops classes. During these workshops at the church, Lawson taught nonviolence philosophy, as well as how to apply these tactics in public accommodations in Nashville.¹⁵

The Nashville Black Churches along with NCLC and NSM also collaborated with other student-dominated groups such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to organize demonstrations such as the Nashville Sit-Ins, Freedom Rides and Operation Open City. The Nashville Sit-Ins, which took place between February 13 and May 10, 1960, are the most notable event in the local Nashville movement. Nashville became the first southern city to desegregate lunch counters because of the Sit-In Movement in the 1960s. When the protests began, the churches held crucial meetings to

¹⁴ Samuel Momodu, “*Nashville Christian Leadership Council (1958-1964)*,” Blackpast.org, June 3, 2020. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/institutions-african-american-history/nashville-christian-leadership-council-1958-1964/>.

¹⁵ “Jim Lawson Conducts Nonviolence Workshops in Nashville” Digital SNCC Gateway, last modified March 30, 2024, <https://snccdigital.org/events/jim-lawson-conducts-nonviolent-workshops-in-nashville/>.

decide what action to take next. John Lewis recalls: “The First Baptist Church became a rallying point, it became the meeting place, it became the place where the students, young people, community leaders, could come and discuss, debate and argue about what the city should become.”¹⁶

Many influential leaders in the National Civil Rights Movement trained in Lawson’s nonviolent workshops at Clark Memorial Methodist Church, including John Lewis, Diane Nash, James Bevel, Bernard Lafayette, and Marion Barry. Lewis, Nash, Bevel, and LaFayette came from various religious backgrounds. Lewis belonged to a Baptist church, Nash practiced Catholicism, and Bevel was also Baptist, so their religious ideology drove their activism and helped them connect within the Christian community in Nashville. Nash, a native of Chicago and participant of Lawson’s nonviolent workshops at Clark Memorial Methodist Church, organized Nashville Freedom Riders during the Freedom Rides in May 1961 and worked as a strategist of the Nashville Student Movement (NSM). Her most notable achievements include organizing Nashville Freedom Riders during the Freedom Rides at First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill in May 1961 and being a strategist of the NSM. As a result of the meeting at First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, Nashville participants saved the Freedom Rides campaign.¹⁷

More research needs to be done on the church's involvement and ideological impact in the movement at the local level and its contribution to the doctrines, strategies, and success of the Nashville civil rights movement. Black Churches in Nashville did more than just train participants in nonviolence for the Nashville civil rights protests. Churches provided the moral

¹⁶ Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, NY: Little Press, 1984), P. 175.

¹⁷ Samantha Kealoha, “Diane Nash,” Blackpast.org, April 18, 2007, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/nash-diane-judith-1938/>.

and Christian footprint for addressing social injustice. They also provided the meeting place in organizing and planning on what actions to take next on civil right demonstrations against segregation public accommodations in the city. Nashville's churches offered refuge before and after demonstrations. Participants in the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville gathered frequently at churches after demonstrations ended, even when White segregationists were attacking them during the Civil Rights Movement, The Nashville Civil Rights Activists and church ministers such as Smith, Lawson, Cordy Tindell Vivian, and Joseph Metz Rollins guided participants on the actions to take during civil rights demonstrations held at downtown public accommodations.¹⁸

Nashville Black Churches emerged as early as the 1830's as the backbone of the black community, and so it made sense that they continued that role during the Long Civil Rights Movement. During and after the Civil War, Black churches in the city continued to flourish. By 1858, nearly 3,000 Whites and 1,015 Blacks belonged to the Methodist churches in the Nashville area.¹⁹ In 1860, the First Colored Baptist Church had around 500 members.²⁰

Reconstruction proved a period of civil rights activism, including sit-ins organized by civil rights activists at downtown Nashville restaurants in 1875 in support of newly passed laws. In 1905, several ministers from Nashville Black Churches included Preston Taylor of Gay Street

¹⁸ “Complete Coverage: The Civil Rights Movement in Nashville,” *The Tennessean*, March 02, 2017, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/2017/03/02/complete-coverage-civil-rights-movement-nashville/98648442/>.

¹⁹ Bobby Lovett, *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee: A Narrative History* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 29.

²⁰ Lynn T. Wynn, “First Colored Baptist Church,” Tennessee State University, April 24, 2024, <https://ww2.tnstate.edu/library/digital/FIRSTCB.HTM#:~:text=First%20Colored%20Baptist%20Church%20was,church%20edifice%20owned%20by%20blacks..>

Baptist Church and Revered J.A. Jones of St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church organized boycotts of Nashville Streetcars. As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum in the late 1950's and early 1960's in Nashville, Smith reached out to his congregation at the pastor of First Baptist Church at Capitol Hill and the Black community in Nashville, building on a tradition of church activism established in the early 20th century. He and his congregation collected money for participants arrested in the nonviolent protests in public accommodations. Besides being a member of SCLC, Smith also founded the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC). Smith established the NCLC at the Capers Memorial Christian Methodist Church on January 18, 1958, which was supposed to be Nashville SCLC branch. The different types of Black churches involved in Nashville's Black church involvement is another unique aspect of the movement. During Nashville's civil rights protests, these Black churches worked together in the movement. Black Baptist churches like the First Baptist Church at Capitol Hill and Black Methodist churches like Bethel A.M.E Church and Clark Memorial Methodist Church participated in the movement.²¹

Famous civil rights leaders and activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks have dominated the popular view of the Civil Rights Movement. They were also involved in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and Selma to Montgomery Marches, both popular Civil Rights Movement events that often occur in discussions. Evidence of this appeared when the first generation of Civil Rights Movement scholars began to write about the movement in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing on leaders and events of national significance including Martin Luther King Jr and the March on Washington. In their view, the civil rights struggle was primarily a political

²¹ "Nashville's Civil Rights Movement," United Street Tours, last modified March 31, 2024, <https://unitedstreettours.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Nashville-CIVIL-RIGHTS-TOUR-by-Historic-Nashville-on-United-Street-Tours.pdf>.

movement. As social history began illuminating the everyday lives of ordinary people in the fields of women's, labor, and African American history, it left the study of civil rights virtually untouched at first. In general, civil rights historians were steered toward traditional approaches, but new approaches were not ignored. In 1965, a book called *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements* edited by Geroge Breitman was released. The book was about the major speeches made by Malcolm X during the last tumultuous eight months of his life. It begins with him speaking as a Black Muslim leader to a Negro conference in Detroit in 1963 and continues up to a radio debate three nights before his murder.²² In 1966, Spencer Crump released a book called *Black riot in Los Angeles: the story of the Watts tragedy*. In the book, Crump gives an account of riots in South Los Angeles in August 1965 on all what occurred.²³ In 1969, Herbert G. Locke released a book named *The Detroit riot of 1967*. In the book, Locke explained all the events that occurred in the riot of Detroit in 1967. Locke the riot's outbreak and the aftermath thereof.²⁴

The second generation of Civil Rights Movement scholars emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s and reshaped the historiography of the Civil Rights Movement with a focus on the participation of national civil rights organizations including the National Association for The Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In 1981, Civil Rights Movement historian Clayborne Carson released his book *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the*

²² Geroge Breitman, *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. and trans. Malcolm X. (Greenwich Village: Grove Press, 1965).

²³ Spencer Crump, *Black riot in Los Angeles: the story of the Watts tragedy*. (Los Angeles: Trans-Anglo Books, 1966).

²⁴ Hubert G. Locke, *The Detroit Riot of 1967*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969).

1960s assesses, how the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) became one of the most influential civil rights organizations in the 1960's.²⁵ According to them, local communities and grassroots organizations should be the focus of the investigation. From the 1990s to the present, historians have begun pursuing a more interactive model, recognizing the need to connect the local with the national and the social with the political by examining both external and internal influences on the national political struggle, including non-governmental organizations such as the media and liberal philanthropic foundations, as well as relations between races and sexes in the movement.

Another significant contribution to civil rights scholarship over the last few decades has been the Long Civil Rights Movement. Scholars have argued that the Civil Rights Movement began decades before the *Brown V. Board of Education* decision and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. In 2005, historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall wrote an article named "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." In the article, Hall argued that the civil rights movement began in the late 1930s and continued well past the 1960s. Other scholars have argued that the Civil Rights Movement started with emancipation and continues until today.

Undoubtedly, the Long Civil Rights Movement began taking off during the 1930s, surrounding the New Deal era of social reform. Scholars who wrote about the Long Civil Rights Movement have acknowledged the contributions of Asa Philip Randolph to the movement. Randolph established the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925. He also headed the plan March on Washington in 1941 until President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 banning

²⁵ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

discrimination in defense industries. Randolph also became an organizer of the 1963 March on Washington.

Historians have studied the Civil Rights Movement for decades. In 1955, C. Vann Woodward released a book called *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. In the book, Vann argued that racial segregation in the rigid and universal form that existed in 1954 did not appear with the end of slavery. Woodward also claimed that Jim Crow Laws were not part of the immediate aftermath of Reconstruction; they came later and were not inevitable.²⁶ The book reached a large popular audience and helped shape the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Martin Luther King Jr called the book "The historical bible of the Civil Rights Movement." The 1974 edition added new chapters to account for the rapid changes between 1955 and 1965, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In 1981, Clayborne Carson released his book *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. In the book, Clayborne gives the complete story of SNCC's evolution, successes, and difficulties in the ongoing struggle to end white oppression. Carson also argued that SNCC changed from a group that endorsed white middle-class values to one that questioned the basic assumptions of liberal ideology and raised the fist for black power.²⁷

In 1984, Aldon Morris released a book called *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. In the book, Morris gives an account of the origins, development, and personalities of the Civil

²⁶ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 2001).

²⁷ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

Rights movement from 1953-1963, starting with the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott in 1953.²⁸ In 1987, David Garrow released a book about King's life called *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*. The book also discusses his organization in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Civil Rights Movement.²⁹ In 1988, Taylor Branch released a book called *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–1963*. Branch explained civil rights events in detail in the book, including the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the 1961 Freedom Rides, the 1963 Birmingham Campaign and Children's Crusade, and the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Branch also explained Martin Luther King Jr role in them events as well.³⁰ In 1998, Branch released another book called *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963–1965*. In the book, Branch mentions the assassination of President Kennedy, the Mississippi Freedom Summer, and King's acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize.³¹

In 1999, Timothy B. Tyson released a book called *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of "Black Power"*. In the book, Tyson tells the story of Robert F. Williams, one of the most influential black activists of the generation who toppled Jim Crow and forever altered the arc of American history. Tyson also argues that Williams supported armed self-defense as

²⁸ Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

²⁹ David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*. (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

³⁰ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–1963*. (New York City, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

³¹ Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963–1965*. (New York City, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1998).

president of the Monroe, North Carolina, chapter of the NAACP.³² Adam Fairclough released a book called *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr* in 2001. Aside from Martin Luther King Jr., Fairclough discusses other members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). According to Fairclough, Julian Bond, Jesse Jackson, Wyatt Walker, Andrew Young, and others also played a role in Selma and Birmingham and Albany and Chicago, respectively.³³

In 2002, James T. Patterson released a book named *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Troubled Legacy* *Brown v. Board of Education: a Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*. In the book, Patterson explained all the events during the *Brown v. Board of Education*.³⁴ In 2003, Barbara Ransby released a book called *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*. In the book, Ransby explained the life of Ella Baker and her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.³⁵ In 2004, Lance Hill released a book called *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement*. The book, the first detailed history of the Deacons for Defense and Justice, grew to several hundred

³² Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of "Black Power"*. (Capitol Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

³³ Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

³⁴ James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Troubled Legacy* *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002).

³⁵ Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*. (Capitol Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

members and twenty-one chapters in the Deep South and led some of the most successful local campaigns in the civil rights movement.³⁶

In 2005, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall released an article called *The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past*. In the article, Hall said that the civil rights movement began in the late 1930s and continued well past the 1960s. Hall challenged the dominant narrative, which rightly celebrates the Civil Rights decade between *Brown v. Board of Education* and the passage of the Voting Rights Act.³⁷ David L. Chappell released a book called *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* in 2005. David Chappell argues in the book that the civil rights movement was not the culmination of decades of gradual progress that ushered in liberal ideas. Rather, it is a story of the power of religious tradition. Chappell also argued about roots of civil rights reform, showing how northern liberals' faith in the power of human reason to overcome prejudice was at odds with the movement's goal of immediate change.³⁸

In 2006, Raymond Arsenault released a book called *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*. In the book, Arsenault explained all the events during the Freedom Rides.³⁹ During that same year, Taylor Branch released a book named *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–1968*. In the book, Branch covers the Selma to Montgomery

³⁶ Lance Hill, *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement*. (Capitol Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

³⁷ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “*The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past*,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol 91, No. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172?saml_data=eyJzYW1sVG9rZW4iOiJlMzk1YjZmMy0wYjkyLTQ1ZjltYjE0MC0yOWFjYjY3MTliMjEiLCJpbmN0aXRldGlvbkkyI6WyJjNGZjMjNmMCO1MDQzLTRiOWMtYjgzNS0wZTBkZDBhMDA2MjMiXX0

³⁸ David L. Chapell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*. (Capitol Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

³⁹ Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006).

marches, the 1966 Chicago Open Housing Movement, Dr. King's participation in the Anti-Vietnam War movement, the Watts Riots, and the events leading up to King's assassination.⁴⁰

Also, that same year, Michael J. Klarman released a book called *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. In the book, Klarman argues that Brown was more important for mobilizing southern white opposition to racial change than encouraging direct-action protest.⁴¹ Charles Marsh *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* in 2008. In the book, Marsh focuses on the events and religious convictions that led each person into the political upheaval of 1964. Marsh also mentioned the many individuals that were involved in the movement including Fannie Lou Hammer, Sam Bowers, William Douglas Hudgins, Ed King, and Cleveland Sellers.⁴²

In 2009, Patricia Sullivan released a book called *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement*. In the book, Sullivan explains the little-known early decades of the NAACP's activism and the organization's history.⁴³ In 2013, Akinyele Umoja released a book, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement*. In the book, Umoja argues that armed resistance was critical to the Southern freedom struggle and dismantling segregation and Black disenfranchisement in places like Mississippi.⁴⁴ In 2015,

⁴⁰ Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–1968*. (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

⁴¹ Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁴² Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights*. (Princeton, NJ: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

⁴³ Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement*. (New York, NY: The New Press, 2009).

⁴⁴ Akinyele Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement*. (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2013).

Charles E. Cobb Jr released a book called *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible*. In the book, Cobb argued the vital role of armed self-defense in the survival and liberation of black communities.⁴⁵ In 2018, Timothy Tyson released a book called *The Blood of Emmett Till*. In the book, Tyson reexamines the lynching of Emmett Till in 1955.⁴⁶

Another critical aspect of the Civil Rights Movement, in addition to the individuals and events, was the involvement of the Black Church in the movement. Black churches helped mold a leadership style emphasizing cooperative values of democracy, equality, and mutuality. Cultivating cooperative values was usually outside the conventional avenues of ministerial training, such as seminaries, ministerial alliances, and denominational conventions that emphasized a hierarchical approach. Few books have been published about the Black Churches' involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.

In 1990, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya released a book named *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. In the book, Lincoln and Mamiya examine and analyze the Black Church as it relates to African Americans' history and contemporary black culture. Lincoln and Mamiya discuss the attitude of the clergy toward women pastors, the reaction of the Church to the civil rights movement, the attempts of the Church to involve young people, the impact of the black consciousness movement and Black Liberation Theology and clergy, and trends that will define the Black Church well into the next century.⁴⁷ In 2001, Anne

⁴⁵ Charles E. Cobb Jr, *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible*. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014).

⁴⁶ Timothy Thompson, *The Blood of Emmett Till*. (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2018).

⁴⁷ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).

H. Pinn and Anthony B. Pinn released a book named *Fortress Introduction To Black Church History*. In the book, the two co-authors give an overview of the shape and history of major black religious bodies: Methodist, Baptist, and Pentecostal. The two also argued about the denominations and their demographics before relating their historical development from the eighteenth century to the end of the Civil Rights Movement into the groups we know today.⁴⁸ In 2002, Anthony B. Pinn released the book *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. In the book, Pinn themes the history of the Black Church and the major beliefs and forms of worship that define this tradition⁴⁹. In 2019, Duchess Harris released a book called *The Impact of Black Churches: On the Civil Rights Movement*. In the book, Harris explores Black churches' history and their roles during the Civil Rights Movement.⁵⁰

Historians have studied the Nashville Civil Rights Movement for decades. In 1989, David E. Summer wrote a dissertation called *The Local Press and the Nashville Civil Rights Movement, 1960*. In his dissertation, he argues that competing newspapers, *the Nashville Banner* and *the Tennessean*, cover the Nashville Sit-Ins. Lee's argument in the dissertation came with four main conclusions. First, the *Tennessean* published longer, more favorable articles about the sit-ins than the *Banner*. Second, *Banner* publisher James Stahlman, who opposed the sit-ins, exercised more direct control and influence on his newspaper's coverage than *Tennessean* publisher Silliman Evans, Jr. Third, students regarded media coverage as very important and took it into

⁴⁸ Anne H. Pinn and Anthony B. Pinn, *Fortress Introduction to Black Church History*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001).

⁴⁹ Anthony B. Pinn, *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. (Ossining, NY: Orbis Book, 2002).

⁵⁰ Duchess Harris, *The Impact of Black Churches: On the Civil Rights Movement*. (Chicago, IL, Core Library, 2019).

consideration in the planning and conduct of the sit-ins. Finally, neither newspaper told the whole story about the sit-ins. Both failed to report on important issues related to the sit-ins, such as the support of the sit-ins from the black adult community and the boycott of the stores.⁵¹ In 1991, Leila Meier, a graduate student at Vanderbilt University, wrote a master's thesis called *A Different Kind of Prophet: The Role of Kelly Miller Smith in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement, 1955-1960*. A part of Meier's work documented Smith's involvement in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement, including *Kelly V. Board of Education* and the Nashville Sit-Ins. In 1998, journalist and historian David Halberstam released a book called *The Children*. In the book, Halberstam assesses the Nashville Student Movement's involvement in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement and other civil rights events. He argues how the civil rights organization created activists and future civil rights leaders like John Lewis, Diane Nash, James Bevel, and many others. That same year, John Lewis released his memoir *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*. In the book, Lewis explains his involvement in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement, from the Nashville Sit-Ins to Selma to Montgomery Marches. Lewis mentions church activism briefly in his memoir. Lewis learned about nonviolence at the First Baptist Church on Capitol Hill and the Clark Methodist Memorial Church through nonviolent workshops hosted by Lawson. In addition to the Nashville Sit-Ins and Freedom Rides, he discussed the role churches played in these movements. In 2005, Dr. Bobby Lovett, a Tennessee State University professor, released a book called *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee: A Narrative History*. In the book, Lovett explores the Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee in three phases: 1864 to 1880, 1881 to 1934, and 1935 to the present. Lovett also focuses on four major Tennessee cities:

⁵¹ E. David Summer, "*The Local Press and the Nashville Civil Rights Movement, 1960*" (Ph.D. Diss, Georgia State University, 2010).

Nashville, Knoxville, Memphis, and Chattanooga.⁵² That same year, Lisa Mullins released a biography on Diane Nash called *Diane Nash: The Fire of the Movement*.⁵³

In 2006, Benjamin Houston wrote a dissertation called *The Nashville Way: A Southern City Confronts Racial Change, 1945-1975*. His dissertation analyzes the origins of the black freedom struggle in Nashville, Tennessee, from 1945-1975. Houston's dissertation also gives a scholarly understanding of two robust Southern belief systems. Moderation and nonviolent direct action. He also explains the racial relations between blacks and whites in Nashville during this period⁵⁴ Unlike previous dissertations and thesis focusing only on the Nashville Sit-Ins, Houston presents other civil rights events that occurred in the city of Nashville aside from the Nashville Sit-Ins, like the protests at Nashville grocery stores H.G. Hill. He also explains the student protests at the Nashville Movie Theaters, including the Paramount, Tennessee, Loew's, and Crescent theaters in 1961. He goes on to describe other objections to Nashville public accommodations up to the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Houston also had a chapter in his book about the Black Power Movement in Nashville, including the Nashville Riot of 1967 involving Stokely Carmichael coming to Nashville. Houston later turned his dissertation into a book named *The Nashville Way: Racial Etiquette and the Struggle for Social Justice in a Southern City* in 2012.

⁵² Bobby Lovett, *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee: A Narrative History* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005).

⁵³ Lisa Mullins, *Diane Nash: The Fire of the Movement* (Miami, FL: Barnhardt & Ashe Publishing, Inc).

⁵⁴ Benjamin Houston, "The Nashville Way: A Southern City Confronts Racial Change, 1945-1975" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 2006).

The Nashville Civil Rights Movement: A Study of the Phenomenon of Intentional Leadership and its Consequences for Local Movements and the National Civil Rights Movement by Barry Lee argues that the Nashville Civil Rights Movement created future leaders and activists in Nashville and the entire civil rights movement in John Lewis, Diane Nash, James Bevel, Bernard Lafayette, and others. He argues that the student activists in Nashville participated in every civil rights event, from Nashville to the Selma to Montgomery marches.⁵⁵ Lee somewhat mentions how Nashville black churches and black colleges and universities played a role in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement in chapter two of his. He mentioned on how First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill gather activists' days before the Nashville Sit-Ins begin on February 13, 1960. Lee discussed how the activists gathered at the church when they had a meeting and decided to continue the Freedom Rides after the violence that occurred in both Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama. His dissertation focused and main argument is on the students who became leaders in the Civil Rights Movement.

In 2013, Aaron Michael Owens wrote his master thesis, "*The Price of a Woolworth's Burger*": *The Importance of and Overshadowing of the Nashville Sit-Ins*". In his view, Owens examines how the sit-in demonstrates that he used direct action and civil disobedience to target segregation at lunch counters. Owens also looks at other cities with lunch counter sit-ins, like Wichita, Kansas, and Greensboro, North Carolina. He argues that the Nashville Sit-Ins surpassed the other two cities in planning, organizing demonstrations, and ending results following the

⁵⁵ L. Barry Everett, "*The Nashville Civil Rights Movement: A Study of the Phenomenon of Intentional Leadership and its Consequences for Local Movements and the National Civil Rights Movement*" (Ph.D. diss., Georgia State University, 2010).

protests.⁵⁶ That same year, Leevia Barnett released a master's thesis called *Civil Rights from Macomb to Peoria to Nashville: Reverend Cordy Tindell (C.T.) Vivian and the Communities that Cultivated His Growth as a Prominent Civil Rights Activist*. In the thesis, Barnett examines the context in which civil rights activist Cordy Tindell (C.T.) Vivian's early life in west central Illinois helped mold him into the civil rights activist and man of faith that he later became. In 2019, I wrote a master thesis called *In it for the Long Haul: The Nashville Sit-Ins, Pioneering Nonviolence Training, and National Leadership*. I explore how the Nashville Christian Leadership Council pioneered nonviolent workshops during the civil rights movement and how the Nashville Sit-Ins created civil rights leaders. In 2021, a memoir by C.T. Vivian was released called *It's in the Action: Memories of a Nonviolent Warrior*. Vivian explains his life and times in the Civil Rights Movement in the book. In 2022, Michael K. Honey and Kent Wong released a book called *Revolutionary Nonviolence: Organizing For Freedom*. The book gives a long history of nonviolent philosophy through the teachings of Rev. James M. Lawson Jr.

Most of these dissertations and books mainly focus on the Nashville Sit-Ins and the involved activists. Although historians acknowledge the importance of the Nashville Civil Rights Movement, there is still a gap in the study that has not been addressed in terms of the religious aspect of the campaign. At the same time, most scholarly works have focused on the Nashville Sit-Ins, famous civil rights activists, and even the historically Black Colleges and Universities involved in the movement. Literary works on the black churches' involvement in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement had not been written or discussed much. This research addresses black churches' participation in the civil rights movement in Nashville during the late 1950s and early

⁵⁶ M. Aaron Owens, “*The Price of a Woolworth’s Burger*”: *The Importance of and Overshadowing of the Nashville Sit-Ins* (Master Thesis., East Tennessee State University, 2013).

1960s. This dissertation focuses on the Black churches because they were the significant factors why the campaign in Nashville was successful as it became. These churches provided the training grounds that taught participants how to conduct nonviolence against segregationists in public accommodations that were racially segregated in Nashville.

The black churches' involvement in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement comes from a long history of the black church's paramount importance among African American community going back to slavery. In 2021, Harvard University professor Henry Lewis Gates Jr released a PBS documentary and book called *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song*. In the book, Gates mentioned, "The importance of the role of the Black church at its best cannot be gainsaid in the history of the African American people. Nor can it be underestimated." Civil rights activist and pastor Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins Jr mentioned in 1959 that "Negro churches need to turn from their rallies, pastor anniversary celebrations, and other special efforts and become actively involved in the social and human struggle over the Southland." Rollins also mentioned that black churches in Nashville must adopt the attitude that the time to wait for desegregation is now. Rollins mostly meant that the black churches in Nashville had an essential role in getting involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the South at the time. Just as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church were involved in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Rollins, Smith, and Nashville First Baptist Church Capitol Hill forged the Nashville Civil Rights Movement. Similarly, how Dexter Avenue Baptist Church was responsible in the creation of the Montgomery Improvement Organization (M.I.A.), Capers Memorial Church created of the NCLC. Students created the Nashville Student Movement (NSM) at the Clark Methodist Memorial Church.

The second chapter of this dissertation traces the establishment of black churches in Nashville in the nineteenth century and their importance to black communities in Nashville, including their activism against *Plessy v. Ferguson*. This led to the establishment of the Union Transportation Company, a black owned streetcar company to give Nashville black residents an alternative to segregated streetcars. Nashville black church ministers in conjunction with the black community protested segregated streetcars in 1905. The Nashville Streetcar Boycott soon became the largest example of an urban transportation protest before the Montgomery Bus Boycott, half a century later. Chapter three discusses the events surrounding the protests the Fisk University president Fayette McKenzie held in 1924-1925 and how the church participated in them. Chapter three also focuses on Kelly Miller Smith Sr's involvement in the *Kelly v. Board of Education* suit in Nashville and co-founder of the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference established at Capers Memorial C.M.E. church by Smith and others. The chapter also focuses on how the nonviolent workshops held by Lawson at Clark Memorial Methodist Church helped prepare the participants for sit-in protests at Nashville public segregated accommodations. The establishment of the Nashville Student Movement will also discuss how the churches had a role in the civil rights organization being established during this time. Chapter four discusses how First Baptist Church Capitol Hill played a role in the Nashville Sit-Ins between February 13, 1960- May 10, 1960, in Nashville. The main result of the Nashville Sit-Ins led to the desegregation of lunch counters in downtown Nashville. This made Nashville the first southern city to desegregate lunch counters during the Sit-In Movement in the early 1960's.

Chapter five discusses the church's involvement in the protest of segregated grocery stores like H.G. Hill and movie theaters, including stand-ins protests from 1960-1961. The chapter also discusses the church's involvement in the Freedom Rides in 1961. The Freedom

Rides, organized initially by the Congress of Racial Equality, ended the rides after participants got attacked in Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama. Led by Diane Nash, decided for the Nashville Student Movement continues the Freedom Rides. The chapter will discuss how the churches were involved in that as well. The chapter will also discuss King and Southern Christian Leadership Conference's annual meeting at Clark Memorial Methodist Church in September 1961. Chapter six discusses the churches' involvement in Nashville's Operation Open City, where civil rights activists in Nashville attempted to protest other segregated accommodations in the city from 1961-1964. The public accommodations included restaurants B&W Cafeteria, Tic-Toc Restaurant, Wilson-Quick Drug Pharmacy, and others leading up to passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Chapter seven continues to speak about the church's involvement in other civil rights activities in Nashville after the 1964 Civil Rights Act in was passed.

Some civil rights activists who participated in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement became known national figures in recent years. This includes John Lewis, who became a congressman from Georgia. Marion Berry, who became mayor of Washington D.C. In 2022, President Joe Biden awarded Diane Nash the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her contributions and efforts in the Civil Rights Movement. Other figures that participated in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement, including Kelly Miller Smith Sr, James M. Lawson Jr, and J. Metz Rollins, have not been mentioned or known to most. In addition, Black churches played a significant role in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement, which has impacts that reverberated around the nation. Black churches in Nashville, like First Baptist Church of Capitol Hill and Clark Memorial Methodist Church.

The black churches in Nashville played an essential role in the Civil Rights Movement. In general, Nashville Black Churches had a lasting impact on the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement both locally and nationally. Through local desegregation campaigns in Nashville, black churches contributed to the success of civil rights campaigns. During the Civil Rights Movement, participants from these churches took leadership roles in the well-known civil rights campaigns. Nashville Black Churches' involvement can be argued to have made a significant impact on movement history.

Chapter 2: The Great Awakening: The Establishment of the Black Church and Early Civil Rights Activism in Nashville 1835-1907

Black Churches and ministers in Nashville have been active in civil rights advocacy going back to Reconstruction. Several Black ministers, including Samuel Lowery and others, organized the first annual State Colored Men's Convention at Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church in August 1865. At the meeting, the first Tennessee State Colored Men's Convention called for final ratification of the 13th Amendment and citizenship and Black suffrage. A year later, a second Tennessee State Colored Men's Convention in August 1866 also occurred at Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church. The main issue discussed at this meeting was voting for Black people in Tennessee since laws prohibited them from doing so. Following the meeting, the Tennessee State Colored Men's Convention organized a Tennessee chapter of the National Equal Rights League in pursuit of Black suffrage. Black leaders organized crowds to demonstrate daily at the General Assembly chambers until a Black suffrage bill passed. The Tennessee legislature later granted Black Tennesseans the right to vote and hold office on February 25, 1867.⁵⁷

Between 1881 and 1921, Black Nashvillians led a long Civil Rights Movement that sought equal rights under Jim Crow. In 1881, Tennessee passed the nation's first Jim Crow segregation law. The law segregated railroad trains and caused Black Nashvillians to lead their first freedom ride demonstration by buying first-class tickets and attempting to board the cars. The United States Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, ruled "separate but

⁵⁷ "1867 House Bill 805," Tennessee Virtual Archive, last modified March 31, 2024, <https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/reconaa/id/390/>.

equal" public facilities did not violate Black citizen's rights under the Fourteenth Amendment. In March 1905, the General Assembly passed a Jim Crow streetcar law that racially segregated Nashville Streetcars between Blacks and Whites. When the new law took effect on July 05, 1905, Black Nashvillians boycotted the Nashville Transit Company. As the boycott occurred, the Nashville Transit Company lost hundreds of customers per day and saw its revenue drop dramatically. On August 1, 1905, three Nashville Black Ministers and businesspeople, Preston Taylor of the Gay Street Colored Christian Church, Sutton Griggs of First Baptist Church, East Nashville, and Richard Henry Boyd of Mount Olive Baptist Church, assumed leadership roles in the boycott and began to organize members of the Black community in Nashville. This resulted in the Union Transportation Company being charged to provide a convenient transportation alternative for Black passengers and carry freight throughout central Tennessee's cities and towns. Taylor became the company's first president, while Boyd became the company's purchasing agent. The Union Transportation Company existed for two years until financial problems and other causes caused the company to cease operations. Despite this, other civil rights activism among Nashville Black ministers and churches continued in the coming decades up to the 1950's.⁵⁸

This chapter traces the establishment of Black churches in Nashville in the nineteenth century and their importance to Black communities in Nashville. Including their activism in fighting for Black suffrage in regards for abolishment of slavery, citizenship, and voting rights in Nashville during Reconstruction. Later, Black activism protested *Plessy v. Ferguson* which led to the establishment of the Union Transportation Company, a Black owned streetcar company to

⁵⁸ Samuel Momodu, "Union Transportation Company," Blackpast.org, November 30, 2016, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/union-transportation-company-1905-1907/>.

give Nashville Black residents an alternative to segregated streetcars. Nashville black church ministers in conjunction with the Black community protested segregated streetcars in 1905. The Nashville Streetcar Boycott soon became the largest example of an urban transportation protest before the Montgomery Bus Boycott, half a century later. Black religious institutions served as the backbone to civil rights activism dating back to the 19th century in Nashville, Tennessee, and they provided the legacy and foundation that later civil rights leaders and organizations built their movements.

For many historians, the Twentieth Century serves as a starting point for a study of Nashville's Civil Rights Movement. However, to fully understand how the churches played such a critical role in the civil rights events in Nashville, one must start by going back to the city's inception. When Nashville was settled in 1780, the Black residents, both free and enslaved, worshipped with their owners and White neighbors through informally organized congregations. Not all local Black religious services were under White control. Some Nashville Blacks operated. Some Blacks worked in invisible churches, which they shrouded in secrecy. The meeting places for the hidden churches consist of lean-to-structures, clearing in the woods, and free black homes. The invisible churches allowed Blacks to escape the constant surveillance of Whites and integrate African practices into White religion.⁵⁹

The origins of Black churches started to emerge from White churches in the 1830s during the Antebellum Period. The Colored Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church became one of Nashville's first quasi-independent Black congregations. The Colored Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church grew out of Vine Street Christian (Disciples of Christ), a White church. 1831, the

⁵⁹ Bobby L. Lovett, Linda T. Wynn, and Caroline Eller, *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee Second Edition* (Nashville, TN: For the Annual Local Conference on Afro-African Culture and History, 2021).

church had 163 White members compared to 117 Black members.⁶⁰ In 1832, Capers Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) Church founded. The Capers C.M.E. Church began as "the African Mission" of the white McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church in Nashville. James Gwin, a Methodist minister, began to preach to enslaved people around 1828-29. Under Gwin's leadership, by 1833, the church membership was around 819. Many black converts continued to come to the church under Reverend John B. McFerrin.⁶¹ In 1835, what would later become the First Baptist Church of Capitol Hill originated from the First Baptist Church, Nashville.⁶²

In the mid-19th century, under the leadership of Pastor R. B. C. Howell, the First Colored Baptist Mission got established in October 1847. The church rented an old Nashville building for Black church services on Sunday. A white minister named Samuel A. Davidson supervised the Black church worshipers. In January 1848, church services began at the First Colored Baptist Mission in a building separate from the White Baptist Church. Davidson allowed three Black ministers to be named. Nelson G. Merry, Henry Howard, John Dodd, and other Black ministers conduct church services there.

⁶⁰ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 28.

⁶¹ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 28.

⁶² Felicia Mack, "First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, Nashville, Tennessee," Blackpast.org, November 11, 2014, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/first-baptist-church-capitol-hill-nashville-tennessee-1835/>.



Figure 2.1 Capers Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

In 1851, Black Methodists moved into a rented building at 153 North Cherry Street. In 1853, the Black Methodists bought a lot to build a new church on Hynes Street and McCreary. On December 25, 1853, Dr. John B. McFerrin preached a sermon at the new church called Capers Methodist Episcopal Church. Name after Bishop William C. Capers of the South Carolina Methodist Episcopal Church; Capers often visited middle Tennessee and gave sermons across churches. Capers C.M.E. Church would become the most prominent Black congregation in Nashville then.⁶⁴ During that same year, the now First Colored Baptist Mission appointed Nelson G. Merry and ordained him as the first Black minister of the Church. Originally, Whites wanted to establish and license another Black minister named Louis Turley for the Church. In protest, Black church members wanted Merry instead to be appointed. On March 9, 1853, Merry got licensed to preach at First Colored Baptist Mission after a unanimous vote. On October 5, 1853, the Black church members were allowed to choose their deacons by the White church

⁶³ Carmelia D. Gregory, “Capers Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.” Tennessee State University. <https://ww2.tnstate.edu/library/digital/capers.htm>

⁶⁴ Lovett, *The African-American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 29.

members. On November 9, 1853, the Church's first deacons included Daniel Walker, Anderson Pritchett, Joseph Morsell, and Aaron Jennings. On November 28, 1853, Merry was finally ordained pastor of First Colored Baptist Mission by Nashville White Baptist ministers.⁶⁵



Figure 2.2 First Colored Baptist Church

In 1840, sixteen-year-old Merry was brought to First Baptist Church by his master mistress. He would attend, be employed, and get baptized at First Baptist Church. On November 1, 1845, Merry, who was Twenty-one, finally got his freedom from slavery. Merry began to preach to the congregation at First Colored Baptist Church. Reverend Samuel A. Davidson, the church pastor then, tutored Merry. In 1853, they became ministers of the First Colored Baptist Church. When Merry was the pastor of First Colored Baptist Church, the church later grew to over 2,000 members who made at one time the state of Tennessee's largest church. Merry organized around fourteen Black Baptist churches in Nashville during his lifetime. Merry was

⁶⁵ “Merry, Nelson G,” *Notable Kentucky African Americans Database*, accessed March 3, 2023, <https://nkaa.uky.edu/nkaa/items/show/1900>.

⁶⁶ Linda T Wynn, “*First Colored Baptist Church*.” Tennessee State University. <https://ww2.tnstate.edu/library/digital/FIRSTCB.HTM>

also the founder of the Tennessee Colored Baptist Association and editor of *The Colored Sunday School Standard*.⁶⁷

In December 1856, a race riot occurred in the city of Nashville due to racial tensions between Blacks and Whites stemming from competition for jobs. Blacks in Nashville who were free held semi-skilled and skilled positions. European immigrants were composed of Scots, Jews, Germans, and Irish. These European immigrants had to compete with enslaved people, working low-skill jobs including in Nashville. Another factor included the 1856 Presidential Election between Democrat James Buchanan, Republican John C. Fremont, and Know Nothing, Millard Fillmore. The election caused fear of rumors of slave insurrections across the South, including Nashville. Nashville White politicians also feared that Fremont, an abolitionist, and Fillmore influenced enslaved people in Nashville to rebel. In response, the city council in Nashville increased the slave patrol, forbade Black schools and black preaching, and prohibited all assembly of Black people after sundown.⁶⁸

The primary significance of the 1856 Nashville Race Riot was that it caused a temporary end to black education in the city for a couple of years until the Union Army occupied Nashville in 1862. Another significance of the race riot is the main area in which the riot took place was called Black Bottom. Nashville blacks once lived in Black Bottom near downtown. Black Bottom came around 1832 when the neighborhood included inexpensive houses. European immigrants who live in poverty reside there. Blacks also resided there and were both enslaved

⁶⁷ Linda T Wynn, “*Nelson G. Merry*.” Tennessee State University. <https://ww2.tnstate.edu/library/digital/merry.htm#:~:text=Merry%20is%20recognized%20as%20a,and%20after%20the%20Civil%20War>.

⁶⁸ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 32.

and free. Many blacks had skilled jobs as servants, laborers, valets, cooks, and artisans.

Competition for employment between blacks and whites in the area would lead to the race riot in December 1856, despite the damage that the riot caused around Black Bottom. Black Bottom continued to prosper in the coming decades of its existence.

Two people who emerged as prominent figures religiously and economically as a result of the riot included Samuel R. Lowery and James C. Napier. Samuel R. Lowery was born on December 08, 1832, to an enslaved father, Peter Lowery, and a Cherokee mother, Ruth Mitchell. Lowery mother died when he was eight years old. In 1849, Lowery's father purchased his freedom, and he joined the Nashville Church of Disciples, where both became preachers. When the 1856 riot occurred in Nashville, Lowery and his family, where many free blacks fled Nashville and went up north, Lowery and his father moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. When he became the pastor of Harrison Street Christian Church, Lowery married Adora Robinson in 1858. The couple had two children named Ruth and Annie. Lowery later moved to Chatham, Ontario, Canada, where he organized Disciples of Christ Churches in 1859. Lowery later returned to the United States and Nashville after the Union Army occupied Nashville in 1862.⁶⁹ James C. Napier was born on June 09, 1845, to William and Jane Napier, free, in Nashville, Tennessee. Napier was eleven years old when the race riot occurred in Nashville. Napier moved to Ohio, where he attended Wilberforce College and Oberlin College. Napier only participated in

⁶⁹ Samuel R. Lowery," *Black History Wall*, February 4, 2010, <https://blackhistorywall.wordpress.com/2010/02/04/samuel-r-lowery/>,

Nashville Black activism after finishing college in 1867. Napier later immersed himself into politics during the Reconstruction.⁷⁰

Reconstruction provide Black people in Nashville an opportunity to advance their rights, build an economic foundation, and gain political equality, and Nashville churches stood at the foundation for organization of the Black community. On February 25, 1862, the Union Army occupied Nashville. The Union Army also imprisoned Merry because he was preaching sedition against the United States government. On January 1, 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Merry was released from his imprisonment. Reverend Elisha Carr pastored Capers Memorial Church that same year. The church gained permission from a United Presbyterian Church missionary, the Reverend J.G. McKee, to build a school in the church building. The Union army used the Capers church building as a brass shop. The Union army used it as a brass shop because the structure lay amid the railroad complex. The Union army was able to turn the church into a military hospital after the Battle of Murfreesboro occurred that year.⁷¹

In December 1863, Bishop Daniel Payne of the A.M.E. Church came to Nashville to organize churches. Payne was born free on February 11, 1824, to London and Martha Payne. Payne's father passed away when he was four, and his mother died when he was nine. His great-aunt Sarah Bordeaux raised him. Growing up, Payne attended the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, from 1835 to 1837. In 1837, Payne joined the Franklin

⁷⁰ Linda T. Wynn, "*James Carroll Napier*," in: *Encyclopedia of African American Business*, Jessie Carney Smith; Millicent Lownes; Linda T. Wynn, eds. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006).

⁷¹ Stephen V. Ash, "Civil War Occupation," *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, March 6, 2018, <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/civil-war-occupation/>.

Synod of the Lutheran Church in Fordsboro, North Carolina. He was ordained as a church minister, becoming the first African American to be a minister at the church. In 1841, Payne left the Lutheran Church and joined A.M.E. Church, where Payne became part of the ministry in 1843. In 1848, Payne became a historian of the church, where he wrote the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1853, Payne was elected the sixth bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Payne would go on to establish the St. John African Methodist Episcopal Church in Nashville.⁷²

Between October 4 and 7, 1864, Peter Lowery, Abram Smith, Ransom Harris, and three delegates from Memphis attended the National Colored Men's Convention in Syracuse, New York. They were at the convention to represent the Tennessee formerly enslaved people. On the way, they supported resolutions that called for the immediate abolition of slavery, equal rights and equal pay for the USCT, Negro settlement of America's public lands, direct Negro suffrage in the District of Columbia, and the assertion of complete confidence in the fundamental principles of the American government.⁷³ On October 24, 1864, the Nashville Black leaders organized a torchlight parade that traveled up to the state capital to petition Andrew Johnson, governor of Tennessee. Several people threw rocks at some of the freedmen. Johnson would proclaim to every person in Tennessee, regardless of skin color, that it was free. Johnson may have had reason in doing this because making a bid for vice president was to attract northern voters as the 1864 Presidential Election was going on. In November 1864, it was around 3,194

⁷² Josephus R. Coan, *Daniel Alexander Payne: Christian Educator* (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1935).

⁷³ Lovett, *The African-American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 201.

Blacks held mock elections located on College Street.⁷⁴ On Thanksgiving Day, 1864, Frederick Douglas, John M. Langston, and others organized the Nashville National Equal Rights League chapter. The purpose of the chapter was to push for Black rights and suffrage.⁷⁵

On March 7, 1865, the First Colored Baptist Mission petitioned the First Baptist Church for its independence. On August 13, 1865, the First Colored Baptist Mission gained independence from First Baptist Church, which had around 500 members, and Merry had been leading the church by then. Bishop Davis W. Clark was by the Methodist Episcopal Church to Nashville to reorganize the Negro mission at Andrew Chapel, located on Franklin Street in South Nashville. The church adopted Clark's name, calling it Clark Chapel. Clark also became the first President of the Freedom Aid Society. The Freedom Aid Society was founded during the American Civil War by the American Missionary Association (A.M.A.). Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches from the north supported the organization. A school would be established at Clark Chapel by the Freedom Aid Society in the church basement. It would later be called Central Tennessee College, then Walden University.⁷⁶

In May and June 1865, Nashville Black leaders circulated for all counties to select delegates for a state convention. The signers of the notice included several Nashville ministers and others, including Peter Lowery, Nelson Walker, Daniel L. Lapsley, William Summer, Samuel Lowery, Richard Harris, Alfred Menefee, William C. Napier, James H. Summer, Jerry S.

⁷⁴ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 202.

⁷⁵ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 202.

⁷⁶ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 202.

Stothard, and Andrew L. Fait. On August 7, 1865, Tennessee's first annual State Colored Men's Convention was at Saint John A.M.E. Church. The people present included twenty-two counties, and six USCT regiments had 140 delegates present. Nelsen G. Merry led the church in prayer, and Nelsen Walker was elected President. The delegates formed three regional committees for West, Middle, and East Tennessee. A second annual State Colored Men's Convention also occurred at the Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church on August 6, 1866. Delegates from sixteen counties and all four major cities attended there including.⁷⁷

In 1866, First Baptist Church East Nashville and Greater Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church founded by Reverend Randall B. Vandavall. Vandavall was born into slavery on March 23, 1832, to Sylvonia and Lewis Vandavall near Neely's Bend, located ten miles above Nashville. Growing up, Vandavall joined the First Baptist Church when he was sixteen. After gaining her freedom, he became pastor of the African Mission and George Dardis, a Black congregation established in January 1862 by the White Spring Street Baptist Church. Still, he was distracted when the Union Army occupied the city. In 1864, the Spring Street Baptist Church reopened under Daniel W. Phillips, an American Baptist Home Missionary Society missionary. In 1866, Vandavall founded the First Baptist Church in East Nashville. Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was also established in 1866 when a group of thirty Christians met at the home of sister Ellen Calhoun located at Tenth Avenue South. During the meeting, they decided to organize a church called Liberty Chapel. The Reverend Henry Glasco would become pastor of the church.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Lovett, Wynn, and Eller, *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee Second Edition*.

⁷⁸ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 147.

1866 would also be the year of two Historically Black Colleges and Universities were established in Nashville. That included Fisk University and Roger Williams University. Fisk University was founded by three members of the American Missionary Association (A.M.A.) John Ogden, Erastus Milo Cravath, and Edward Parmelee Smith. The school was named after Civil War veteran Clinton Bowen Fisk, a member of the Tennessee Freedmen's Bureau. Fisk donated a former Union Army barracks to the school. Fisk University, then known as Fisk Freed Colored School, opened on January 9, 1866, for students to attend. A year later, the university's name changed to Fisk University.⁷⁹ Roger Williams University initially held elementary classes for Black Baptist preachers in 1864. The classes were held at Daniel W. Phillip's home, a White minister and freedmen's missionary from Massachusetts.⁸⁰ The following year, the classes were moved to the basement of the First Colored Baptist Church. In 1866, Phillips and supporters founded the Nashville Normal and Theological Institute. The school would be transferred to the Union Army barracks in North Nashville. The school's early funding came from the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) of New York and local Blacks and Whites. The school would later be named Roger Williams University in 1883.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Toni P. Anderson, *Tell Them We Are Singing for Jesus: The Original Fisk Jubilee Singers and Christian Reconstruction, 1871-1878* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009).

⁸⁰ Bobby Lovett, "Roger Williams University," <http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=1147>

⁸¹ Samuel Momodu, "Roger Williams University," Blackpast.org, June 30, 2016. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/roger-williams-university-1866-1929/>.



Figure 2.3 First Baptist Church East Nashville

On May 26, 1866, the General Assembly granted a charter to the First Colored Baptist Church. By then, the church had around 780 members. On December 03, 1867, Samuel, and Peter Lowery co-founded Tennessee Manual Labor University. Tennessee Manual Labor University was designed to teach agriculture, mechanical arts, and Christian ethics. The school was located on Murfreesboro Road near Smyrna. Lowery and Daniel Wadkins traveled north to raise funds for the school. However, a scandal occurred when Wadkins was accused of financial impropriety, who had collected \$1,632 and taken all but \$200 of its expenses. Lowery was blamed instead of Wadkins. The school troubles would lead the school to cease in 1872.

⁸² Bobby L. Lovett, “*First Baptist Church East Nashville.*” Tennessee State University. <https://ww2.tnstate.edu/library/digital/FIRSTB.HTM>

Universities like Fisk University, Roger Williams University, and Tennessee Manual Labor University were examples of how religious institutions impacted these schools.⁸³

As the 1860s came to an end, the federal government passed the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments which granted Blacks freedom from slavery and US citizenship. The decade also saw some blacks prosper socially, politically, and economically. The establishment of other Black churches like Clark Memorial Methodist Church and First Baptist Church East Nashville was established. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including Fisk University, Roger Williams University, and Walden University, were found to give Blacks educational opportunities. Historically Black Colleges and Universities were established based on the help of religious institutions.⁸⁴

As the Black community flourished during Reconstruction, so did the Black church community. In 1873, the membership to the First Colored Baptist had grown to 3,000 members. This caused the church to purchase more land on North Spruce Street (8th Ave, North), which would become Spruce Street Baptist Church. Racial discrimination and segregation were occurring in the town. The city's main civil issue was public accommodation segregated between Blacks and Whites. In 1874, a new civil rights bill was proposed by congressional Republicans. The bill was supposed to allow blacks equal access to public accommodations with whites. Senator William Brownlow opposed the bill since it allowed blacks and whites to attend the same schools together. Despite opposition to the Civil Rights bill, the bill was passed into law on March 1, 1875. The bill's passing allows Blacks and Whites to go to school together. This

⁸³ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 147.

⁸⁴ "Nashville Historically," Google, last modified March 25, 2016,

situation was unique at the time because this foreshadowed the similar issues with Blacks and Whites attending school together that were seen after *Brown v. Board of Education* was passed in 1954.⁸⁵

On March 8 and 9, 1875, several Black leaders in Nashville decided to test the new law by organizing sit-in demonstrations at downtown Nashville restaurants. The plan was for them to go to Nashville's downtown restaurants located on Cherry, Deaderick, Cedar, and Union Streets. They would go to these restaurants and attempt to order meals and get service from the White servers.⁸⁶ Although White restaurant managers hesitated to give Blacks service, Blacks still got served at the restaurant. Some of the demonstrators included John Phelps, Marion Reed, Jessie Bransford, John Trimble, and Henry Alonzo Napier. The sit-in demonstrations in 1875 were unique for Nashville at that time because these sit-in demonstrations would foreshadow the Nashville Sit-Ins that would occur in 1960. In 1876, the Presidential election between Rutherford Hayes and Samuel Tilden was one of the closest Presidential elections in United States history. The vote came down to three states: Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana. A special commission was created to decide who would win the election. Hayes was favored by the commission in winning the Presidential election against Tilden. In keeping his promise, Tilden withdrew troops from the south, which left blacks at the mercy of white racists. Following the Compromise of 1877, black voters drop which Jim Crow Segregation in public accommodations between Blacks and Whites occurred in the following decades. This had repercussions that

⁸⁵ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 218.

⁸⁶ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, 218.

reverberated throughout the South, including the of Nashville. But Black church activism remained.

The year 1876 also saw Meharry Medical College established in Nashville. Meharry Medical College was founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Freedman's Aid Society. The school was named after Samuel Meharry, a Scot Irish immigrant salt trader who donated \$15,000 to the school. Methodist Episcopal Church and Freedman Aid Society used the \$15,000 donation to establish medical training for black students. Gordon Memorial United Methodist Church would also be founded that year.⁸⁷ The Gordon Memorial United Methodist Church was established after a small group of devout worshipers met in the home of Brother John and Sister Belle Rouse. The worshipers have been having been at home for nine years. The worshipers going to the home grew so much that a decision was made that more meaningful worship needed to gather for prayer services. The congregation met at first in a rented house, and Gordon's Hall, located at Meharry Medical College, is now located. Five church members, Sister Belle, John Rouse, Nancy Martin, Viney Lewis, and Brother John L. Lewis, raised money to purchase a church lot. The group purchased the land for \$125. Reverend David Gordon was appointed the church's first pastor. The church would be named after him, and its membership would quickly grow to 171. Gordon Memorial United Methodist Church would be recognized in the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁸⁸

In 1884, First Colored Baptist Church pastor Merry died. In 1887, another black church, Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church, was established. The Mount Olive Missionary Baptist

⁸⁷ Reavis L Mitchell, Jr., *Meharry Medical College (1876-)*, <http://www.tnstate.edu/library/digital/meharry.htm>

⁸⁸ Gordon Memorial United Methodist Church, <https://www.gordonmemorialumc.org/church-history>.

Church was established after Reverend Tom R. Huffman, who became pastor of Spruce Street Baptist Church following Merry's death, led dissident Spruce Street parishioners to develop the church. Meredith W. Gilbert and John Purdy would lead First Colored Baptist Church after Huffman's departure. In 1892, Jim Crow Segregation would gain national attention with the Plessy versus Ferguson case. On June 7, 1892, a mixed-race black man, Homer Plessy, was a passenger on a train going to Covington, Louisiana. *Plessy* took his seat in the segregated white section of the train. *The Plessy versus Ferguson* case took its name from John H. Ferguson, where Plessy was jailed under the jurisdiction. *The Plessy* case was brought to the Supreme Court, which ruled separate but equal in public accommodations. Blacks would indeed suffer under the Jim Crow laws, which denied them access to colleges, voting booths, parks, and libraries. In the coming decades, Blacks in Nashville would also feel the Jim Crow effects in the city in public accommodations.

By the end of the nineteenth century, there were more than seventy-nine black churches in Nashville. The Black religious community in Nashville would belong to Baptist, Methodist, Christian, Congregational, Episcopal, Catholic, and Presbyterian denominations. The Black Baptist churches included First Colored Baptist Church, Spruce Street Baptist Church, and Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church. The Black methodist churches included Capers Memorial CME Church, Clark Memorial Methodist Episcopal, Greater Bethel AME, Saint Paul AME Church, Payne Chapel AME Church, African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, and Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church.

Blacks in Nashville experienced the first major civil rights movement event with the Nashville Streetcar Boycott in 1905. The importance of their activism against *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which legalized Jim Crow segregation in public accommodations, including streetcars. The

background of the streetcar boycott goes back to 1899. In 1899, the Tennessee General Assembly wanted to take advantage of the Plessy V. Ferguson separate but equal case. The Tennessee General Assembly attempted to expand segregation public transits by proposing legislation to “made the separate coach law apply to street cars.” The proposal died the same year in the House Judiciary Committee. In 1901, another attempt to get it passed but again failed after being defeated by a 48-30 vote by the House of Representatives.⁸⁹ In 1903, Tennessee passed a segregated act which was introduced by A. K Hancock. Despite some cities in Tennessee being organized by the bill, Memphis had the final say if the law would pass. Many of Memphis’ streetcar owners refused to enforce the law.

On June 7, 1903, it was ruled unconstitutional by the streetcar law given by the Tennessee Supreme Court. On January 10, 1905, a bill was introduced by Davidson County representative Charles P. Fahey who called for Bill Number 87. The law was supposed to segregate the streetcars in Nashville between Blacks and Whites. A vote of 81-4 successfully passed the bill by the lower house of the legislature and by the lower house of the legislature by a vote of 28-1 by the upper chamber. On March 30, 1905, the law passed, which was supposed to go into effect on July 5, 1905. On July 5, 1905, the streetcar laws went into effect, where streetcars were segregated between Blacks and Whites.⁹⁰ As the law went into effect that day, blacks in Nashville started to boycott the Nashville Transit Company. On August 1, 1905, three Black Nashville businesses, Preston Taylor, Sutton Griggs, and Richard Henry Boyd, took

⁸⁹ Briggs, Gabriel A. “*Tried by Fire*”: *The African American Boycott of Jim Crow Streetcars in Nashville, 1905– 1907*.” In *The New Negro in the Old South*, 115-116. Rutgers University Press, 2015.

⁹⁰ Briggs, 122.

leadership roles in the boycott.⁹¹ What Taylor, Griggs, and Boyd had in common was all three men were ministers, businessman, and civil rights leaders in Nashville. Brief background on these Nashville historical figures will be provided in next paragraphs.

Taylor was born into slavery on November 7, 1849, to Zed and Betty Taylor in Shreveport, Louisiana. Taylor enlisted in the Union Army at the age of fifteen in Company G of the 116th Infantry Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops, as a drummer boy during the siege of Richmond, Virginia, during the American Civil War. After the Civil War ended, Taylor traveled throughout the north and finally settled at Mount Sterling, Kentucky, where he became a minister in the Christian domination Disciples of Christ. Taylor would later relocate to Virginia, where he secured a contract to build several sections of the Big Sandy Railway from Mount Sterling to Richmond. In 1884, Taylor moved to Nashville, where he became a minister at the Gay Street Baptist Church. A controversy would occur that made Taylor and a few others leave the church and form his own church in 1891. Taylor also became known for its renowned business in Nashville. He bought thirty-seven acres of land at Elm Hill Pike and Spence Lane in 1887. The following year, Taylor established Greenwood Cemetery, Nashville's second-oldest Black burial ground, the Greenwood Cemetery. That same year, he also founded the Taylor Funeral Company.⁹²

Griggs was born June 19, 1872, in Chatfield, Texas. He was the son of a former slave named Allen R. Griggs. Griggs was educated in Dallas public schools and at Bishop College in Mars Hall, Texas, where he graduated in 1890. He would continue his education at Richard

⁹¹ Briggs, 124.

⁹² "*Preston Taylor*," Tennessee State University Archives, <http://library3.tnstate.edu/library/DIGITAL/taylorp.html>

Theology Seminary in Virginia from 1890 to 1893, where he became an ordained Baptist minister. Griggs received his first pastorate in Berkley, Virginia, where he served for two years and married Emma J. Williams, a public-school teacher. In 1899, Griggs moved to Nashville to become the corresponding secretary of the National Baptist Convention and the pastor of the First Baptist Church, East Nashville. He also operated his own publishing company while in Nashville.⁹³

Boyd was born into slavery on March 15, 1843, to his mother, Indiana Dixon, in Noxubee County, Mississippi. Despite his original name given by his enslaver Dick Gray but changed his name to Richard Henry Boyd after the American Civil War. In 1869, Boyd became a Baptist minister. In 1872, he helped organize the Negro Baptist Convention of Texas. During the 1880s, he attended Bishop College in Marshall, Texas. Boyd moved to Nashville in 1896. He came to Nashville mainly because he wanted to establish a publishing house for Black Baptists. He also wanted Blacks in Nashville to publish their literature, operate their own business, and guide their children. Boyd would also become a Mount Olive Baptist Church member, where Reverend C.H. Clark was the pastor. Boyd also became vice president of the National Negro Business League, a business organization founded by Booker T. Washington in 1900.⁹⁴

On August 01, 1905, Taylor, Boyd, and Griggs assumed leadership roles in the boycott and began to organize members of the Black community in Nashville. A meeting at Clarion Hall on the corner of Second Avenue North and Locust Street was advertised as “the most important

⁹³ Bruce A. Glasrud, *From Griggs to Brewer: A Review of Black Texas Culture, 1899-1940*.

⁹⁴ Bobby L. Lovett, *A Black Man's Dream: The First Hundred Years, The Story of R. H. Boyd* (Nashville, Tennessee: R.H. Boyd Publishing, 1993).

meeting of the year by far.”⁹⁵ Griggs and Taylor also sought to “inaugurate a movement” that Blacks in other prominent Tennessee cities would join the effort to boycott segregated streetcars.⁹⁶ On August 29, 1905, the Union Transportation Company was chartered. Union Transportation was founded to provide safe and comfortable accommodation for Nashville Black residents. The company was supposed to provide a convenient transportation alternative for Black passengers to carry freight throughout the cities and towns of Tennessee and other cities across the United States. The company was capitalized at \$25,000 in shares of ten dollars each. The hierarchy of the organization included Nashville Black leaders Preston Taylor, president; George W. Henderson, treasurer; Richard Henry Boyd, purchasing agent; James C. Napier; C. Victor Roman; Bishop Evans Tyree; George W. Washington; William D. Chappelle; Luke Mason; T.G. Ewing; J.W. Grant; H.T. Noel; A.T. Sanders; J.G. Merrill; Robert Robinson; and William Beckham.⁹⁷

The boycott also gained life as news of the company and the appearance of a temporary system of horses and wagons for transporting Black passengers around the city. As the Nashville Streetcar Boycott was occurring, the boycott's effects started to take a toll on the White street cars in the city. The Nashville Transit Company was known to lose \$500 weekly by mid-September 1905. The company bought five large fifteen-passenger steam-propelled automobiles and took the option to purchase twenty more vehicles. On September 29, 1905, the autobuses arrived in Nashville, and the dedication ceremonies were held in Watkins Park on October 02,

⁹⁵ Gabriel A. Briggs, *The New Negro in the Old South* (Rutgers NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 54.

⁹⁶ Briggs, *The New Negro in the Old South*, 54.

⁹⁷ “*The Union Transportation Company*,” Tennessee State University Archives, <http://library3.tnstate.edu/library/DIGITAL/content.html>

1905. On October 05, 1905, the regular line of travel started that day. Four of the five cars were in continuous service, with a fifth car in reserve. In December 1905, the *Globe*, a weekly newspaper, was founded by Boyd, J.O Battle, Chas H. Burrill, and D.A. Hart. The purpose of the newspaper was to provide boycotters with a forum for protest. On January 14, 1906, the first edition of the *Globe* appeared, arguing that "self-reliance and racial solidarity" provided Nashville's Black community with their best opportunity "to succeed and prosper within the confines of the Jim Crow South."⁹⁸

The Union Transportation Company would soon experience problems. The problems stem from the steam-propelled buses lacking adequate power to traverse the steep grades of Nashville's terrain and regular schedules. The company responded by trading the original steam-powered vehicles for fourteen electric automobiles that could carry twenty passengers each. In January 1906, the company put its electric cars into operation. The Nashville Railway and Light Company facilities batteries were ruined by overcharging. Some believe that it was an act of sabotage. The Union Transportation Company would install its dynamo and electric generating equipment at the Nashville Baptist Publishing House facilities, one of the largest black businesses in the city. Despite these efforts, the company would soon meet its demise. The initial enthusiasm driven by the Nashville Black community's boycott of the bus lines declined, along with the novelty of riding on Black company-owned automobiles. In April 1906, the city of Nashville initiated its plan to levy an annual privilege tax of \$42 per car. These taxes and persistent battery trouble caused the company to cease operation by mid-summer. In 1907, the Union Transportation Company sold its remaining automobiles to the Jamestown Exposition, celebrating the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Virginia colony.

⁹⁸ "*The Union Transportation Company*,"

Despite the failure, the Nashville Streetcar Boycott soon became the most significant example of an urban transportation protest before the Montgomery Bus Boycott, half a century later. Another essential factor about the boycott was under the leadership of Taylor, Griggs, Boyd, and others; the Nashville Black community organized a two-year protest the discriminatory practices of Jim Crow on Nashville streetcars. Their efforts not only challenged the state legislature and the White community of Nashville. It also challenged the transportation and electric power monopoly that Nashville's Railway and Light Company maintained. The boycott also shows how Blacks in Nashville could organize and form independence from whites' public accommodations and compete economically. As mentioned earlier, Blacks boycotting the Nashville Transit Company were known to lose \$500 weekly by mid-September 1905. This was an example of how Blacks refusing to segregate financially hurt the company. The importance of the Nashville Streetcar Boycott was that the prominent leaders of the movements involved ministers in businesspeople like Taylor, Griggs, Boyd, and Napier. This foreshadowed the leadership that would be seen with ministers of churches in the 1950s and 1960s, with people like Kelly Miller Smith Sr leading the civil rights movement in Nashville.

The early civil rights activism involvement of these Black churches in Nashville proved essential to setting the stage for the civil rights activism of the churches in the 1950s and 1960s. Black Nashvillians fought for their civil rights going back to the end of the Civil War. Blacks fought for social and political rights. The social rights Black Nashvillians and Black churches fought for was establishing Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which included Fisk University, Roger Williams University, Meharry Medical College, Walden University, Tennessee Manual Labor University, and Tennessee A&I University. These Historically Black Colleges and Universities allowed African Americans to get higher education, which they were

denied during slavery. The political side saw Blacks elected to office and other government positions during Reconstruction. They passed the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, giving Black Nashvillians freedom, citizenship, and voting rights. Black Churches provided the foundation for these movements and laid the groundwork for future civil rights battles.

Chapter 3: Satyagraha: Fisk University Protest and Nonviolent “Movement Schools” at First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, and Clark Memorial Methodist Church 1925-1960

Civil rights activism in Nashville continued to be influenced by Nashville Black leaders and churches throughout the 20th century. One significant event that is often overlooked in Nashville’s Long Civil Rights Movement includes the Fisk University Protest in 1925. On February 04, students at Fisk University, supported by local Black churches, launched a strike against the administrative policies of the school’s president, Fayette Avery McKenzie who was White. McKenzie sought to secure a million-dollar endowment from Northern foundations like the Rosenwald Fund and Rockefeller Foundation sympathetic to his cause, which included suppressing Black activism that was considered radical. As a result, McKenzie suppressed campus militancy at Fisk University on behalf of the foundations he courted. In response to McKenzie’s policies that curtailed student activities, such as discontinuing the school magazine and newspaper, cancelling the baseball team, and reducing the football team budget, students held protests on the Fisk University campus.⁹⁹

The students launched their February 4 protest after McKenzie made a speech requesting the students to either "abide by the rules of Fisk University" or "get out."¹⁰⁰ Later that day, male residents of Livingstone Hall gathered for a protest demonstration around 10 p.m. McKenzie called the police about the students demonstrating. McKenzie brought five protest demonstrators to his office at Livingstone Hall one at a time to speak to them. McKenzie asked the students to sign a document agreeing "To Obey To The Letter All Fisk University Rules And Regulations

⁹⁹ Gabriel A. Briggs, *The New Negro in the Old South* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

¹⁰⁰ Briggs, *The New Negro in the Old South*, 154.

On Pain Of Being Arrested Or Expelled."¹⁰¹ Some students agreed to sign the letter, while others refused to.¹⁰² Despite this, authorities still charged students with a felony and faced incarceration if found guilty. On February 5, 1925, the City of Nashville transferred its case against the five defendants to the Second Circuit Court for deliberation. The trial court started at two o'clock, and Black and White observers filled the courtroom. The case was dismissed, and the five students were discharged. On February 9, 1925, members of Nashville's Negro Board of Trade tried to contact McKenzie on behalf of the students to discuss resolutions proposed by the student body. McKenzie countered their offer with a proposal to create an impartial committee of eighteen individuals. McKenzie stressed that the committee was there to advise Fisk on how to administer. The Negro Board of Trade members refused to participate in what they saw as a biased committee. This led them to organize their mass meeting at Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church of concerned Black Citizens to form a definite action plan that same day. Regarding students protest at the school, a meeting was called by C.L. McKissack, president of the Nashville Negro Board of Trade.¹⁰³

An estimated three thousand Black community members crowded Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church. At the church meeting, a Fisk University student and protestor named George Streater repeated student demands for representation by a council of their peers, reinstatement of a school paper informed by student contributions, the creation of an athletic association, and the ability to join fraternities and sororities like students in other institutions. Streater also argued that the next president to replace McKenzie could either be a White or Black

¹⁰¹ Briggs, *The New Negro in the Old South*, 155.

¹⁰² Briggs, *The New Negro in the Old South*, 155.

¹⁰³ Briggs, *The New Negro in the Old South*, 160.

president but just needed to be president who did not practice a dictatorial rule on Fisk campus like McKenzie practice. Another Fisk University student named J. Andrew Simmons argued that he and other students defended Fisk University and pleaded for students to not destroy it by protesting McKenzie's policies.¹⁰⁴ Following the meeting at the church, the Negro Board of Trade passed five resolutions regarding the student protests and McKenzie. It was the protests that culminated in McKenzie's resignation on April 16, 1925, that were sparked by the meeting at Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church and the passage of five resolutions following the meeting. Thomas Elsa Jones, a White minister from the north, replaced McKenzie as president of Fisk University. Jones served as president at Fisk until he was replaced by Charles S. Johnson, who became the first Black president of Fisk University in 1947. Fisk University protests and McKenzie's resignation as president were heavily influenced by the Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Meetings at Nashville Black churches played a significant role in making important decisions regarding education during this period. Thirty years later, in 1955, these same issues regarding education would emerge during *the Kelley V. Board of Education*, a lawsuit filed by several Black families to desegregate Nashville public schools. Nashville Black church members and ministers also advocated for students in this case, including Kelly Miller Smith Sr and Alfred Z. Kelley. Smith was pastor of First Colored Baptist Church. Kelley worked as a Nashville barber and a member of the First Baptist Church, East Nashville, where he served as a deacon, choir member, and religion committee chair. Both Smith and Kelley were involved in the suit regarding their children attending Nashville schools that were segregated at the time. Kelley's son Robert Kelley, after whom the case was named, wanted to participate in the East Junior High

¹⁰⁴ Briggs, *The New Negro in the Old South*, 162.

School rather than go across town to the all-Black Pearl High School. Smith's eldest daughter Joy, then six years old, became one of the first African American children to integrate Nashville's public schools in 1957. Smith and Kelley became presidents of the Nashville Branch of the National Association for Colored People (NAACP)—Smith from 1956 to 1959. Kelley would take the position in 1959 after Kelly. As a result of the 1957 desegregation of Nashville public schools, Nashville church members such as Smith and Kelley played a key role.¹⁰⁵

Despite the *Brown V. Board of Education* ruling, Nashville public schools remain segregated. As a result of the 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Kelley V. Board of Education* was one of the first desegregation lawsuits in the nation.¹⁰⁶ The lawsuit challenged the Nashville Board of Education for failing to implement the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. There were similarities and differences in educational issues between the Fisk University Protests and *Kelley V. Board of Education*. There was a parallel between the two, which involved racial issues African American students faced in Nashville's education system. Fisk University students protested McKenzie's policies as a form of racial segregation on campus. They adopted the racial attitudes of his donors, who wanted Fisk University students to follow Jim Crow laws. As a result of Nashville White public schools failing to implement *Brown V. Board of Education*, which wanted Nashville White public schools to remain segregated, *Kelley V. Board of*

¹⁰⁵ Samuel Momodu, “Kelley V. Board of Education,” Blackpast.org, February 02, 2024. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/kelley-v-board-of-education-1955-1957/>.

¹⁰⁶ Momodu, “Kelley V. Board of Education.”

Education occurred. The Fisk University Protests focused only on one McKenzie policy on that college campus, whereas *the Kelley V. Board of Education* focused on the segregated Nashville Public Schools system.

On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren delivered the unanimous ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. The Supreme Court ruled “that separating children in public schools on the basis of race was unconstitutional. Nashville decided to follow the *Brown V. Board of Education* and filed *Robert W. Kelly, et al. v. Board of Education v. of Broad of Education* case in 1955 by Nashville lawyers Z. Alexander Looby and Avon N. Williams Jr. They were also supported by Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP. The case happened because Robert Kelly, son of a Nashville barber Alfred Z. Kelly, attempted to attend the all-White East High School. Kelly Miller Smith Sr who also served as pastor of First Colored Baptist Church was a part of the lawsuit. Kelly won his case which Judge William E. Millier ruled in favor of him. The Nashville School Board had to start desegregating Nashville public schools following the case.¹⁰⁷

On September 9, 1957, nineteen elementary school children who were the age of six attended six of Nashville’s White elementary schools which included Hattie Cotton, Emma Clemons, Glenn, Bailey, Fehr, Jones, and Buena Vista. As a result of the *Kelley V. Board of Education* decision, Smith's 6-year-old daughter Joy became one of the first African American children to attend all Nashville public schools in 1957. The students faced resistance from White segregationists. They were harassed as rocks and bottles were thrown at them. On September 10,

¹⁰⁷ Momodu, “Kelley V. Board of Education.”

1957, a bomb exploded at Hattie Elementary School.¹⁰⁸ John Kasper, a segregationist, was responsible for the bombing. The bomb destroyed half of the school, but nobody was wounded or killed. Kasper was later arrested for his involvement in the bombing, in which he was arrested for disorderly conduct and loitering.

It was at the Capers CME Church on January 18, 1958, when Smith convened other Black Nashville ministers to form the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC). The NCLC wanted to attack social problems in the city of Nashville while operating within the context of the Christian faith.¹⁰⁹ By operating from a Christian perspective, the NCLC attempted to address social problems in Nashville. In March 1958, Lawson attended a workshop meeting at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church called “Christian Nonviolence” and began working with the NCLC. The meetings at the church began with Lawson discussing nonviolent tactics for fighting segregation at Nashville public accommodations. Clark Memorial Methodist Church near Fisk University emerged as the site of Lawson nonviolent workshops classes called “Movement Schools”. During these workshops at the church, Lawson taught nonviolence philosophy, as well as how to apply these tactics in public accommodations in Nashville. In fall 1959, Lawson students decided to start targeting Nashville downtown lunch counters at Harvey’s Department Store and Cain-Sloan. This chapter is going to explain the Fisk University Protests. Kelly Miller Smith Sr's involvement in the *Kelley v. Board of Education* suit in Nashville and being co-founder of the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference established at Capers

¹⁰⁸ Samuel Momodu, “Kelley V. Board of Education (1955-1957),” Blackpast.org, February 2, 2024. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/kelley-v-board-of-education-1955-1957/>.

¹⁰⁹ Samuel Momodu, “Nashville Christian Leadership Council (1958-1964),” Blackpast.org, June 3, 2020. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/institutions-african-american-history/nashville-christian-leadership-council-1958-1964/>.

Memorial C.M.E. church by Smith and others. The chapter also focuses on how the nonviolent workshops held by Lawson at Clark Memorial Methodist Church that helped prepare the participants for sit-in protests at Nashville public segregated accommodations.

Nashville Black leaders would continue to impact socially, politically, and economically significant. Taylor organized other business ventures across Nashville, including the One Cent Citizens Savings and Trust Company Bank. In 1909, he supported the creation of Tennessee State Agricultural and Industrial State Normal College, a state-sponsored college for African Americans, which later became Tennessee State University.¹¹⁰ In 1917, Taylor took the lead in creating the National Christian Missionary Convention, a nationwide organization of African American Disciples of Christ Churches. He served as president of the convention as well. Taylor died at eighty-one on April 13, 1931, in Nashville, Tennessee.¹¹¹ Griggs would continue to be a pastor and organize black self-help associations such as the National Public Welfare League and National Religious and Civic Institute for the Baptists of Houston. Griggs would assume the pastorate at Hopewell Baptist Church in Denison, Texas, in 1931 but would be resigned later to work for the Religious and Civic. Griggs died on January 2, 1933.¹¹² Boyd would be involved in other business activities, including establishing the National Baptist Church Supply Company in 1902. The company was able to sell supplies for churches, including pews, fans, pulpits, and pipe organs. Boyd also established the National Negro Doll Company, which designed and sold black dolls. In 1915, controversy occurred where it was a split with the National Baptist Convention

¹¹⁰ Samuel Momodu, "Preston Taylor (1849-1831)," Blackpast.org, November 29, 2016. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/taylor-preston-1849-1931/>.

¹¹¹ Momodu "*Preston Taylor* (1849-1831)."

¹¹² "Sutton E. Griggs," Tennessee State University Archives, <https://ww2.tnstate.edu/library/digital/griggs.htm>.

over the debate on money. Boyd and his supporters would form the National Baptist Convention of America. Boyd died on August 22, 1922, at the age of seventy-nine.¹¹³

In 1909, Napier and other Nashville Black leaders sponsored a tour for Booker T. Washington, C. Victor Roman, and Andrew N. Johnson. They escort all these men to Nashville. On November 21, 1909, Washington addressed a large crowd at the Ryman Auditorium, where the city mayor and other white delegates graced the stage. In 1911, Napier was appointed the Register of the Treasury under President William Howard Taft through his connections with Washington. Napier became one of the four African American men appointed by President Taft to high positions known as the “Black Cabinet.”¹¹⁴ In 1912, the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School for Negroes was founded. On January 13, 1913, its dedication was held that day. The school’s name would change numerous times throughout its history. In 1925, the school’s name was changed to Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State Normal College. Two years later, in 1927, the school would become known as Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College. Finally, in 1968, the school would become known as Tennessee State University.¹¹⁵

In 1913, Napier resigned from his position of Register of the Treasury in protest after President Woodrow Wilson broke federal precedent to order racial segregation of public accommodations, including lunchrooms, restrooms, and workspaces for federal employees in the

¹¹³ “Richard Henry Boyd,” Tennessee State University Archives.
<https://ww2.tnstate.edu/library/digital/RHBoyd.htm>.

¹¹⁴ Herbert Clark, “*James Carroll Napier: National Negro Leader*,” Tennessee Historical Quarterly LX, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 243-252.

¹¹⁵ “Tennessee State University,” Tennessee State University Archives.
<https://ww2.tnstate.edu/library/digital/tenn.htm>.

Treasury Department. Napier would return to Nashville and resume his law practice. On November 14, 1915, Washington died. Napier would succeed him as President of the National Negro Business League, where he also started a chapter of the organization in 1905.¹¹⁶ After 1915, Black leaders in Nashville, including Napier, would be involved in other civil rights protests. In 1918, after a Black person was lynched in a nearby town, Napier led over two thousand people in a protest march to the state capital building to present a civil rights petition to the governor. Napier said, “The constitution of the United States guarantees the right of petition all citizens of our country.”¹¹⁷ Napier also asked the governor to use the same power of the state government to protect its citizens of color and their rights. In August 1918, a mass protest meeting at the colored YMCA was held by the Negro Interdenominational Ministers Alliance. At the conference, the main discussion was “the inhuman treatment that is being perpetuated upon our people in our beloved state.”¹¹⁸

In late 1918, Napier, Robert Mayfield, and ninety-two other charter members applied to the national office to establish a Nashville chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP was launched on February 12, 1909, and was founded after the Springfield Riot that occurred the year before. Some of the founders of the NAACP included W.E.B Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, and others.¹¹⁹ The Nashville NAACP charter was granted on January 18, 1919. The following year, several Black

¹¹⁶ “James C. Napier,” Tennessee State University Archives, <https://ww2.tnstate.edu/library/digital/napier.htm>.

¹¹⁷ Bobby L. Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 251.

¹¹⁸ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930*, 251.

¹¹⁹ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930*, 251.

and White leaders in Nashville formed the Nashville chapter of the Commission of Interracial Cooperation (CIC). The CIC would be created to continue accommodations, decrease racial conflict, and stop the violent campaigns by radical white groups.¹²⁰ Napier and William J. Hale became leaders in the organization. After 1920, the Ku Klux Klan became more visible in Tennessee. The Ku Klux Klan was primarily visible in cities including Nashville, Memphis, and Chattanooga, with Nashville being the group's headquarters. The Ku Klux Klan had its newspaper, *The Klan Crusader*, distributed in Nashville. The Methodist Episcopal Church South Social Service Commission condemned the organization's actions.¹²¹ During this time, as Nashville leaders and activists such as Taylor, Boyd and Griggs grew older or passed away, a new generation of activists would emerge. In contrast to the previous activists, who protested segregated streetcars back in 1905, this new generation of activists protested university policies, such as those at Fisk University.

In 1924, a student protest occurred at Fisk University. Fayette McKenzie was the president of Fisk University at the time of practicing dictatorial rule on campus. McKenzie had discontinued the school magazine and newspaper, canceled the baseball team, cut the football team budget, and extracurricular activities were outlawed as well. Female students at the university also had a strict dress they had to follow. It had been McKenzie's goal to obtain a million-dollar endowment from Northern foundations including the Rosenwald Fund and Rockefeller Foundation that were sympathetic to his cause. In return, Fisk University campus militancy had been suppressed by McKenzie at the foundation's behest. The foundation also wanted Black schools, including Fisk University, to teach their students to accommodate to the

¹²⁰ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930*, 252.

¹²¹ Lovett, *The African American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930*, 251.

Jim Crow Laws as Booker T. Washington had preached, and not to challenge it, as W.E.B. Du Bois suggested. McKenzie was born on July 31, 1872, to Gertrude Avery and Edwin McKenzie in Montrose, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. McKenzie would attend public schools in Montrose until his senior year in high school. His family moved to South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and he attended high school there, where he graduated.¹²²

After graduating high school, McKenzie attended Lehigh University, a private university in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He also studied at the University of Pennsylvania in the summer of 1894 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. McKenzie graduated from Lehigh University with a B.S. degree in 1895 and was also a Phi Beta Kappa member. From 1895 to 1897, he tutored families of the Lehigh Valley Railroad and Pennsylvania Railroad officials. From 1897 to 1900, he taught French, German, English, History, and Economics at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. McKenzie also taught at the Blight School for Boys, where they taught Modern Languages and Mathematics from 1900 to 1903. He also taught at Wind River Indian Boarding School in Central Wyoming, the Shoshoni Indian Reservation. McKenzie would graduate with his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania in 1908. He would become a Professor of Economics and Sociology at Ohio State University from 1905 to 1914.¹²³

In 1915, he became president of Fisk University. During his time taking over as president of Fisk, he was able to help Fisk University to become the first Historically Black College and University to gain recognition as a standard college. He was also able to raise an endowment fund, and Fisk was put on the Carnegie Pension Plan. Despite some of their accomplishments,

¹²² "*Fayette Avery McKenzie papers*" (PDF). Nashville, Tennessee: Fisk University Library Special Collections. 1971. Retrieved 2021-12-01.

¹²³ "*Fayette Avery McKenzie papers*" (PDF). Nashville, Tennessee: Fisk University Library Special Collections. 1971. Retrieved 2021-12-01.

McKenzie's relationship with Black students at the university would soon start to deteriorate. McKenzie suspended the Fisk Herald, the student newspaper of Fisk University. The reason for the suspension of the newspaper, McKenzie would claim, was because of financial difficulties. McKenzie would establish the news journal Fisk News. McKenzie would also dissolve the student government and deny students their own NAACP chapter on campus. McKenzie also ordered the university librarian to inspect NAACP Crises and redeem any articles that were seen to be too radical.¹²⁴

On June 2, 1924, W.E.B. Du Bois attended his daughter Yolande's commencement at Fisk University. He was also there to give a speech about the would-be personal conditions at the university at the time. In the speech, Du Bois mentioned, "To my long-continued silence, Conscript Fathers, which I made use of in these days, not on account of any fear, but partly from grief, partly from shame, this day brings an end and also a beginning of my speaking according to my former custom what I think and what I know." Du Bois would also criticize McKenzie for all the restrictions that he placed on his students in the speech. Du Bois said, "Never to have known an institution whose alumni, on the whole, are more bitter and disgusted with the present situation in this university than the alumni of Fisk University today." Whites responded negatively to the speech, while Blacks saw his speech as a welcome surprise. A couple of days after Du Bois's speech, tensions between Black students and White administrators would be intensified.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ "Fayette Avery McKenzie papers" (PDF). Nashville, Tennessee: Fisk University Library Special Collections. 1971. Retrieved 2021-12-01.

¹²⁵ BRIGGS, GABRIEL A. "Before I'd Be a Slave': The Fisk University Protests, 1924–1925." *In The New Negro in the Old South*, 134–75. Rutgers University Press, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1b18thd.10>.

Du Bois's criticism of McKenzie drew media attention across the nation. Du Bois was labeled a "propagandist" by The Gazette Times of Pittsburgh. The Chicago Whip considered Du Bois's speech an "unwarranted," malicious verbal attack" on McKenzie, which he wanted to discredit his administration and thwart his efforts to raise a million-dollar endowment. White newspapers in Nashville used the opportunity to help support the McKenzie administration at Fisk. The Nashville Banner praised white Nashvillians for the contributions of the endowment drive, which was around fifty thousand dollars. During the Fall 1924 semester, tensions were seen between the students and the administration. In October 1924, a student committee at Fisk provided broad members with grievances. Students would catalog the rules and regulations implemented by McKenzie that they deemed excessive. The students also question the commitment of faculty members at Fisk University. Students would also be called for Blacks at the university to participate so they could have mentors who would invest in their educational development. Despite students voicing their concerns about Fisk's curriculum direction and quality, their concerns were largely ignored.¹²⁶

In November 1924, during the second week of the month, students would display discontent when board members arrived at Fisk. In protest, students would march around campus banging on pans and trash cans, shouting, "Away with the Czar!" and "Down with the Tyrant" in response to McKenzie's policies at the university. Some students would lock themselves inside one of the dormitories, turn out the lights, and demand to meet the faculty members, McKenzie, and student representatives to discuss policy changes. A Black professor named T.W. Talley

¹²⁶ BRIGGS, *Before I'd Be a Slave': The Fisk University Protests, 1924–1925*, 134–75.

assured students that if they could stop the demonstrations and leave their dormitories, they would be able to seek alterations to restrictive guidelines.¹²⁷

By January 1925, the protest movement was gaining momentum. Du Bois gave Fisk students additional support, where he organized a three-session meeting for Fisk Club members from across the country. The meeting took two days, on January 2 and 3, in New York City, New York. During the meeting, it was decided that each club and its members would vote to form a united organization headed by an executive committee of which Du Bois would serve as chair. Being a chair, Du Bois was now responsible for speaking on behalf of the organization at various locations, both north and south, to raise awareness of the issues that were going on at Fisk University at the time. Du Bois would contact various Black press members to keep Fisk's concerns in the national news. Trustees attempted to speak to McKenzie to see if some reconciliation could occur among Fisk students while he was in New York City. On January 31, 1925, upon his return to Nashville, McKenzie told reporters, "A complete ignoring of the charges made against the administration will be the policy of the Board of Trustees of Fisk University".¹²⁸

On February 4, 1925, McKenzie made a speech requesting the students to either "abide by the rules of Fisk University" or "get out." Later on that day, male residents of Livingstone Hall gathered for a protest demonstration around 10 pm. The protest demonstration was in response to McKenzie's policies. Over the next two hours, the men moved through dormitory halls onto the athletic field, beating pans with sticks while singing, "Before I'd be a slave, I'd be buried in my grave."¹²⁹ Thirty minutes later, after male residents returned to Livingstone Hall,

¹²⁷ BRIGGS, *Before I'd Be a Slave': The Fisk University Protests, 1924–1925*, 134–75.

¹²⁸ BRIGGS, *Before I'd Be a Slave': The Fisk University Protests, 1924–1925*, 134–75.

¹²⁹ BRIGGS, *Before I'd Be a Slave': The Fisk University Protests, 1924–1925*, 134–75.

they were awakened by gunshots. The gunshots came from eighty police officers who were armed with riot guns. McKenzie made a phone call to the police about the students demonstrating. When the police entered Livingstone Hall, they found the Livingstone Hallways silent and eighty-six resident students asleep in their beds. The police began to knock down doors and tear out transoms until they had awakened every student in Livingstone Hall. The police were not there to arrest the people who participated in the demonstration. The students who participated in the demonstrations included George Streater, J.B. Crawford, Edward Taylor, Victor Perry, Charles Lewis, E.L. Goodwin, and R.R. Alexander. These seven student names were given to the police by McKenzie. These seven students had presented objections to McKenzie administration and its policies the previous year and visited the Board of Trustees three months earlier. Only five of the seven men were located that night. Streater, who lived off campus, could not be found, and Crawford lived at the home of a White family in the West End area.¹³⁰

The armed guard took the five men to the President's house, where McKenzie was residing. McKenzie refused to see the five men, and he instead requested to be taken to the police station located on Second Avenue. Once the five men were removed from the police wagon, McKenzie brought each of the five one at a time to his office. McKenzie asked the students to sign on paper promising "To Obey To The Letter All Fisk University Rules And Regulations On Pain Of Being Arrested Or Expelled". Some students agreed to sign the letter while others refused to. White newspapers would pick up the story of student demonstrations and

¹³⁰ BRIGGS, *Before I'd Be a Slave': The Fisk University Protests, 1924–1925*, 134–75.

turn them into reports of widespread rioting in the coming days. The arrest also made national news and divided Nashville residents by racial lines.¹³¹

On February 5, 1925, the City of Nashville transferred its case against the five defendants to the Second Circuit Court for deliberation. The trial court started at two o'clock, and Black and White observers filled the courtroom. Even though warrants were issued for Streater and Crawford, neither were arrested. The two worked with fellow students Van Taylor, Stanley Hemphill, Frank Williams, and Ernest Crossley to contact Fisk alums in Tennessee and other Blacks in Nashville, raise 150 dollars in cash, and secure twenty thousand dollars in bonds. The funds were used to hire a former Tennessee governor named Albert H. Robert. Surprised by many, prosecutor John Dewitt asked Judge Roscoe Matthews to dismiss the case against the five students. The case was dismissed, and the five students were discharged. On February 9, 1925, members of Nashville's Negro Board of Trade tried to contact McKenzie on behalf of the students to discuss resolutions proposed by the student body. McKenzie would counter their offer with a proposal to create an impartial committee of eighteen individuals. The committee would include six of their members, six from the Chamber of Commerce, and six members representing Nashville universities, including Vanderbilt, Peabody, Ward-Belmont, Walden, and Tennessee State A&I. They were there to act as jury for the recent student allegations of Fisk's excessive rules and regulations. McKenzie stressed that the committee was there to advise Fisk to administer.¹³²

The Negro Board of Trade members refused to participate in what they saw as a biased committee. They then decided to organize their mass meeting of concerned Black citizens to

¹³¹ BRIGGS, *Before I'd Be a Slave': The Fisk University Protests, 1924–1925*, 134–75.

¹³² BRIGGS, *Before I'd Be a Slave': The Fisk University Protests, 1924–1925*, 134–75.

form a definite action plan. C.L. McKissack, president of the Nashville Negro Board of Trade, called for a 7:30 pm meeting at Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church. An estimated three thousand Black community members crowded Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church. Some of the people at the meeting included E. W. D. Isaac, editor of the *Clarion*, one of Nashville's Black newspapers; T. Clay Moore and Dr. J. T. Phillips, former Fisk Alumni Association presidents; pastors R. W. Nance, former president of Alcorn College, and Noah Williams, a former army chaplain; J. A. Martin, Colored Methodist Episcopal School Board secretary; Dr. J. T. Barnes, a dentist, and Fisk alumnus; and Meredith G. Ferguson, bookkeeper at Citizens' Savings Bank and a veteran who served as an officer in the First World War. A few of McKenzie's supporters were in attendance, including Dr. J.A. Napier and Dr. W.W. Sumlin. supporters and aid “the quieting of the public mind.”¹³³

The first to speak at the meeting was Streator, one of the students who avoided being arrested after McKenzie called the police. Streator repeated student demands for representation by a council of their peers, reinstatement of a school paper informed by student contributions, the creation of an athletic association, and the ability to join fraternities and sororities like students in other institutions. Streator also argued that the next president to replace McKenzie did not matter if it was a White or Black president but just an actual president. J. Andrew Simmons, a student protestor, took the stage where he argued that he and other students were trying to defend Fisk University and not destroy it. Simmons also told the audience that despite contributions from Whites, Fisk did not get its reputation as “the greatest Negro school in the world by just sitting on a hill out there”; it was the physical and financial contributions of blacks that enabled the success. At the end of his speech, Simmons demanded an administration of “people who are in

¹³³ BRIGGS, *Before I'd Be a Slave': The Fisk University Protests, 1924–1925*, 134–75.

sympathy with the institution regardless of race, color, or creed” and who treat the students as respective adults.¹³⁴

Following the meeting at the church, the Negro Board of Trade passed five resolutions. The first is that we regard the things prayed for by the students as reasonable and practicable. The second is that the students' requests have yet to be given a respectable hearing. The third is that having been denied a respectful hearing, Fisk's board of trustees has been and is now petitioned by the citizens in a mass meeting assembled to give their case a full hearing and impartial investigation. The fourth, the president, Dr. F. A. McKenzie has shown his inability to govern the school by calling in the police to stop a demonstration that was quickly within the power of him and his faculty and by causing the imprisonment of five students, against whom his accusations were subsequently withdrawn for lack of evidence. The fifth, because of his inefficiency, as evidenced by the facts herein, is our firm opinion that his usefulness as president of Fisk University is at an end. On April 16, 1925, McKenzie resigned from Fisk University. Thomas Elsa Jones, a White minister from the north, would replace McKenzie as president of Fisk University. Jones would be president at Fisk until he was replaced by Charles S. Johnson, who became the first Black president of Fisk University in 1947. McKenzie would return to Juniata College, teaching until his retirement in 1941. McKenzie died on September 1, 1957, in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.¹³⁵

During the 1920s, two of Nashville's Historically Black Colleges and Universities ceased to exist. In 1925, Walden University was forced to close after financial difficulties. On July 12, 1927, the trustees agreed to merge the school with Howe Institute in Memphis, Tennessee, which

¹³⁴ BRIGGS, *Before I'd Be a Slave': The Fisk University Protests, 1924–1925*, 134–75.

¹³⁵ BRIGGS, *Before I'd Be a Slave': The Fisk University Protests, 1924–1925*, 134–75.

would later become Le Mayne Owen College. On December 29, 1929, the students and teachers at Roger Williams University left for Memphis to join Howe Institute. Black churches in Nashville, like the First Colored Baptist Church, would see changes in many pastors from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twenty century. These pastors included Harding Smith (1894), Thomas W. Lott (1895), Allen D. Hurt (1896-1898), J. Gardner Ross (1898-1899), and W. S. Ellington (1899-1816). It was followed by Meredith W. Gilbert (1916-1917), Samuel L. McDowell (1917-1923), Peter A. Callahan (1924), and Samuel N. Vass (1925-1928). Russell C. Barbour (1897-1944) served as pastor from 1929 until his death. He was followed by Acting Pastor Ralph W. Riley (1944-1946) and Pastor Herbert L. B. Wilkins (1946-1950).¹³⁶ *Kelley v. Board of Education*, a suit filed by several Black families thirty years after the Fisk University Protest, brought the same education issues back to the forefront again in 1955. Pastor Kelly Miller Smith Sr, of the First Colored Baptist Church, was a parent who filed suit against the Board of Education in *Kelley v. Board of Education* in 1955, and a leader in Nashville's Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s.

Kelly Miller Smith Sr became pastor of First Colored Baptist Church in March 1951 succeeding Pastor Herbert L.B. Wikins. Smith was born on October 28, 1920, in the Black town of Mound Bayou, Mississippi to Terry Monroe and Priscilla Anderson Smith. He was named after Howard University dean and professor Kelly Miller. Smith's grandfather, R.D. Smith, and his father were officers in the Mississippi Knights of Tabor, a fraternal organization. At an early age, Smith attended Magnolia Avenue High School in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and graduated from the school in 1938. After graduating from high school, Smith attended Tennessee State A&I University and transferred to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. While at Morehouse,

¹³⁶ First Baptist Church Capitol Hill, <https://www.firstbaptistcapitolhill.org/our-history/>.

Smith became the campus chapter of the NAACP. He received his bachelor's degree in religion in 1942 from Morehouse College. Smith then attended graduate school at Howard University in Washington D.C., where he received his Master of Divinity degree in 1945. Smith became pastor at Mount Heroden Baptist Church in Vicksburg, Mississippi, serving from 1946 to 1951. Once became pastor of First Baptist Colored Church, member would grow around the church the next couple of years.¹³⁷ In 1954, Ebony magazine named him "One of America's Most Outstanding Preachers". Smith would also become President of the Nashville chapter of the NAACP from 1956 to 1959.

Robert W. Kelley, et al. v. Board of Education was a lawsuit filed by several Black families to desegregate Nashville public schools. Nashville Black attorneys Z. Alexander Looby and Avon N. Williams Jr joined Thurgood Marshall, a legal director of the NAACP Legal and Educational Fund filed suit against Nashville public schools, in federal district court, to bring the city into compliance with the *Brown v. Board of Education* discussion. Alfred Z. Kelley, a Nashville barber, was the lead plaintiff of the case.¹³⁸ Kelley operated Kelley's Barber Shop, lived with his wife Robbie L. Kelley and Robert Kelley at 543 Ramsey Street in Nashville. Kelley would also become the President of the Nashville chapter of the NAACP in 1959. Kelley was also a member of the First Baptist Church, East Nashville where he served as a deacon, choir, and religion committee chair of the church.

¹³⁷ "Kelly Miller Smith Sr," Tennessee State University, <https://library3.tnstate.edu/library/digital/smithk.htm>.

¹³⁸ Samuel Momodu, "Kelley V. Board of Education (1955-1957)," Blackpast.org, February 2, 2024. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/kelley-v-board-of-education-1955-1957/>.

On September 23, 1955, attorneys Z. Alexander Looby, Avon Williams Jr, and Thurgood Marshall would file the suit on Nashville public school on behalf of twenty-one black children, including Kelley's son Robert, who wanted to attend East Junior High School rather than go across town to the all-Black Pearl High School. Robert would turn away from East Junior High School because of his race. Kelley agreed to become the lead plaintiff of the case. This is the reason why the case became known as *Robert W. Kelley, et al. v. Board of Education*.¹³⁹ Smith would also be a part of the case where he was one of the parents along with Kelley to file a lawsuit against the Nashville Board of Education for failing to implement *the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. Despite Smith being a part of the *Robert W. Kelley, et al. v. Board of Education* case, the First Colored Baptist Church did not take part in the Civil Right case.

Two years later, Judge William E. Miller decided in favor of the plaintiff and ordered the Nashville School Board to desegregate its public schools and submit to the court a desegregation plan by January 1957. In the spring of 1957, the court accepted the school board's plan to desegregate the first grade in the fall of 1957. The court placed emphasis on the 1955 Supreme Court's decision in *Brown II* to desegregate "with all deliberate speed" and stressed the adjective "deliberate" rather than the noun "speed"¹⁴⁰. On September 9, 1957, nineteen black children, all six years old, including Smith's daughter, Joy, who attended the first grade, were to desegregate all-White Nashville elementary schools including Buena Vista, Jones, Fehr, Bailey, Glenn,

¹³⁹ Gwyneth Anne Thayer, "First Baptist Church East Nashville: history and property description," 05000761 listed July 27, 2005.

<https://digital.mtsu.edu/digital/collection/p15838coll4/id/2881>

¹⁴⁰ Bobby L. Lovett, Linda T. Wynn, and Caroline Eller, *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee* (Nashville, TN: the Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History, 2021), 150.

Emma Clemons, and Hattie Cotton. Three students were unable to attend on the first day of school because of improper transfer papers.

The rest of the sixteen children would integrate into the elementary schools on that day. The names of students that entered Buena Vista Elementary School included Erroll Groves, Ethel Mai Carr, and Patricia Guthrie; Jones Elementary School included Barbara Jean Watson, Marvin Moore, Richard Rucker, Charles E. Battles, and Cecil Ray Jr; Fehr Elementary School included Charles E. Ridely, Willis E. Lewis, Bobby Cabknor, Linda McKinley, and Rith Buchnan; Glenn Elementary School included Lajunanda Street, Jacqueline Griffith, Sinclair Lee Jr; Emma Clemons Elementary School included Joy Smith and Hattie Cotton Patricia Watson. The students were harassed by angry Whites as rocks and bottles were thrown at them on that day. On September 10, 1957, a bomb exploded at Hattie Elementary School. John Kasper, a White segregationist, was responsible for the bombing.¹⁴¹ Kasper was also responsible for inciting violence in Clinton, Tennessee after the city decided to integrate schools in 1956. Kasper relocated to Nashville where he started to argue that bombings and lynching were necessary if Nashville decided to desegregate their public schools. The bomb destroyed half of the school, but nobody was wounded or killed.

The attack caused numerous responses from civic leaders and activists. Nashville Police Chief Douglass E. Hossee mentioned “has gone beyond a matter of integration. These people segregationists have ignored the laws and they have shown no regard for you whites or any citizen.” Smith and Rev. Will Campbell held a community meeting about the bombing. Smith mentioned, “We can go forward as planned and try to show them the right way”. Hattie Cotton would reopen nine days later and there was an investigation of the bombing with a \$7,000 cash

¹⁴¹ The Nashville Tennessean September_15, _1957_ (Page_12_of (1)

reward for the person who was responsible for the bombing. Six suspects would be detained for questioning, but nobody was charged. Kasper was later arrested for his involvement in the bombing, which he was arrested for disorderly conduct and loitering in November 1958. In December 1957, the Parents' Preference plan was filed by the Nashville School Board. The plan allowed parents to decide what school they wanted their children to attend in the city of Nashville. The plan did not go through, which it was dismissed. The plan returned in April 1958, which was approved two months later, on June 18, 1958. It allowed Black students to attend other White schools. The *Robert W. Kelly, et al. v. Board of Education* would become Tennessee's longest running desegregation case and it was finally settled in 1998.¹⁴² Having won *Kelley V. Board of Education*, Smith began gathering Black ministers in Nashville, Tennessee to create a branch of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to combat racial segregation called the Nashville Christian Leadership Council.

On January 18, 1958, Smith gathered other Black Nashville ministers at the Capers Memorial CME Church. The pastor of Capers Memorial CME Church at the time was Joseph A. Johnson Jr. Johnson was born on June 19, 1914, which was on the day of Juneteenth in Shreveport, Louisiana. Johnson was the third child and the oldest son to Joseph A. Johnson Sr and Rose Johnson. In 1938, he married Grace Leon Johnson, and they would have three children, Joseph Andrew Johnson III, Charles DeWitt Johnson, and Patricia Ann Johnson-Powell. Johnson would attend and graduate from Monroe Colored High School in Monroe, Louisiana. He received his BA degree from Texas College in 1938. He went on to graduate school and attended the Iliff School of Theology, where he received his Master of Theology in 1943 and Doctor of

¹⁴² “*Kelley v. Board of Education*,” Tennessee State University.
<https://www.tnstate.edu/library/documents/KellyvBdofEduc.pdf>

Theology in 1946. In 1953, Johnson became the first African American to be admitted to Vanderbilt University. He also went on to become the first African American to graduate from Vanderbilt University, where he earned his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1954 and Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1958. Johnson would go on to become the first African American to serve as a full member of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust. In 1933, Johnson would enter in the Christian ministry and was ordained Elder in 1937. In 1938, he began his pastoral career at Mays Chapel and St. Mary Chapel CME Churches in Ruston, Louisiana. He served as a pastor at other churches, including Phillips Chapel CME Church and Capers Memorial CME Church in Nashville, Tennessee. He also served as a pastor at Cleaves Memorial CME Church in Denver, Colorado. In 1966, he would be elected as the 34th bishop of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁴³

The background of the meeting on that day goes back to when Smith was invited to a meeting held in Atlanta, Georgia on January 10, 1957, at Ebenezer Baptist Church. On that day, the Southern Leadership Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration which would later be changed to Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Some of the principal founders of SCLC include Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Ralph Abernathy, Bayard Rustin, Fred Shuttlesworth, Joseph Lowery, and Ella Baker. The SCLC was established to replicate the successful strategy and tactics of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) involvement in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Being inspired by the establishment of the SCLC, Smith told King that he would go back to Nashville and establish a civil rights organization similar to the MIA. Another reason why he told King this was because despite being president of Nashville

¹⁴³ Cynthia Johnson-Oliver, “*Bishop Joseph Johnson History Project*,” Retrieved March 29, 2023, <https://bishopjosephjohnson.org/about/about-bishop-johnson/>.

chapter of the NAACP, he had seen the NAACP incapable of mounting a protest civil rights campaign. King would tell Smith that he hoped that Smith was not establishing an organization to compete with the NAACP. Smith's inspiration of the organization included a number of factors, including the *Montgomery Bus Boycott*, SCLC, and *Robert W. Kelly, et al. v. Board of Education* that led to the desegregation of Nashville Public Schools and the resistance among white segregationists of the case. Smith realized that Nashville had their own racial problems in relation to Jim Crow Segregation.¹⁴⁴

Another purpose of the gathering was to hold a mass meeting on the SCLC'S Voters Crusade on February 12, 1958, which is Abraham Lincoln birthday on the concern about voting. Smith mentioned, "The conference is currently working to get millions of Negroes to register as new voters as a means of using the ballot to eliminate many of them of problems. Place of the Nashville mass meeting has not been set."¹⁴⁵ On that day, Smith established the Nashville Christian Leadership Council at the meeting at Capers Memorial CME Church. The Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC) was established where Smith was elected as the first president of the organization. The other council members included ministers of other Black churches from Nashville at the time. It included the first vice president, Revered Enoch Jones, pastor of Friendship Baptist Church; the second vice president, Joseph A. Johnson Jr, pastor of Capers Memorial CME Church; secretary, the Rev. J.L. Edwards Jr., pastor of Mount Nebo Baptist; assistant secretary, the Rev P.C. Campbell Jr., associate pastor of St. Luke CME Church;

¹⁴⁴ Samuel Momodu, "Kelly Miller Smith (1940-1984)," Blackpast.org, February 2, 2024. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/kelly-miller-smith-sr-1920-1984/>.

¹⁴⁵ "Negro Ministers Here to Map Vote Rally," *The Tennessean*, January 18, 1958. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111327072/?terms=%22Kelly%20Miller%20Smith%22&match=1>.

treasurer, the Rec. Cecil H. Marcellus, pastor of Braden Methodist Church; chaplain, the Rev. G.W. Parker, pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church; publicity chairman the Rev C.L. Dinkins, education director of Sunday school publishing board of the National Baptist Convention USA Inc.; registration and voting committee chairman, the Rev P.C. Campbell Sr., pastor of St. Luke CME Church; music committee, chairman, the Rev. J.T. Ridley, pastor of Hopewell Baptist; associate chairman, the Rev. R.E. Holt, pastor of Olivet Baptist.¹⁴⁶ The headquarters of the NCLC was located at Mount Nebo Baptist Church at 2416 Clifton Pike where Rev. John J.L. Edwards Jr was pastor.

The purpose of the NCLC was supposed to “unite clergymen and laymen of all denominations in the common venture of spreading the ministry of reconciliation and love in a society of racial injustice”.¹⁴⁷ Their purpose was also to apply the central tenets of their faith to the problems of injustice and persecution and segregation. The NCLC wanted to attack social problems in the city of Nashville while operating within the context of the Christian faith.

The NCLC went by three principles:

1. To discover ways of non-violent resistance in love to all forms of racial, social, economic, or political justice.
2. To explore opportunities for non-partisan service in labor, industry, voting, registration, and civic life.

¹⁴⁶ “Negro Pastors in Ballot Drive,” *The Tennessean*, January 20, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111330815/?terms=%22Kelly%20Miller%20Smith%22&match=1>.

¹⁴⁷ *Nashville Christian Leadership Council. Toward The Beloved Community: The Story of The Nashville Leadership Council*. Nashville: 1961.

3. To co-ordinate those forces for good in the city which seek the growth of a genuine Christian movement toward the new community.

On February 13, 1964, Smith conducted an interview about his experiences with NCLC involvement in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement. Smith mentioned, “In 1958, when we formed an organization called the Nashville Christian Leadership Council, we had been in existence a very short time and before we adopted the methodology of nonviolence. The organization was formed in January 58, in March of 58, we had a workshop of nonviolence, that soon, and then we had them off and on for 15 or 18 months”.¹⁴⁸

On February 9, 1958, Capers CME Church celebrated the 126th anniversary of its church founding that included four services that day. Johnson’s sermon on that day was “Jesus Saw the Multitude”.¹⁴⁹ On February 12, 1958, what is known as “the Lincoln Day Negro Day Vote Rally”, Lincoln Day rallies was being held in 21 Southern cities under sponsorship of the SCLC. The goal of SCLC on the day was to double the registration for Blacks in 11 Southern States or which they call Dixie States. Smith mentioned, “A general outline of the Crusade for Citizenship voter registration campaign will be announced at the meeting”. Smith also mentioned, “We’re planning a thorough campaign here.” He continued, “I don’t know how many negroes here are registered to vote. I should know in the next couple of days but whatever the number is, it could

¹⁴⁸ Kelly Miller Smith Sr, interview by Robert Penn Warren, Nashville, TN, February 13, 1964.

¹⁴⁹ “Church To Mark 126th Birthday,” *The Tennessean*, February 7, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111857906/?terms=%22Capers%22%20&match=1>.

stand doubling.”¹⁵⁰ He also mentioned that it was a plan for NCLC to meet again on Saturday February 15, 1958.

Around 7:30 p.m., a *Crusade for Citizenship* rally was held at Capers CME Church where Martin Luther King Sr., who was the father of Martin Luther King Jr. was supposed to be the principal speaker at the church but could not attend because of illness. Pastor Dr. Raymond Francis Harvey of Tuskegee Alabama became the substitute speaker. During his speech, Harvey mentioned, “This is no time for clowning. Even circuses are going out of business these days,” Harvey also mentioned, “An entire county is being gerrymandered, uprooted.”¹⁵¹ Harvey advised leaders of local Blacks, including the NCLC to proceed with laying out plans to double the number of Blacks registered to voting in Davidson County. Rev. P. Clifford Campbell, registration chairman for NCLC, said during his speech “There are approximately 32,000 Negro voters of the total 137,000 people registered in Davidson County”. He also mentioned that the goal was to double the number of negro voters that was among 71,000 Negroes in Nashville and the county. He mentioned, “If we use the ballot, we won’t have to go to the courts so much. Let us vote our convictions and stop being Uncle Toms asking for a dollar for our vote.” Through the meeting, NCLC was able to raise over \$500 to contribute to the Southwide registration crusade’s expenses. NCLC voted to send letters of commendation and urgency to Missouri’s Democratic Senator Thomas Henning’s and U.S. Attorney General William P. Rogers. The letter to

¹⁵⁰ “Lincoln Day Negro Vote Rally Set,” *The Tennessean*, February 12, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603561898/?terms=%22Kelly%20Miller%20Smith%22&match=1>.

¹⁵¹ Robert Churchwell, “Think Look, Speaker Tells Negro Rally,” *Nashville Banner*, February 13, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603562325/?terms=%22%22Think%20Look%2C%20Speaker%20Tells%20Negro%20Rally%2C%22%20%22&match=1>.

Hennings was supposed to commend support of civil rights legislation in Congress. The letter to Rogers was supposed to urge his office to be vigilant in enforcing the new civil rights law. On February 27, 1958, NCLC opened voting quarters. NCLC spent quarters which it was supposed to direct its registration drive to give more Blacks to qualify to vote. The headquarters of the NCLC were located at Mount Nebo Baptist Church. Rev. Charles L. Dinkins said, “The drive is a non-partisan campaign, interested in seeing that citizens exercise their right to vote.”¹⁵² Dinkins also mentioned on how the ministers of NCLC were to provide transportation for voters as well to register to vote. In the weeks following *the Crusade for Citizenship* rally at Capers CME Church, NCLC sponsored a nonviolent workshop at Bethel A.M.E. Church.

A church study workshop on “Christian Non-violence” was held at Bethel A.M.E. Church from March 26 to 28, 1958. NCLC sponsored the workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to “deal with any violence can be met and defeated by the Christian concept of love.” The speakers of the workshop included the Rev. Glenn E. Smiley, national field secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), and the Rev Ralph D. Abernathy, vice-president and chairman of the executive board of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). Smiley was supposed to speak at 8 p.m. on March 26, 1958, at Bethel A.M.E. Church and direct the workshop. Smiley originally was supposed to have another speaking engagement at Millsaps College in Mississippi, but the invitation was withdrawn because of his integration stand. Abernathy was supposed to speak at 8 p.m. on March 28, 1958, at the church. Rev James Lawson and Ann Holden were to assist Smiley with the workshop. The three-day workshop

¹⁵² “NCLC Opens Vote Quarters,” *Nashville Banner*, February 27, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603566267/?terms=%22NCLC%22%20&match=1>.

meeting was held using nonviolent tactics to challenge segregation in Nashville led by Lawson.¹⁵³

Lawson was born on September 28, 1928, to the Reverend James Morris and Philane May Cover Lawson Jr in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Both of Lawson's father and grandfather were methodist ministers. Lawson grew up in Massillon, Ohio, where he attended primary and secondary education. During his senior year in high school, he received his ministry license. After graduating from high school, Lawson attended Balwin College in Berea, Ohio in 1947. While attending Balwin College, he became a member of the local chapter of FOR and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Both FOR and CORE were the organizations that believe in nonviolence action against racism. In April 1951, Lawson was found guilty of violating the draft laws of the United States, where he was sentenced to three years in federal prison, and he was released a year later. After getting released from prison, Lawson returned to Balwin College and earned his bachelor's degree.¹⁵⁴

Afterward, Lawson would travel to India to do missionary work with the Methodist Board of Missionaries. While in India, he studied the Gandhian principles of *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* means "truth," "insistence," "holding firmly to," "holding firmly to truth," or "truth force," which is a form of nonviolent resistance or civil resistance.¹⁵⁵ Mohandas Gandhi coined and practiced *satyagraha* in the Indian Independence Movement, that occurred in India from

¹⁵³ Samuel Momodu, "Nashville Christian Leadership Council (1958-1964)," Blackpast.org, June 3, 2020. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/institutions-african-american-history/nashville-christian-leadership-council-1958-1964/>.

¹⁵⁴ Henry Hampton, Steve Fayer, and Sarah Flynn, *Voices of Freedom* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990).

¹⁵⁵ Uma Majmudar, *Gandhi's Pilgrimage of Faith: From Darkness to Light* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

1857 to 1947, leading up to India's independence from Great Britain. *Satyagraha* would also influence Lawson, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, and other civil rights activists during the Civil Rights Movement. In 1956, Lawson returned to the United States, where he entered Oberlin College's Graduate School of Theology in Oberlin, Ohio. In 1957, one of Lawson's college professors introduced him to King, who advised him to move to the south and aid the Civil Rights Movement. After listening to King's advice, Lawson moved to Nashville and enrolled at the Divinity School of Vanderbilt University, where he would start organizing nonviolent workshops.

He recalled a meeting and spoke to King at Oberlin College: "I told him I expected to come South one day when I finished graduate degree or degrees. And Martin said to me, 'Don't wait, come now. We need you now.' And, I quietly, recognizing the challenge, said, 'Okay, I'll come as fast as I can.'"¹⁵⁶

When the nonviolent workshops were launched in early 1958, they were composed of adults with no college students involved in them. Smith noted in a 1964 interview with Robert Penn Warren, "Yes yes, sort of clinics, that's right, and we had many Sunday night coffee sessions. At this time, it was all adults, there were no students involved anywhere, and the thought of students hadn't really entered the minds at that time, was these coffee sessions we discussed the problems of Nashville and which problems we could perhaps best approach. And having adopted the nonviolent methodology, we had think in terms of kind of project which would lend itself to a nonviolent demonstration, which could also serve as an opening wedge for other things."¹⁵⁷ The coffee sessions would be a series of gatherings that would occurred between

¹⁵⁶ James Lawson interview: *James Lawson: Reflections on Life, Nonviolence, Civil Rights, MLK*.

¹⁵⁷ Kelly Miller Smith Sr, *interview by Robert Penn Warren*, Nashville, TN, February 13, 1964.

the fall and spring of 1958. The coffee sessions in Nashville played a significant role in the development of the Nashville movement. A Nashville prison would be the setting for the July 1958 death of Richard Lillard, during which the First Colored Baptist Church would get involved

On July 20, 1958, a Black warehouse prisoner named Richard Lillard, who was 38 years old at the time, was found dead in a bloodied padded cell around 4 a.m. by Turnkey C.R. Bracey. According to the warehouse superintendent, John Burnette, Lillard was put in the padded cell from a workhouse cell “to protect him after he went berserk.”¹⁵⁸ Burnette also mentioned Lillard was in a warehouse cell with 20 to 25 other prisoners on various charges. He first started to annoy his fellow prisoners, then started fighting with them and started stripping off his clothes. He was then taken to another cell, where he was by himself, and he broke the glass on the door and started to take off his clothes. Burnette was given permission by Lt. W.D. Monohon, officer in charge at the headquarters, to move Lillard to the padded cell in the city jail section. Burnette mentioned, “He attacked us when we went in to get him and move him”¹⁵⁹ Helping him were Patterson Clark and Lucien Debow, Turnkey, and guard.

Burnette explained that Lillard was already bloodied when Lillard was moved to the padded cell. Burnette also admitted that Lillard already had some wounds including a head cut, before he was taken to the cell. Burnette was then asked how Lillard got the head wound where he mentioned, “I hit him. He grabbed Clark’s blackjack out of his hand.”¹⁶⁰ The reporter then asked Burnette if there was a practice for employees to enter a cell with drawn blackjacks.

¹⁵⁸ Steve Korpan, “Prisoner Dies In Cell; Police Claim Defense,” *The Tennessean*, July 21, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111659992/?terms=%22Richard%20Lillard%22%20&match=1>.

¹⁵⁹ Korpan, “Prisoner Dies In Cell; Police Claim Defense.”

¹⁶⁰ Korpan, “Prisoner Dies In Cell; Police Claim Defense.”

Burnette responded, “When a man goes berserk like that and we go into his cell, we have to have something to beat him off he attack us.” Burnette would go to tell the reporter that Lillard was carried to the padded cell and left there. The reporter asked why Lillard did not receive medical attention if his condition was severe. Burnette answered the reporter’s question by saying, “I thought of that. I went downstairs, but he was already dead.” He added, “When a prisoner gets like that, beating his head against the wall and everything, the first thing we think of is to move him to a padded cell where he can’t hurt himself.”¹⁶¹

Police Chief Douglas Hosse turned over the evidence of the death of Lillard to the City Civil Service Commission and District Attorney General Harry G. Nichol. Nichol explained that the grand jury would study the case. Hosse suspended the three city workhouse employees who were questioned in the death of Lillard without pay. The workhouse employees who were questioned in the death of Lillard included Burnett, Lucien DeBow Jr, and Patterson Clark. Workhouse prisoners told a different tale on what occurred: “Where they seen Lillard getting beaten badly where he was begging for mercy, battered by blows, bleeding badly from head and face wounds, and left to die in a padded cell with his hands cuffed and his body lying limply against the cell door with cuff chains tied to the outside of the door through a peep hole.”¹⁶² Workhouse prisoners Robert Fitzgerald, Paul Barkley, and John Thomas Biggers explained that Lillard suffered gashes over his eyes when he fell from his dining table on Friday before the court time. Lillard would be treated at General hospital and returned to city court where he was sentenced to pay a \$50 fine for possessing untaxed whiskey. After being transferred to the

¹⁶¹ Korpan, “Prisoner Dies In Cell; Police Claim Defense.”

¹⁶² Korpan, “Prisoner Dies In Cell; Police Claim Defense.”

warehouse, Lillard complained his eyes hurt and tore his bandages off. They added, “Lillard started acting kind of crazy, kept some of the men up by punching their cots.”¹⁶³

Aubrery Nelson Graves said the prisoners told him Lillard was going crazy. He said they telephoned Burnett at home about it. Graves said, “Burnett told me he was coming in and put the prisoner in a cell by himself.”¹⁶⁴ Graves would also say that Burnett ordered Lillard belt and long shoelaces be taken from him. Graves said, “I took his belt. He had no long laces.” According to the prisoners, Lillard was left in a cell by himself where he started to strip himself of clothing and started pointing a finger and yelling: “Bang Bang, you’re dead.”¹⁶⁵ Prisoners started to enter the same cell block as Lillard. Lillard started ordering them to stay out and threatening to slap the four people when they refused to. Afterwards, Lillard was moved by Booker Olden to an empty cell by DeBow’s order.

Another Black prisoner named A.B. McClain said Burnett came to the fourth floor. McClain would continue in saying he heard but did not see Burnett asking Lillard: “Boy, what’s wrong with you?” McClain would go on saying: “I heard him unlock the door, a short time later I heard some licks like a baseball bat and I heard Burnett say: “Think you can stop playing now?” Another prisoner named Barkley heard Burnett telling Lillard: “You quiet down or I’ll have to quiet you down.” Barkley would claim that he heard it around 15-20 licks coming from Burnett hitting Lillard with his nightstick. Debow ordered prisoners Walter Robinson Jr and James Hodge to clean off the blood in the cell where Lillard had been. Other prisoners said that they saw large splashes of blood on the shirts of Burnett and Clark. McClain said that Debow

¹⁶³ Korpan, “Prisoner Dies In Cell; Police Claim Defense.”

¹⁶⁴ Korpan, “Prisoner Dies In Cell; Police Claim Defense.”

¹⁶⁵ Korpan, “Prisoner Dies In Cell; Police Claim Defense.”

told him to clean the padded cell in the city jail section. McClain would explain that he heard Lillard crying, "Help me somebody, help me." County medical examiner Dr. W.J. Core ruled that Lillard died because of external violence. Core ruled that Lillard's death resulted from hemorrhage, shock, and cerebral concussion.¹⁶⁶ The autopsy was reported to District Attorney Harry Nichol, Burnett, DeBow, and Clark would be charged with murder by Lillard's wife Leila Elizabeth Lillard. Lillard was joined by her attorney Charles Galbreath and a special prosecutor in the case. Attorney Jack Norman Sr would represent Burnet, Debow, and Clark in court that was scheduled for August 11, 1958. The three men were released on a \$2,500 bond.

On August 01, 1958, during a meeting at the First Colored Baptist Church, Smith and the NCLC discussed Lillard's death on July 20. Smith said, "Regardless of the prisoner Lillard's behavior, he should not have received such violent treatment with clubs used to kill animals. We further feel that Richard Lillard was not given proper medical or psychological care at the time when it was most needed."¹⁶⁷ Smith went on to explain: "We believe that though man has broken the law, he is yet a sacred personality with certain human rights and deserves humane treatment. He should be able to enter or be committed to the institution of our city and retain the dignity and self-respect he had upon entering." The next day, the NCLC protested the death of Lillard where they call for an investigation and prosecution of suspected police brutality and hiring more moral guards. The NCLC sent their resolution to Mayor Raphael Ben West, Police Chief D.E. Hosse, and District Attorney General Harry Nichol. On August 15, 1958, the Davidson County grand

¹⁶⁶ "Workhouse Death Probe Set By Grand, CSC," *Nashville Banner*, July 22, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603313632/?terms=%22Richard%20Lillard%22%20&match=1>.

¹⁶⁷ "Council Protests Prisoner's Death," *The Tennessean*, August 03, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111517691/?terms=%22%22Council%20Protests%20Prisoner%27s%20Death%22%20%22&match=1>.

jury reported on the investigation of Lillard's death. The grand jury subpoenaed a dozen witnesses in the previous case. Charges lodged against Burnett, DeBow, and Clark before the city civil board. Evidence from the warehouse was taken in the case including a slapjack, Billy club, and broken broom.¹⁶⁸ These weapons were allegedly used in the fatal beating of Lillard. A special prosecutor named Frank C. Gorell was retained Lillard's wife. It would take several months for the murder case to be concluded.

On August 24, 1958, a public meeting occurred at Clark Memorial Methodist Church, where the Commission on Christian Social Relations, the Women's Society of Christian Service, and the Nashville community could meet with the superintendent of schools with W.H. Oliver. The meeting was to hear how the school system planned on handling the 1958-1959 school year in Nashville, the new stair-step of integration, the safety of integration, and the safety of children and families trying to attend integrated schools in Nashville. Most of the attendees of the meeting at the church were Black except for city officials and police. White segregationist John Kasper and six of his followers also attended the meeting. While Oliver was speaking, Lieutenant Rex White of the Nashville Police Department walked back from the church auditorium, went up the aisle to the rostrum, and interrupted Oliver. White asked for the church building to be clear for a bomb threat. Vivian Henderson, Economics professor at Fisk University, chairman of the forum told the audience: "The meeting temporarily is suspended. I have been requested to ask all of you to file from the building. One group to the back, others out this side door, please."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ "Jury Reports Today On Workhouse Death," *The Tennessean*, August 15, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111544196/?terms=%22Jury%20Reports%20Today%20On%20Workhouse%20Death%22%20&match=1>.

¹⁶⁹ "Police Prepared, Quickly Cope With Bomb Scare," *Nashville Banner*, August 25, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603555548/?terms=%22Kasper%22&match=1>.

Both Oliver and White would be approached by newsmen. White said, “Both police and firemen have received phone calls saying the building will blow up.” White also said, “John Kasper came into the back of the room just a minute after Professor Oliver started talking, If this the work of any race agitators, certainly they wouldn’t want to blow up the building with him in it. But we can’t take any chances; that’s why we’re getting everybody out.”¹⁷⁰ Inspector W.J. Donoho informed White that the police and fire department had received anonymous tips that a bomb had been planted at the church. Donoho said, “We were on the scene as a matter of routine precaution. Sergeant Roy Morgan got the bomb scare call at headquarters and radioed me to call him. I did. He told me what was wrong and our outside police detail moved in to join others in the building. The call came to headquarters at 4:25; by 4:29 the building was empty.”¹⁷¹ Firemen from the Engine Company 11 searched Clark Memorial Methodist Church for explosives, which none was found. In half an hour, the church was pronounced safe to reenter. The meeting would continue at the church auditorium and end in the church sanctuary.

In September 1958, newspaper publisher civil rights activist Daisy Bates spoke at First Baptist Church, East Nashville, as part of Women’s Day at the church. Bates’s speech was on the topic “Women: Accepting Challenges in Times of Crises.” Harriet H. Davidson chaired the Women’s Day event at the church. Bates was best known for her involvement with the integration of Little Rock Central and Little Rock, Arkansas branch of the NAACP.¹⁷² On September 20, 1958, a 42-year-old mentally disturbed woman named Izzo Curry, stabbed Dr.

¹⁷⁰ “Police Prepared, Quickly Cope With Bomb Scare.”

¹⁷¹ “Police Prepared, Quickly Cope With Bomb Scare.”

¹⁷² Gwyneth Anne Thayer, “First Baptist Church East Nashville: history and property description,” 05000761 listed July 27, 2005.

<https://digital.mtsu.edu/digital/collection/p15838coll4/id/2881>.

Martin Luther King Jr at the Blumstein's Department Store in Harlem, New York. King was signing copies of his book *Stride Toward Freedom*. Curry approached King and stabbed him with a seven-inch steel letter opener and drove the blade into the upper left side of the chest. King was then rushed to Harlem Hospital, where he underwent two hours of surgery to repair the wound. According to the doctors, had King sneezed or coughed, the weapon that stabbed him would have had penetrated his aorta and he would have had died. Curry would be arrested shortly after the stabbing. Curry would claim that civil rights leaders were boycotting and torturing her and caused her to lose jobs and change her religion. She was charged with felonious assault and possession of a firearm.¹⁷³

The next day, both Black and White religious and educational leaders expressed hope for a quick recovery for the King. Dr. Stephen J. Wright, president of Fisk University, said, "However, I am happy to know his condition is good, and I certainly hope his recovery will be speedy and complete. Martin Luther King is a constructive leader. His policy of non-violence and compliance with the law has aided the cause of Negroes everywhere." Rev. Robert C. Palmer, minister of the First Unitarian Church and chairman of the Nashville Community Relations Conference called it "an awful tragedy." Smith mentioned, "It's tragic that anything should happen to Martin Luther King at this time when everyone needs him the most." The Reverend J.F. Grimmett, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, said, "The Rev. Mr. King is a very fine Christian gentleman and we all sincerely hope he will recover quickly." The Rev. R.W. Kelley, minister of Clark Memorial Methodist Church said, "This is a terrible thing to have happen,

¹⁷³ *Dexter Avenue Baptist Church to King*, 21 September 1958, in Papers 4:498–499.

especially on top of all the other difficulty he had recently, his arrest and manhandling in Montgomery.” It seemed that Nashville ministers showed their concern on King’s recovery.¹⁷⁴

A month later, King’s wife, Coretta Scott King, was the speaker at the Women’s Day program at First Colored Baptist Church. Mrs. D. Conrad Gandy, chairman of the program introduced Coretta. She mentioned that her husband was doing well recovering from the stabbing. She appreciated with the many prayers on her husband’s behalf where she mentioned, “Certainly, without prayers the struggle wouldn’t continue.” During her speech, Coretta mentioned, “The Negro masses in the South won’t stop until freedom becomes a reality.” She also said, “that America, priding itself on being Christian and democratic, has almost slept away the opportunity to demonstrate to the world it really believes in these ideals through its treatment of Negroes.”¹⁷⁵ She also denied about violence being the solution to the way of freedom in the movement urging love to overcome hate. Ironically, the same day that Coretta spoke at First Colored Baptist Church, Curry was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic and committed to Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. After Coretta appeared at First Colored Baptist Church in the fall of 1958, nonviolent workshops began to take place there.

¹⁷⁴ “White, Negro Leaders Here Deplore Knifing of King,” *The Tennessean*, September 21, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111515946/?terms=White%20Negro%20Leaders%20Here%20Deplore%20Knifing%20of%20King&match=1>.

¹⁷⁵ “Mrs. Martin Luther King Address Nashville Group,” *Nashville Banner*, October 20, 1958, [https://www.newspapers.com/image/603580036/?terms=.](https://www.newspapers.com/image/603580036/?terms=)



Figure 3.1 Mrs. Coretta Scott King, Reverend Kelly Miller Smith, and Mrs. D. Conrad Gandy, First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee on October 20, 1958.

College students started to attend the nonviolent workshops head at First Colored Baptist Church. One of the first students to attend these workshops was John Robert Lewis. Lewis was born on February 21, 1940, to Willie Mae and Eddie Lewis in Troy, Alabama. At a young age, Lewis aspired to be a preacher where he was able to preach to his family chickens on the farm. Growing up in Troy, Lewis had little interaction with white people since the area he lived was mostly Black. In 1955, fifteen-year-old Lewis first heard King on the radio, where he was closely following King's involvement in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. At 17, Lewis met Rosa Parks, who was famously known for her participation in the boycott in refusing to get up on the bus on

¹⁷⁶ "Mrs. Coretta Scott King, Reverend Kelly Miller Smith, and Mrs. D. Conrad Gandy", First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee, 1958 October 20.
<https://digital.library.nashville.org/digital/collection/nr/id/564/rec/1>.

December 01, 1955. Lewis also had an opportunity to meet King in 1958, after writing to him about being denied admission to Troy University in Troy, Alabama. King would refer to Lewis as “the boy from Troy.” Lewis wanted to sue Troy University for discrimination, but King warned Lewis that doing so would endanger his family in Troy. Lewis then decided to attend American Baptist Theological Seminary, a private Baptist college in Nashville, Tennessee, founded in 1924.¹⁷⁷

Lewis mentioned: “But in 1955, at 15 years old, I heard of Dr. King, and I heard of Rosa Parks. They inspired me to get in trouble. I remember meeting Rosa Parks as a student. In 1957, I wrote Dr. King a letter and told him that I wanted to attend a little whites-only college 10 miles from my home—Troy State College, known today as Troy University. I submitted my application and my high-school transcript. I never heard a word from the school, so that gave me the idea that I should write Dr. King. In the meantime, I had been accepted to a little college in Nashville, Tennessee, so I went off to school there. King heard that I was there and got in touch with me. He told me that when I was back home for spring break, to go and see him in Montgomery”.¹⁷⁸

Lewis started to attend American Baptist Theological Seminary in the fall of 1958. While attending American Baptist Theological Seminary, Smith became his homiletics instructor at the university. This would lead Lewis to start attending First Colored Baptist Church, where Smith announced that workshops would be held at the church. The first workshop took place at First Colored Baptist Church one Sunday evening around 6:30 p.m. Lewis mentioned in his memoir

¹⁷⁷ Cassandra Waggoner, “John Lewis (1940-2020),” Blackpast.org, February 19, 2008, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/lewis-john-r-1940/>.

¹⁷⁸ "The Montgomery Bus Boycott, 50 Years Later". News & Notes. December 1, 2005. NPR. Archived from the original on February 3, 2018. Retrieved April 6, 2018.

that “he took a seat along with seven or eight other young men and women, all of us college students, all of us black,” with him being the only ABT student.¹⁷⁹ The Sunday evening sessions at First Colored Baptist Church were more of an introduction where Lawson gave an overview of world religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Lawson suggested that all of the religions shared a common tenet of justice.

Lewis would also mention: “First Baptist Church . . . became a rallying point, it became the meeting place where students, young people, community leaders, could meet and discuss, debate and argue about what the city should become. . . . Kelly’s church became a sort of haven where people could come on a Sunday evening at 6 o’clock and discuss social action, debate the question of segregation and social discrimination. . . . And so his ministry at the church and his leadership in the community went hand in hand. He had a tremendous influence over almost everything that was taking place in the city of Nashville, in the black community”.¹⁸⁰

In December 1958, A.Z. Kelley, who was known for his involvement in the *Kelley v. Board of Education*, was elected president of the Nashville chapter of the NAACP, where he succeeded Smith. On January 16, 1959, the prison warehouse workers who were involved in the fatal beating of Lillard, including Burnett, DeBow, and Clark, were acquitted. They were acquitted by an all-male, all-White jury that took 43 minutes to return a verdict. Despite the men being freed, they would remain suspended from their work. In early 1959, NCLC started to shift their focus on attempting to desegregate lunch counters downtown. James Lawson recalls, “In early 1959 we decided that we needed to begin a movement to desegregate downtown Nashville.

¹⁷⁹ John Lewis, *Walking With The Wind* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 83.

¹⁸⁰ Allison Calhoun-Brown, “*Upon This Rock: The Black Church, Nonviolence, and the Civil Rights Movement*,” Volume. 33, no. 2 (June 2000): 171.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/420886?seq=4>

We planned a series of workshops on nonviolence to start the process.”¹⁸¹ These workshops were attended by students from the HBCU in the city. The reason why NCLC decided to target lunch counters was that they were the main economic area in which many African Americans went to spend their money. African Americans were able to buy items at the stores but were not allowed to eat at the lunch counters. The leaders held meetings as they discussed targeting lunch counters downtown to protest segregation. Attempts were made by the NCLC to negotiate with business leaders of department stores who refused to negotiate with them.

On March 03, 1959, The Rev. Fred L. Shuttleworth, president of the Alabama Christian Movement (ACMHR), was the principal speaker at an installation program for the NCLC at St. John AME Church. Shuttleworth was the pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama and secretary of the SCLC. Shuttleworth organization ACMHR was involved in many of the civil rights activities that were occurring in Birmingham during that time. The council officers to be installed that day at the church were Smith, president; the Rev Robert W. Kelley, first vice-president; the Rev. C.T. Vivian, second vice-president; the Rev. Andrew White, secretary; Mrs. C. M. Hayes, assistant secretary; the Rev. G.W. Parker, treasurer the Rev. G.A. Donald, chaplain, and the Rev. Mr. Marcellus, publicity chairman.

On April 12, 1959, the NAACP held a public meeting for their membership campaign kickoff program at First Baptist Church, East Nashville. The campaign was organized by Edith Otey, who was the campaign chairman. Dr. Matthew Walker, chief of surgery at Meharry Medical College was co-chairman. Other people who were involved in the event included Merideth D. Feguson, vice president of the Citizens Savings Bank and Trust company, and Z Alexander Looby. The principal speaker of the meeting was Arthur D. Shores, Birmingham

¹⁸¹ Lewis, *Walking With The Wind*, 82.

NAACP lawyer and chief counsel in the case of Autherine Lucy, who was the first black student to attend the University of Alabama in 1956. Shores also represented King in the Montgomery Bus Boycott prosecutions and the NAACP, when the state of Alabama sued the organization. During Shores speech, he urged the Nashville Branch of the NAACP to reject the idea of a “cooling-off period”. He also said, “This is the old Biblical story of people who have seen the promised land, rich in fruit and honey. But there are some who say we are as grasshoppers beside its inhabitants.”¹⁸² Shores continued: “The you’re pressing too fast argument is part of the south’s offensive to maintain the Southern way of life, not exactly the same thing as the American way of life as expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, by our presidents and the Golden rule.” Shores would conclude his speech with a quotation from John C. Lynch of Mississippi, a Black United States representative, “If the sorrows and miseries of our race is to be tolerated by the American people then our boasted civilization becomes a fraud; our republican institutions a failure, our social system a disgrace, and our religion a complete hypocrisy.” At this time, several Nashville Black ministers started encouraging Black churches to get involved in civil rights issues that were occurring in Nashville at the time, such as racial segregation in public accommodations.

On July 09, 1959, the 16th Institute of Race Relations at Fisk University. One of the speakers was the Rev. Joseph Metz Rollins. In his speech, Rollins mentioned, “Negro churches need to turn from their rallies, pastor anniversary celebrations and special efforts, and become actively involved in the social and human struggle taking place over the Southland.” Rollins thought it was wrong for Black denominations to expect their White counterparts to carry the

¹⁸² “Local NAACP Chapter Sets Membership Driver,” *Nashville Banner*, April 02, 1959. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603858355/?terms=>.

whole blunt of the integration crises that was occurring in Nashville. Rollins added, “I believe Negro churches must adopt the attitude that the time to wait for desegregation is now.”¹⁸³ Rollins was indeed urging for black churches to play a role in the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville.

Rollins was born on September 08, 1926, to Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins Sr. and Alice C. Rollins. His father was the pastor of the Carver Memorial Presbyterian Church. In 1954, Rollins became the first pastor at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Tallahassee, Florida. While he was pastor at Carver Memorial Presbyterian Church, he became active in the Tallahassee Bus Boycott, which was coordinated by the Inter-Civic Council (ICC). Rollins would serve as treasurer for the civil rights organization, working closely with civil rights activist Charles Kenzie Steele, who was one of the main organizers of the Tallahassee Bus Boycott and a member of the SCLC. During the bus boycott, Rollins would receive many death threats and many in the group leadership of the ICC would also receive threats of violence. The boycott also made him lose his job, where he had to take up another job as a hospital orderly. Rollins would be involved in the civil right events in Nashville.¹⁸⁴ Finally, nonviolent workshops that would be called “Movement Schools” hosted by Lawson would occur Clark Memorial Methodist Church. Nonviolent workshops held at Clark Memorial Methodist Church laid the foundation for nonviolent discipline used in Nashville public accommodations during the 1960s.

In the fall of 1959, the nonviolent workshops were held at Clark Memorial Methodist Church by Lawson. Clark Memorial Methodist Church was chosen for the workshops for several

¹⁸³ Robert Churchwell “Negro Churches Push Desegregation,” *Nashville Banner*, July 10, 1959, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603237885/?terms=Negro%20Churches%20Push%20Desegregation&match=1>.

¹⁸⁴ “Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins Jr,” The History Makers last modified September 14, 2007.

strategic reasons. First, it gave other churches a central role in the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville and built a sense of camaraderie across denominational lines. Second, the church was located on Jefferson Street, where Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and Tennessee State A&I University were also located. This made it easy for adult leaders to access students and it was convenient for some students to participate in the workshop.

Lawson made contact to Paul LaPrad, a White student from Delphi, Indiana, and who was attending Fisk University at the time. Lawson encouraged him to join the non-violent workshops. He also advised LaPrad to recruit other students from Fisk University to join the nonviolent workshops. One of the students that LaPrad reached out to and recruited to join the workshops was a bright young student from Chicago named Diane Nash. Nash got inspired to get involved in the Nashville Sit-Ins when she witnessed the Jim Crow Segregation that occurred among public accommodations in Nashville with her date. She saw the white and colored signs in the lady's bathroom and asked her date that if he was offended by the segregation among public accommodations. He was not offended because he had seen white and colored signs all his life living in the South. As Nash attended the workshops, she started liking the studios in which she felt the sit-ins had a purpose in attempting to desegregate lunch counters.¹⁸⁵ Nash joined the workshops and made other people join the workshops, especially men, because they got attracted by Nash's light-skin.

Diane Nash was born in Chicago on March 5, 1938. Nash's parents were Leon Nash and Dorothy Bolton Nash. Nash had a middle-class upbringing in which her family moved from Memphis, Tennessee to Chicago which her family was most likely a part of the Great Migration.

¹⁸⁵ Samantha Kealoha, "Diane Judith Nash (1938-)," Blackpast.org, April 18, 2007. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/people-african-american-history/nash-diane-judith-1938/>.

The Great Migration was a movement which included Blacks leaving the South to escape Jim Crow and racism while looking for job opportunities elsewhere. Most Blacks headed to cities such as Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; New York City, New York; and Los Angeles, California. Nash spent most of her childhood with her grandmother Carrie Bolton. Nash's grandmother worked as a seamstress for a White doctor. It was Bolton who moved her family from Memphis to Chicago.¹⁸⁶

Nash's parents sent her to St. Anselm Catholic School to avoid the segregation in Chicago public schools. Nash continued to experience racism in her later childhood as she continued to get her education. Many people who were around Nash during her life thought she was white because of her light skin tone. Nash attended Hyde Park High School in Chicago and graduated in 1956. After graduating, Nash attended Howard University, which is a historically black university located in Washington D. C., but she had to leave because of financial problems. Nash transferred to Fisk University, which was another historically black university in Nashville, Tennessee.¹⁸⁷

In a 1985 interview that Nash did for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) program *Eyes on the Prize*, Nash talked about taking part of the nonviolent direct workshops:

“Well, I had by then experienced the emotional reaction, and was really feeling stifled, and my goodness, I came to college to grow, and expand and here I am shut in. And in Chicago, I had had access, at least, to public accommodations, and lunch counters and

¹⁸⁶ WYNN, LINDA T. "Diane Judith Nash (1938–): *A Mission for Equality, Justice, and Social Change.*" In *Tennessee Women: Their Lives and Times*, edited by Freeman Sarah Wilkerson, Bond Beverly Greene, and Helper Ferris Laura, 2813. University of Georgia Press, 2009.

¹⁸⁷ WYNN, Diane Judith Nash(1938-):*A Mission for Equality, Justice, and Social Change. In Tennessee Women: Their Lives and Times.*

what have you. So, my response was, Who's trying to change it, change these things? And I recall talking to a number of people in the dormitories at school and on campus, and asking them if they knew any people who were trying to — to bring about some type of change. And I remember being, getting almost depressed, because I encountered what I thought was so much apathy. At first, I couldn't find anyone, and many of the students were saying, "Why are you concerned about that?" You know, they were not interested in trying to effect some kind of change, I thought, they certainly didn't seem to be".

“And then, I did talk to Paul Laprad, who told me about the nonviolent workshops that Jim Lawson was conducting. They were taking place a couple of blocks off campus. And the reason that I said earlier that I thought the other students were apathetic was that after the movement got started, and there was something that they could do, i.e., sit at a lunch counter, march, take part, many of those same students were right there, going to jail, taking part in marches, and sit-ins, and what have you. It was that they didn't have a concept of what they really could do, so when they got one, they were on fire. They wanted to a change”.¹⁸⁸

Marion Barry, who was a graduate student at Fisk University at that time joined the sit-ins. Barry was inspired in joining the workshops after he had a negative experience while attending Lemoyne College in Memphis as an undergraduate student. He ran into problems with the school board of trustees with racism. He was not sure if he believed in nonviolence, but he thought that the workshops gave him the opportunity to participate in desegregating the lunch counters.

Barry recall:

¹⁸⁸ Diane Nash, Interview for Eyes on the Prize Documentary, Boston, MA November 12, 1985.

“Well fortunately in Nashville, I was in graduate school then. There was a minister by the name of Reverend Jim Lawson who was teaching at Vanderbilt, in the Divinity School, and in the fall of 1959, a number of us had been asked to go to a series of workshops on nonviolent direct action and frankly I didn't know what, what that was about, I didn't know—I mean I was more curious as to what was going on than anything else. But once we got involved with it we talked about the whole nonviolent technique of direct action and what we hoped would be achieved, you know, by that and we went to some workshops—we were pushed around, and we were thrown on the floor and I, just— that part of it and then we had a number of discussions about why we had to think about even moving in that area. This was before the sit in movement nationally happening in North Carolina just a Nashville group. In that group was Jim Bevel and Diane Nash and Bernard Lafayette and some others that I can't remember now who had come from Tennessee State, Fisk, the American Baptist Theological Seminary, and there were a couple of people I guess from Vanderbilt; then there were some white students in it who were on an exchange from several colleges around the country who were at Fisk who participated. I think Paul Laprad was one guy I remember—it's been so long.”¹⁸⁹

Marion Barry was born on March 6, 1936, to Marion Barry and Mattie Barry, who were sharecroppers in Itta Bena, Mississippi. His father died when he was four years old. He moved to Memphis, Tennessee, when he was eight years old with his family. Barry attended Le Moyne College in Memphis. While attending Le Moyne College, Barry became active in the NAACP chapter at Le Moyne College. In 1958, he almost got expelled after criticizing a white college

¹⁸⁹ Marion Barry, Interview for Eyes on the Prize Documentary, Boston, MA May 05, 1979.

trustee named Walter Chandler for remarks he felt were demeaning to Blacks.¹⁹⁰ Barry wrote a letter to the LeMoyne's president Dr. Hollis F. Price, asking if Chandler be removed from the school board of trustees for the remarks he made. Barry received his bachelor's degree in chemistry in 1958. He moved to Nashville to attend Fisk University to earn his master's in Organic Chemistry. While attending Fisk University, Barry heard of Jim Lawson and NCLC workshops at Clark Memorial Methodist Church, where he started to attend.

Lewis also recruited and advised his friend Bernard Lafayette to join the workshops. Lafayette, who also attended American Baptist Theological Seminary, declined a scholarship to attend Florida A&M. Lafayette was born on July 29, 1940, to Bernard Lafayette Sr and Verdell Lafayette in Tampa, Florida. In 1958, he moved to Nashville to attend the American Baptist Theological Seminary. Lafayette became friends with Lewis at the university. Lafayette and Lewis started to attend the nonviolent workshops at Clark Memorial Methodist Church organized by Lawson.¹⁹¹ Lawson and Lafayette recruited James Bevel, who was another American Baptist Theological Seminary student, to join the nonviolent workshops. Gandhi's teachings of nonviolence influenced Bevel, who was from Mississippi. James Bevel was born in Itta Bena, Mississippi, in October 1936. Bevel was also raised in Cleveland, Ohio, until he moved to Nashville, Tennessee, in 1957, to attend American Baptist Theological Seminary.¹⁹² Bevel join

¹⁹⁰ Lacinda Mennenga, Marion Barry Jr (1936-2014), Blackpast.org, April 18, 2007. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/people-african-american-history/barry-marion-jr-1936/>.

¹⁹¹ Bernard Lafayette Jr. and Kathryn Lee Johnson, *In Peace and Freedom: My Journey in Selma* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2013).

¹⁹² Grant Kagawa, James Bevel (1936-2008), Blackpast.org, March 31, 2011. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/bevel-james-1936-2008/>

Jim Lawson and NCLC nonviolent workshops after fellow theological students Lewis and Lafayette recruited him to do so.

Cordy Tindell Vivian joined the nonviolent workshops, as well. Vivian was born on July 30, 1924, to Robert Cordie and Euzetta Tindell Vivian in Boonville, Missouri. Vivian attended Lincoln Grade School in Macomb, Illinois. Vivian would graduate from Lincoln Grade School in 1942. After graduating, Vivian would enroll at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois. Vivian would encounter racism while attending Western Illinois University. Vivian's original major was social science, but he changed it to English after experiencing racism in the department. Despite of changing his major to English, he would also experience discrimination in the English department. The English department chair refused to allow him to join the English Club. Vivian would move to Peoria, Illinois, where he started to participate in civil rights activism. He would later graduate from Western Illinois University with a Bachelor of Arts in English. In 1947, Vivian was part of the campaign to successfully desegregate lunch counters in Peoria. Furthermore, while living in Peoria, Vivian met Octavia Geans and the two married in 1953. The couple would have six children together. Vivian would become pastor and delivered his first sermon at Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Peoria. In 1954, Vivian would move to Nashville. He would become pastor of First Community Church in Nashville from 1956 to 1961. He also began attending American Baptist Theological Seminary and became an editor at the National Baptist Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention. Vivian resigned from the Publishing Board when it refused to publish a twenty-four-page article that he wrote

after interviewing King about successfully leading the Montgomery Bus Boycott. He would later self-published the interview and distributed it.¹⁹³

In a 1985 interview that Vivian did for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) program *Eyes on the Prize*, Vivian described the nonviolent workshops that was occurring in 1959:

“Sure. In Nashville our natural leader, the person who had held about five or six of us together, understood the nonviolent was Reverend Kelly Miller Smith pastor of First Baptist Church. But it was just holding us together. I had demonstrations in 1945, but I couldn’t move anything in Nashville nor was I trying that hard. I was just trying to hold onto my job as editor. Kelly Miller Smith was the natural leader with people and yet—and all he could do was hold us together. What to do—how to do something was the problem. How to get underway. When Jim Lawson came to the city he began to organize students, right. And, most important to that, for both students and we who were ministers was that we had workshops. And the workshops in nonviolence made the difference. We began to, first, understand the theory, understand the philosophy behind it. The great religious imperatives that were important in terms of understanding people. Then, finally, the tactics. Then, finally, the techniques. How to in fact begin to take the blows. Cigarettes put out on you. The fact that you were being spit on and still, still respond with some sense of dignity and with a loving concept to what you were about. To be hit and to be knocked down and to understand that in terms of struggle and in terms of reaching conscience. In terms of, of gaining the greater goals for which you sought. Now, we actually done.”

¹⁹³ Peter Cole, Reverend Cordy Tindell “C.T.” Vivian (1924-2020), Blackpast.org, March 31, 2011.

“That, I mean, we actually beat people to the ground. We actually poured coffee on people. We actually did the various things to people. Kicked chairs out from under them, all right. Came on them in a crowded situation so that they could begin to get used to it. How did they respond? So they could begin to understand respond not in terms of verbiage. But in terms of actuality. You see, it is in the action that ethics is tested and this is one of the great learnings of nonviolent movement”¹⁹⁴

Other students who were involved in the nonviolent workshops included Rodney Powell, Gloria Johnson, Curtis Murphy, Hank Thomas, Angeline Butler, and others. Like Smith, Lawson, and other ministers, Lewis, Nash, Bevel, LaFayette, and Vivian came from religious backgrounds. Lewis and Bevel were Baptist, Nash was Catholic, and Vivian was Methodist. It also should be known that Vivian was a pastor at First Community Church in Nashville and Bevel was a pastor at the Chestnut Grove Baptist Church located in Summer County, Tennessee. Lewis, Bevel, and Lafayette attended American Baptist Theological Seminary, which is a Baptist university along with the National Baptist Convention USA Inc., which is the university religious affiliation. It is not surprising to see why these students would be drawn to attend Lawson’s nonviolent workshops at Clark Memorial Methodist Church.

Lawson argued and believed that people in the United States were one group of people instead of separated groups. Therefore, Americans did not need to segregate, and Lawson thought nonviolence was the solution to the world problems regarding conflict and war. The Christian principles which Lawson used were based on nonviolence to train students for the Nashville Sit-Ins. Gandhi’s ideas of peaceful resistance against the British was what Lawson saw

¹⁹⁴ C.T Vivian, Interview for Eyes on the Prize Documentary, Boston, MA January 23, 1986.

as a tactic which African Americans in Nashville could use against whites. Lawson believed that nonviolence would end segregation in the South similar to how Gandhi used this tactic in British colonization.¹⁹⁵ Workshop training included students sitting in chairs and other students harassing them. These students acted as White segregationists, calling students who sat in chairs racial slurs and attacking them. During this practice, Lawson told the students to remain calm while students who were acting as White segregationists attacked them. The workshops also taught students the rules of conduct once they started the sit-ins protest. The plan for the students when they entered the lunch counters was for them to sit and act polite while asking for service and never looking back at the table.

Lawson knew that once the students started sitting at the lunch counters, White segregationists would begin attacking these protesters. Lawson also believed that the use of nonviolence like the way how Gandhi used in India would be effective in desegregation in lunch counters in Nashville. Nash felt that the nonviolent workshops were too idealistic to solve the real problems which were occurring in relations to segregation. Despite Nash's different opinion about the use of non-violence for the movement, she knew that workshops would be beneficial in training the students for the lunch counters protests. The leaders of the workshops accepted Nash, and she was elected by the students of the campaign to be one of the leaders for the Nashville Student Movement (NSM). Despite being one of the organization leaders, Nash had fears of being a part of the sit-in movement. Nash feared the students would encounter violence and death at the lunch counters from white segregationists. She understood that racism was a severe issue in the South which student would most likely get attacked by people that were older

¹⁹⁵ Hasan Tesfa, James Lawson (1928-), Blackpast.org, June 10, 2009.
<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/lawson-james-1928/>.

than them at the lunch counters.¹⁹⁶ Lawson taught the acts of nonviolence on how to combat segregation to Nash and the students at the workshops. The workshops became popular all-around Nashville. Lawson discussed the theory and methods of nonviolence in handling attacks. Students in the workshop practiced the acts of nonviolence where they sat in stools while other students attack and harass them. The Nashville Student Movement and the Nashville Christian Leadership Council divided members to smaller groups and made careful planning to create signs and maps along with providing transportation. NCLC was known to give food and finances to the students. It organized African-American churches across Nashville. NCLC was able to take the challenge to help raise money for the sit-ins.

Diane Nash and others knew that segregation was getting tiring and old. Nash believed that segregated restrooms and water fountains were based on Jim Crow segregation. Some lunch counters did allow Blacks to purchase food but they could not eat at lunch counters. Under the leadership of Nash, the NCLC kept in mind of Lawson's nonviolent ideologies as they were planning for the sit-ins. The students' next step was to start attending the lunch counters downtown to start protesting segregation. During the 1950s, racism was still prevalent in the city of Nashville. Lawson's solution to the problem was the department lunch counters be desegregated. The students that attended Lawson's workshops were able to observe lunch counters and they realized that the lunch counters were an opportunity to desegregate downtown lunch counters in Nashville.

During the Christmas season of 1959, some of the students who were involved in the workshops, including women, targeted the department stores downtown. Nashville newspapers like *The Nashville Tennessean* and *The Nashville Banner* were not alert or did not know that the

¹⁹⁶ David Halberstam, *The Children* (New York, NY: Fawcett Books, 1998), 101.

students were planning the sit-ins. The Nashville Sit-In protest was organized and expected to provide success to the movement in an attempt to integrate lunch counters in Nashville. Racism was seen at every department store. One of the largest department stores in Nashville which students targeted during the protests was Harveys. Harveys store treated the protesters more kindly than other local department stores. On the other hand, Cain-Sloan treated the protesters more harshly which they asked the students to leave the store, or they would call the police.¹⁹⁷

There was a meeting at First Colored Baptist Church, where the students gathered with Lawson to discuss their involvement in the sit-in lunch counters. After the Christmas break, the students were planning to return the following year to continue the sit-in demonstrations. As 1960 came around, the leaders and groups in Nashville were planning on resuming the plans on the sit-ins. The Greensboro Sit-Ins beat Nashville to the lunch counter protests when on February 1, 1960, four students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College (now North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University), Joseph McNeil, David Richmond, Ezell Blair Jr, and Franklin McCain, went to the Woolworth, where they sat at the lunch counters. The four, which would later be known as the Greensboro Four, would become the catalyst of other sit-in movements which would occur in the South during that time.¹⁹⁸ Sit-ins spread to other cities across North Carolina and Virginia. Douglas Moore, who was participating in the Greensboro Sit-Ins, phoned Lawson and asked Lawson that if they were ready to join in the sit-in movement that was spreading across the South. Lawson agreed.

¹⁹⁷ Samuel Momodu, Nashville Christian Leadership Council (1958-1965), Blackpast.org, June 03, 2020. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/institutions-african-american-history/nashville-christian-leadership-council-1958-1964/>.

¹⁹⁸ Samuel Momodu, Greensboro Sit-Ins (1960), Blackpast.org, August 31, 2016. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/greensboro-sit-ins-1960/>.

The Nashville Black churches and ministers who participated in the Fisk University protests and *Kelley V. Board of Education* had a significant impact on Nashville's education protests. The February 09, 1925, meeting at Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church and the five resolutions passed by the Negro Board of Trade contributed to McKenzie's resignation as president of Fisk University on April 16, 1925. It was Smith's and Kelley's involvement in the *Kelley V. Board of Education* case that led Federal Judge William E. Miller to rule in favor of the plaintiffs and order the Nashville School Board to submit a desegregation plan by January 1957. This resulted in Smith's first-grade daughter Joy, along with 19 Black children, being able to desegregate seven all-White Nashville Elementary schools on September 9, 1957. First Colored Baptist Church and Clark Memorial Methodist Church played a significant role in their nonviolent workshops referred to as "Movement Schools" which helped prepare many students who attended Nashville Historically Black Colleges and Universities like Fisk University, Tennessee A&I University, Meharry Medical College, and American Baptist Theological Seminary for the nonviolent protests in Nashville public accommodations including lunch counters. The Nashville Black Churches' participation in education protest movements left a lasting impact on Nashville's education system.

Chapter 4: Let My People Go! First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill role in the Nashville Sit-Ins (1960).

The Nashville Sit-Ins were among the earliest nonviolent direct-action campaigns that targeted Southern racial segregation in the 1960s. The sit-ins, which lasted from February 13 to May 10, 1960, sought to desegregate downtown lunch counters in Nashville, Tennessee. First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, then known as First Colored Baptist Church, played a prominent role in the Nashville Sit-Ins. In addition to serving as a meeting house for civil rights protest meetings, the church also served as a gathering place before and after these protests. On February 13, 1960, the same day the Nashville Sit-Ins began, around 124 student activists gathered at the church before heading to Fifth Avenue downtown, where department store lunch counters were located, including Woolworth, S.H. Kress, and McClellan. On February 29, 1960, two days after the fourth sit-in protests occurred, also known as “Big Saturday,” which resulted in the first violent response to the protests, a group of 86 Black ministers gathered at First Colored Baptist Church to meet with Mayor Ben West to discuss the mass arrests of college students who protested lunch counter segregation on Saturday, February 27. West met with the Black ministers at the church to discuss what occurred on Saturday. West and James Lawson exchanged heatedly about the student protestors breaking the law at the lunch counters.¹⁹⁹

A few days after the church meeting, on March 03, 1960, West announced the formation of a Biracial Committee. The purpose of the Biracial Committee was to seek a solution to the city’s racial strife and an effort to defuse the racial divisions that were caused by the sit-ins. On that same day, Vanderbilt University Chancellor Harvie Branscomb announced that Lawson was

¹⁹⁹ James Talley, "Judge Harris Ouster Sought". *The Tennessean*, March 01, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111999041/?terms=%22Judge%20Harris%20ouster%20sought%22.%20&match=1>.

expelled from Vanderbilt. Lawson was expelled from Vanderbilt because of his involvement in the sit-in protest. The next day, Lawson would be arrested at First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, on charges of conspiring to violate the state's trade commerce law. Seventy-nine other students were also charged with Lawson on that day. The officers then took Lawson to general session court, where he declined to accept bail when three Vanderbilt Divinity School faculty members offered to post it for him. Lawson would later change his mind and leave jail before 9 p.m.²⁰⁰ On March 25, 1960, the sit-ins resumed with demonstrations at nine downtown stores and restaurants. Approximately 120 Black students, 10 White students, and some older Blacks sat at the restaurant's lunch counters. Before the sit-ins occurred, the students attended a briefing session at First Colored Baptist Church before heading out. During the same day, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) was in Nashville to film a documentary on the sit-ins called *Anatomy of a Demonstration at the First Colored Baptist Church*. At the First Colored Baptist Church, Jim Delihias, the researcher with CBS, was with the documentary film crew, taking notes on the sit-in plan meeting at the church.²⁰¹ Buford Ellington, who was Tennessee Governor at the time, accused CBS of instigating and planning the sit-ins that occurred that day while they were at First Colored Baptist Church. CBS officials from New York to Nashville denied that CBS was responsible for the sit-in demonstrations.

²⁰⁰ Mac Harris, "New Charges Filed Against Sit-In Students," *The Tennessean*, March 05, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112001118/?terms=New%20Charges%20Filed%20Against%20Sit-In%20Students&match=2>.

²⁰¹ Charles L. Fontenay, "Ellington Says Demonstration For TV Benefit," *The Tennessean*, March 26, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112126521/?terms=Ellington%20Says%20Demonstration%20For%20TV%20Benefit&match=2>.

In April 1960, several incidents would occur during the month leading up to the lunch counters downtown to be desegregated. The first incident would include an economic boycott of the department stores downtown, where Blacks and Whites began to stay away from these stores because of the sit-in protests. The second incident was the Biracial Committee making recommendations to partially integrate the city lunch counters on April 05, 1960. Each store would have one section for Whites only and another for Whites and Blacks. Discussions occurred at First Colored Baptist Church about the recommendation which student leaders rejected. The student leaders considered the recommendations morally unacceptable based upon a policy of segregation, which the sit-ins resumed. The third incident occurred during Easter weekend from April 15-17, 1960, when a conference occurred at Shaw University, a private HCBU in Raleigh, North Carolina. Fourteen Nashville leaders, including Lawson, Nash, and others, attended this conference organized by Ella Baker, a civil rights organizer and SCLC's executive secretary. At the meeting, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee will be established.²⁰² Around that time, back in Nashville, twelve students from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis arrived in Nashville in support of the Nashville Sit-Ins. They went to First Colored Baptist Church for Easter Services, where they had the chance to meet with Smith. University of Minnesota student Thomas D. Olson would be arrested for reckless driving. Despite being arrested for reckless driving, some of them would say the actual reason Olson was

²⁰² David Halberstam, Sit-In Leaders Here Take Trip, *The Tennessean*, April 15, 1960. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111846907/?terms=Sit-In%20Leaders%20Here%20Take%20Trip&match=1>.

arrested was a form of harassment from the police in their support for the sit-ins, in which he would be released and fined \$25.²⁰³

A dynamite blast ripped through the front window of Z Alexander Looby's house near Meharry Medical College on April 19, 1960. Looby and his wife were asleep at the time when the bombing occurred. The bombing caused damage to the house, but nobody was injured or killed. In response to the bombing, around 3,000 blacks marched on city hall to meet with the West in protest of the Looby bombing. West agreed with the protestors that the lunch counters should be desegregated.²⁰⁴ After weeks of secret negotiations between merchants and protest leaders, an agreement was finally reached during the first week of May. On May 10, six downtown stores opened their lunch counters to black customers for the first time. With that agreement, Nashville became the first major southern city to begin desegregating public facilities during the Sit-In Movement. Due to its location, First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill served as a physical center of the movement in downtown Nashville, particularly for desegregating public accommodations. This chapter assesses how First Baptist Church Capitol Hill, as an institution of African American life in Nashville, shaped and directed civil rights activism in the Nashville Sit-Ins.

As 1959 came to an end, the Nashville students who participated in the nonviolent workshop at Clark Memorial Methodist Church was expected to resume the sit-in demonstration after the Christmas break the upcoming year. As 1960 came around, Lawson's workshops at

²⁰³ Mac Harris, "Sit-In Supporter Given \$25 Fine," *The Tennessean*, April 19, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112100700/?terms=Sit-in%20supporter%20given%20%2425%20fine&match=1>.

²⁰⁴ Garry Fullerton, "Community Leaders Deplore Looby Bombing; Urge Action," *The Tennessean*, April 20, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112101198/?terms=bombing&match=1>.

Clark Memorial Methodist Church resumed with the growing number of attendance of students coming from the colleges including some White students. The church would have a larger meeting space with more students coming, along with occasional extra meeting on Thursdays to supplement the regular Tuesday evening sessions.²⁰⁵ As students in Nashville attended Lawson's nonviolent workshop's at Clark Memorial Methodist Church as they intended to resume sit-ins. Several students at North Carolina A&T College in Greensboro, North Carolina organized sit-in demonstrations that would launch the Sit-In Movement in the early 1960s.

On February 1, 1960, "the Greensboro Four" that included Ezell Blair Jr, David Richmond, Franklin McCain, and Joseph McNeil, who were students at North Carolina A&T College, went to the Woolworth Department Store lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Like Lawson and most of the students at his workshop, the Greensboro Four were influenced by the nonviolent protest teachings and strategies of Gandhi, as well as the Freedom Rides organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1947. On that day, the four sat down at the lunch counter inside the Woolworth store. Woolworth's lunch counter policy was to serve Whites only, and the staff, which included Black employees, refused to serve them. The store manager, Clarence Harris, asked them to leave, but the four men stayed until the store closed that night. The next day, more than twenty students joined the sit-in including coeds from Bennett College in Greensboro. White customers would harass the Black students and the lunch counter staff at Woolworth would continue to deny them serving them. News reporters and a TV

²⁰⁵ Lewis, *Walking With The Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, 98.

cameraman covered the protests the second day as the Greensboro community and eventually the nation and the world learned about them.²⁰⁶

On February 3, 1960, news of the Greensboro Sit-Ins reached Nashville in a newspaper article named *The Tennessean*. During that same day, Reverend Douglas Moore, a methodist minister in Greensboro and a friend of Lawson, telephoned him. During their phone conversation, Moore pleaded with Lawson to get Nashville involved with the sit-in movement. Moore mentioned to Lawson “We need to get these sit-ins to spread. So how soon can you get Nashville going?”²⁰⁷ Moore was the pastor of Asbury Temple Methodist Church in Durham, North Carolina. On June 23, 1957, Moore led several attendees from his Sunday session from the Asbury Temple Methodist Church to the Royal Ice Cream Parlor. The group would enter through the back door, they sat at the segregation section that was reserved for whites and waited to be served. Louis Coletta, who was the owner of the Royal Ice Cream Parlor, asked the group to either move to the Black section of the Parlor or leave, which the group refused. Coletta then called the police. Lieutenant Wallace Upchurch led several officers to arrest Moore and others. The group was to be known as the “the Royal Seven,” that included Moore, Mary Elizabeth Clyburn, Vivian Jones, Virginia Williams, Claude Glenn, Jesse W. Gray, and Melvin Williams. The next day, the group would be found guilty of trespassing, and each was fined \$10 plus court costs. On July 16, 1957, after a 24-minute deliberation, an all-White jury of the Superior Court upheld the guilty verdict and fined the protestors an additional 25 dollars each. On January 18, 1957, the case was moved up to the State Supreme Court where the group again lost their case.

²⁰⁶ Samuel Momodu, “The Greensboro Sit-Ins (1960),” Blackpast.org, August 31, 2016. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/greensboro-sit-ins-1960/>.

²⁰⁷ *Halberstam*, 93; Barnes interview of Lawson

The group attempted to apply the case to the United States Supreme Court which refused to hear their case.²⁰⁸ Despite the Royal Ice Cream Sit-In not being successful, it would have a long-term significance and would help spark future protests such as the Greensboro Sit-Ins.

Later in the evening on that same day, a mass meeting occurred at Fisk University chemistry building where 500 students gathered to hear Lawson announce the upcoming sit-ins at the downtown department store lunch counters and that volunteers were needed. On February 6, 1960, around forty-five students staged a “sympathy sit-in” to show support to the Greensboro Sit-Ins. Lawson thought the students were finally ready to stage their own sit-ins. Lawson most likely felt like that for two reasons. First, the Greensboro Sit-Ins beat him to the sit-ins protests that him and his students who were planning to resume their sit-in protests after the Christmas Break in Nashville. Second, Moore, who was also involved in the Greensboro Sit-Ins, advised Lawson and his students to get involved in the Sit-In Movement in Nashville through their phone calls. The Greensboro Sit-Ins began the Sit-In Movement that would spread to other cities across North Carolina including Winston-Salem, Durham, Raleigh, and Charlotte in the next coming days.²⁰⁹ In preparation for the sit-in demonstrations that began on February 13, 1960, Fisk University and First Colored Baptist Church held several meetings.

On February 10, 1960, another meeting occurred at Fisk University, where seventy-five were in attendance for the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to set a date for the sit-ins in Nashville to begin. Smith decided that the sit-ins should begin on February 13. Smith would

²⁰⁸ Aldon Morris, “*Black Southern Student Sit-In Movement: An Indigenous Perspective*,” CSRO Working Paper 234 (1981): 15.

²⁰⁹ Barry Everett Lee, “*The Nashville Civil Rights Movement: A Study of the Phenomenon of Intentional Leadership Development and its Consequences for Local Movements and the National Civil Rights Movement*” 173 (PhD diss., George State University, 2010),

argue in the meeting that the NCLC had a paltry \$87.50 in treasury, that amount could not afford to bail out for those who would be arrested during the protests. There were concerns by other members of the NCLC about the sit-ins launching very soon in a few days as they might have little time to solve the problems that soon follow. Despite the concerns, the students were determined to begin the sit-ins as soon as possible.²¹⁰

On February 12, 1960, a day before the sit-in protests were to begin, a meeting was held at First Colored Baptist Church. Nearly six hundred students and adults crowded the meeting. Smith and many of the NCLC Colleagues pleaded for a delay of the sit-in protests. Even Lawson felt that few had been trained for what was about to transpire the next day. The students urged to push on the sit-in protest the next day. Bevel mentioned to the adults, “If you asked us to wait until next week, then next week something will come up and you’d say wait until the next week, and maybe we’d never get our freedom.”²¹¹ The next day, February 13, the Nashville Sit-Ins began. Around 124 student activists, most of whom were Black, gathered at First Colored Baptist Church. On that day, the weather included snow which was around six inches. Around 11:00 a.m., the students left the church, and they headed to Fifth Avenue downtown, where department store lunch counters were located. The students were divided into groups of twenty-five or so, where each was assigned to a specific department store including Woolworths, S.H. Kress, and McClellan. The students walked into the stores around 12:40 p.m. Some of the students wandered around the stores, purchasing candy and other items, and then went to the lunch counter to ask to be served. The lunch counter staff refused, and the students remained at the lunch counter for two hours; some read books and others studied their school homework. The

²¹⁰ Lee, “*The Nashville Civil Rights Movement*,” 174.

²¹¹ Lee, “*The Nashville Civil Rights Movement*,” 174.

students would then leave the stores without any incident of violence. Nash mentioned, “We just got tired of having no place to eat when we shop downtown. So, we decided to do something about it” Nash also mentioned that the sit-down strike was intended as “a spontaneous student movement for equal recognition not boycott.” Lapard, who was one of the students who participated in the lunch counter protests said, “the waitresses and managers at each store were courteous, but not particularly nice.” Carl May, another student leader, said “the idea for the sit-down strike originated Wednesday at Fisk and later spread to A&I and the seminary like a snowball rolling.”²¹² After the first protest ended on that day, five days later protests resumed.

On February 15, 1960, the NCLC and the Baptist Ministers Conference of Nashville representing 79 congregations, unanimously voted to support the student movement, thus throwing the weight of Nashville's Black religious community behind the students.²¹³ On February 18, 1960, a second sit-in occurred, where approximately 200 students went to Woolworths, S.H. Kress, McClellan, and Grants. The lunch counters would remain closed where the students at the lunch counters for about half an hour and left again without incident of violence.²¹⁴ Two days later, on February 20, a third sit-in would occur where approximately 350 students entered the previous four stores and added Walgreens drug store downtown site to protest at their lunch counters. As the students sat at the lunch counters, crowds of white youths

²¹² James Talley, “Lunch Counter Strikes Hit City,” *The Tennessean*, February 14, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111803058/?terms=Lunch%20Counter%20Strikes%20Hit%20City&match=1>.

²¹³ “Local Ministers To Support Student Movement,” *Nashville Globe and Independent*, February 19, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603207041/?terms=Nashville%20Globe%20&match=1>.

²¹⁴ “Negroes 'Strike' Counters Again,” *The Tennessean*, February 19, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112078897/?terms=Negroes%20%27Strike%27%20Counters%20Again&match=1>.

gathered at several of the stores. Police had a watchful eye in all the five stores where the students were protesting. Fred J. Cobb, city traffic policeman, ordered the Walgreens to be cleared out around 3 p.m. after an argument occurred between Carolanne Anderson, a white exchange Fisk junior student and several white segregationists. Despite this, no violence occurred at the lunch counters that day. The students would remain for nearly three hours until adjourning to a mass meeting at the First Colored Baptist Church.²¹⁵ In seven days, another sit-in would occur that was more violent and significant.

The fourth sit-in would occur on February 27, 1960. On that day, which Lawson would call "Big Saturday", the students would go to Woolworth, McClellan, and Walgreens stores. On that day, violence occurred at the lunch counters for the first time in the Nashville Sit-Ins. Three violent incidents at the lunch counters would occur that day. The first incident occurred at McClellan, where Laprad was attacked by a White youth who was sitting at the lunch counter next to a Black demonstrator named Maxine Walker. White youth who attacked Lapard called him a "nigger lover.", The second incident also occurred at McClellan where a White man attacked a Black student after receiving no reaction from the student after he repeatedly blew cigar smoke into the student face. The third incident occurred at Woolworth where a group of White boys attacked two Black demonstrators named Maurice Davis and Elvin Seale, along with making derogatory comments like "Go home nigger," and "What's the matter, you chicken!" A third Black demonstrator named Emory Irving was pushed down the stairs.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ "Lunch Counter 'Strike' Spreads," *The Tennessean*, February 21, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112082404/?terms=Lunch%20Counter%20%27Strike%27%20Spreads&match=1>.

²¹⁶ James Talley, "75 Students Arrested Here," *The Tennessean*, February 28, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112086751/>.

When the police arrived, the White attackers fled the scene, and none was arrested. Police ordered three locations to leave the stores. When the demonstrators refused to leave, they were arrested and loaded into paddy wagons. Around eighty-one protestors were arrested and charged with loitering and disorderly conduct. One Black student leader named Luther Harris said, "It was the most scandalous thing that's happened in the South since Emmett Till." Harris continued, "I really wouldn't expect this type of thing in Nashville. The police just pulled out and left us unprotected. Something's got to be done. The Negro in the South has taken a lot but there is just so much he can take." Rev. C.T. Baker, a Presbyterian minister and executive secretary of the Nashville Association of Churches conferred with Police Chief Douglas E. Hosse, who appeared on the scene with Inspector William Donoho several times. Hosse mentioned to Baker "You can stop this if you want to." Baker would tell reporters, "He could only appeal to the students to apply their Christian teachings."²¹⁷

It should be known that the previous day, Mayor West met with the store managers and came up with plans on what action they should take if the demonstrators returned to the stores. Baker attempted to call West to arrange a conference with the Nashville Association of Churches, but West did not return his call. C.H. Handley, manager of McClellans and C.J. Rackard, manager of Woolworth's declined comment. Nash mentioned, "the smaller group today was part of a change in plans." She would go on to say, "We are stressing the moral issue. We do not want to hurt their business."²¹⁸ Nash would also be arrested with others at McClellans. Dr. Maynard P. Turner, president of American Baptist Theological Seminary, was asked about the

²¹⁷ Talley, "75 Students Arrested Here."

²¹⁸ James Talley, "Negro Ministers Urge Meeting with Mayor," *The Tennessean*, February 29, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112090775/>.

school position with the sit-in demonstrations. Turner responded, "I'm trying to find out myself. I can make no statements. I don't know of any organization backing this. They are a group of individuals and citizens and such and I don't know how we the seminary could be involved in it." Dr. Stephen J. Wright, president of Fisk and Dr. W.S. Davis, president of Tennessee State A&I University could not be reached for comment. Immediately following this sit-in, Black ministers gathered at First Colored Baptist Church to meet with West in response to Saturday's violence.²¹⁹

The next day, around 6 a.m. in the morning, a group of 86 black ministers gathered during their Sunday session at First Colored Baptist Church. The ministers sent a telegram to West to ask him to meet with them on Monday at 10 a.m. to discuss the mass arrests of college students who protested lunch counter segregation on Saturday, February 27. The ministers at First Colored Baptist Church telegraphed West saying, "A large group of ministers of all faiths respectfully request a conference with you tomorrow Monday at 10 o'clock at First Baptist church, 319 Eight ave. N. Our urgent concern is the current crises and the general situation involving human relations (signed) Kelly Miller Smith, for the ministerial group."²²⁰ Wright spoke to around an estimated 1,000 students at Fisk Chapel, where he said that he supported the principle behind the student demonstrations. Wright told the students, "As president of Fisk, I approve the ends our students are seeking by these demonstrations. From all I have been able to learn they have broken no law by the means they have employed thus far, and they have not

²¹⁹ Talley, "Negro Ministers Urge Meeting with Mayor."

²²⁰ Talley, "Negro Ministers Urge Meeting with Mayor."

conducted themselves peacefully, but with poise and dignity. As long as this is true, I have no present intention of instructing them to discontinue their efforts.”²²¹

That same day, a meeting was held by the NAACP at First Colored Baptist Church where the arrest was discussed. Smith told the NAACP about the telegram he sent to West earlier in the day by saying, “As yet we have not heard from him (West), but whether we do or not you’ll hear from us.” Smith announced that a mass meeting would occur at the First Colored Baptist Church on Wednesday, March 02, at 7:30 p.m., to continue to discuss what occurred on Saturday. Dr. Vivian Henderson and A.Z. Kelly shared at the meeting that the students could count on the NAACP for their support. Z. Alexander Looby said he supported the students in their efforts of protest. Looby mentioned, “They are tired of waiting on others to help them out. I take my hat off to them in this fight.” Looby also called the demonstrations “a revolution to our people.” Rev. E.J. Odom, NAACP church secretary from New York, mentioned the demonstrations “the story of heroism of these young people.” Odom would go on saying “the students who stood together for their convictions make you search our own heart.” Kelly and Smith told members during the meeting to donate \$200 to the NAACP voter registration fund. They got \$356.72 in donations²²².

On February 29, 1960, West met with the Black ministers at First Colored Baptist Church in the morning. During the meeting, West “pleaded with the Black ministers to influence their people to avoid a blood bath in Nashville by obeying the laws.”²²³ There would be a heated

²²¹ Talley, "Negro Ministers Urge Meeting with Mayor. "

²²² Talley, "Negro Ministers Urge Meeting with Mayor. "

²²³ James Talley, "Prejudged Sitdowns Looby Says," *The Tennessean*, March 01, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111999028/>.

exchange between West and Lawson that would become one of the most disputed events of the Nashville Sit-Ins. According to *The Tennessean*, Lawson mentioned to West, “the law has been a gimmick to manipulate the Negro and keep him in his place in the South.” Lawson would continue, “The effort to close the lunch counters is a deliberate effort to crush our movement. The students have made a definite decision to violate the legal gimmick.” West told the group “that the law was broken when anyone insists on staying seated at lunch counters when the store owner has shut them down. Up to that point, there no violation.” West continued, “The attorneys advise me that the entering of the store and the sit down there and requesting of service constitute no violation.”²²⁴

Lawson responded by saying, “You can’t have a public store one minute and private store the next.” West responded, “I hope I misunderstood that gentleman. I thought I heard him say the young people should violate the law. We don’t want our elders telling youngsters to violate the law.”²²⁵ West continued, “Please don’t ask these youngsters to violate the laws of our city. I hope that is not the attitude of you ministers of the gospel, and I don’t believe it is. Please let’s not have a blood bath in this great city. Let’s not do something we will all regret.” There were other statements that West answered that the ministers at the church were asking him. West told the ministers that a group of merchants at the lunch counter had the police stop the Black protestors from coming in the lunch counters, which he refused to intervene. West mentioned, “I told them in my opinion and the opinion after consultation with my attorney was that as long as their business was open to the public any member of the public had a right to come in and request service and I could not interfere with it.” West also mentioned that Black civil rights should be

²²⁴ Talley, "Judge Harris Ouster Sought."

²²⁵ Talley, "Judge Harris Ouster Sought."

everywhere, including where they spend their money. Vivian also spoke during the meeting where he mentioned, "Police should crack down and prevent further trouble during school integration unrest here several years ago after Hattie Cotton school was dynamited." Vivian suggested, "the police should crack down now to protect the passive demonstration of the Negroes." Vivian would go on and say, "If there is a blood bath, it will be because police decide they want a blood bath."²²⁶

On the same day, the first day of trials occurred. There were crowds of more than 2,000 people who lined the streets surrounding the city courthouse to show their support for the defendants who took part in the sit-ins on February 27. A group of 13 lawyers, including Z. Alexander Looby, Robert Lillard, Avon Williams, Coyness L. Ennix, A.J. Steel, J.F. McClellan, R.B.J. Campbell Jr, Adolph Birch, W.D. Hawkins Jr, Roscoe Hamby, William Blakemore, E.B. Lindsey, and Eugene White represented the 81 defendants.²²⁷ Looby wanted to seek an injunction Special City John I. Harris who fined three students who took part in the sit-ins on Saturday. The three students included Hardy Woodworth Hunter, John Ira Nye, and Alva Keith Guy. Hunter, a Black Tennessee A&I University student was fined \$100 for disorderly conduct. Nye, a White Fisk University student was fined \$50 for disorderly conduct. Guy, a Black student who was also from Fisk University, was fined \$10 for disorderly conduct. The charges of loitering against all the defendants were dismissed by City Judge Andrew J. Doyle at the beginning of the trial. Doyle turned the court over to Harris. As the trial was occurring, a second meeting at First Colored Baptist Church occurred where 1,000 students gathered. The students argued agreement with proposals that they continue their sit-in demonstrations.

²²⁶ Talley, "Judge Harris Ouster Sought."

²²⁷ Talley, "Judge Harris Ouster Sought."



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Figure 4.1 Nashville Mayor Ben West left gestures with his hands, and so does a black minister, standing right, during a vigorous discussion of key point in civil rights at a meeting between the mayor and black ministers at the First Baptist Church on 8th Ave. N. Feb. 29, 1960.

The next day, student leaders in the demonstrations got into a dispute with Lawson where he mentioned the NCLC was behind the Nashville Sit-Ins. During a press conference at First Colored Baptist Church, Lawson said that the demonstrations by Black and White students had been planned for 18 months by the NCLC. Earl Mays, a Black student at Fisk University said: “That is not the truth. There is no organization behind us. There is none! I can assure you that...

²²⁸ “Lost Nashville: “First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

A great mistake has been by Lawson. There is no connection with an organization.”²²⁹ Before Lawson press conference at First Colored Baptist Church, nine blacks including six men and three women including Vivian went into Woolworth’s and sat at the lunch counters, but they were closed. A group of 75 white men gathered at the store where they gave few jeers to the blacks, but no trouble or violence occurred. Back at the First Colored Baptist Church, Lawson described himself as project chairman of the NCLC. He said that the main project of the movement was the elimination of segregation at lunch counters in Nashville.

Lawson would mention that he was not the leader of the sit-in movement. Lawson said, “For one thing, the responsibility among the students is passed from person to person, according to the situation according to the need.” Lawson also mentioned that the NCLC was formed in 1958 “for the explicit purpose to develop Christian non-violent efforts to change the social evils of segregation.” He said a group from the NCLC went to the Cain-Sloan and Harvey’s department stores back in the fall of 1958 and was refused service. Lawson said that the students were trained a month before the sit-ins began on February 13 in Nashville. Lawson continued to explain that the training was supposed to be “passive resistance to segregation.” He said that no organization was sponsoring the Nashville demonstrations, but the NCLC was an affiliate of the SCLC of which King was president. Lawson mentioned, “Whenever a movement breaks out in one part of the country, it spreads elsewhere spontaneously.” Lawson said that two days before the sit-ins began, the NCLC members asked the students if they were willing to demonstrate which the students agreed. Lawson mentioned, “It became quite clear that police could have easily stopped the incidents of violence if it had been their intention to do so.” Lawson argued

²²⁹ James Talley, “Minister Draws Students’ Ire,” *The Tennessean*, March 02, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111999415/?terms=Minister%20draws%20students%27%20Oire>.

that the reason why there was not any riot that occurred Saturday was because “the students were committed to their peaceful cause.”²³⁰



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Figure 4.2 Rev. J. Metz Rollins, standing, speaks during an afternoon press conference in the First Baptist Church at 319 Eighth Ave. N. March 1, 1960. Listens to Rev. Rollins are Mrs. Ella Baker, on his right, and Rev. James Lawson, on his left.

²³⁰ Talley, "Minister Draws Students' Ire. "

²³¹ "Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement," *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.



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Figure 4.3 Rev. James Lawson, a student at Vanderbilt University divinity school, said during a press conference in First Baptist Church March 1, 1960, that the demonstrations by black and white students had been planned for 18 months by the Nashville Christian Leadership council, an all-black group of ministers. But student leaders in the demonstration against lunch counter segregation dispute that there is any organization behind them.

²³² “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*. August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

On the same day, the trials of the students who took part in the February 27 sit-ins resumed around 6:30 p.m., after an hour and a half recess for supper. Robert Lillard, city councilman and attorney, made announcement that the defendants would present no defense testimony. The three defendants were fined \$50 each after two police officers said they refused to vacate a lunch counter at McLellan's department store. The three defendants went to jail instead to post appeal bonds. When Harris recess court after 4 p.m., Lillard announced the remaining students had asked their bondsmen to surrender them so they would be put in jail, pending their trials. The remaining students refused to pay the fines and decided to serve thirty-three days in the county workhouse. Nash would issued a statement "'We feel that if we pay these fines we would be contributing to and supporting the injustice and immoral practices that have been performed in the arrest and conviction of the defendants."²³³ Lawson would be expelled from Vanderbilt University and arrested at First Baptist Church Capitol Hill after the meeting at First Colored Baptist Church, and West would establish a biracial committee following the meeting at First Colored Baptist Church.

On March 03, 1960, Vanderbilt University Chancellor Harvie Branscomb announced around 10 a.m. that Lawson was expelled from Vanderbilt. The reason why Lawson was expelled from Vanderbilt was because of his involvement in the sit-in protest. 11 of the 16 faculty members of Vanderbilt Divinity School said, "they saw no adequate justification for Lawson's expulsion."²³⁴ Lawson got expelled from Vanderbilt three months before he was

²³³ Mac Harris, "75 Students Back in Jail; 2 White Coeds Freed on Bond," *The Tennessean*, March 02, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111999415/?terms=75%20students%20back%20in%20jail%3B%202%20White%20Coeds%20Freed%20on%20Bond>.

²³⁴ Garry Fullerton, "VU to Continue Taking Negroes," *The Tennessean*, March 04, 1960, [https://www.newspapers.com/image/112000622/?terms=.](https://www.newspapers.com/image/112000622/?terms=)

supposed to graduate from the university. Lawson's fellow students at the Divinity School voiced their support for him after he got expelled. Other protests from telegrams and telephone calls went into the offices of Branscomb and Robert Nelson, who was dean of the divinity school. Lawson himself felt that getting expelled from the university was unfair. Branscomb issued a statement in regard to Lawson getting expelled from the university: "There is no issue involved of freedom of thought, or of conscience, or of speech, or of the right of protest against social custom. The issue is whether or not the university can be identified with a continuing campaign of mass disobedience of law as a means of protest."²³⁵ Branscomb explained that Lawson was being expelled from the university not because of his ideas but because of his actions in the sit-in protests. Branscomb would continue by saying: "The university would have protected him in the expression of his ideas. Furthermore, the action we took was not punitive. It was not based upon actions which had already been performed, but upon Mr. Lawson's commitment to continuing his program of civil disobedience."²³⁶

On the same day, West announced the formation of a Biracial Committee. The purpose of the Biracial Committee was to seek a solution to the city's racial strife and an effort to defuse the racial divisions that was caused by the sit-ins. West made his announcement by saying: "I have appointed a community relations committee and requested the membership to study the issues involved in the present sit-down demonstrations and to recommend steps toward their solution."²³⁷ West would continue by saying: "Pending the report of this committee. I am most

²³⁵ "VU to Continue Taking Negroes."

²³⁶ "VU to Continue Taking Negroes."

²³⁷ Mac Harris, "Mayor Names Biracial Group To Seek Peace," *The Tennessean*, March 04, 1960,

hopeful for the cessation of the demonstrations, and I appeal to all persons of good will in this community to withhold any expressions of intemperance, regardless of sides.” Members of the Biracial Committee included Dr. C. Madison Sarratt, vice chancellor emeritus of Vanderbilt University, who was also chairman of the committee. Other members included Dr. Stephen J. Wright, president of Fisk University, Lipscomb Davis, president of Davis Cabinet company, Dr. W.S. Davis, president of Tennessee A&I University, B.B. Gullet, president of the Nashville Bar association, George Barret, lawyer, president of the Nashville community relations conference, and F. Donald Hart, president of Temco Inc.

The next day, Lawson was arrested by four police sergeants, including Sgt. Morgan Smith, Sgt. Jesse Moore, Sgt. Herman Cobb, and Sgt. C.P.Lynch. He was arrested at First Colored Baptist Church on charges of conspiring to violate the state’s trade commerce law. Lynch and Cobb arrested Lawson in the church office after Lynch read the warrant to him. Lynch mentioned about the arrest: “I don’t know what was going inside the church. I never went inside where they hold services, only into the ante room and the pastor’s office. But it looked like they were having a meeting of some kind because there was a mixed group of whites and Negroes and about 150 cars outside the church.”²³⁸ Lawson told Lynch and Cobb, “I was expecting something like this since I got expelled from Vanderbilt.”²³⁹ Lawson was then taken by the officers to general session court, where he declined to accept bail when three Vanderbilt

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/112000645/?terms=Mayor%20Names%20Biracial%20Group%20To%20Seek%20Peace&match=1>.

²³⁸ Mac Harris, “New Charges Filed Against Sit-In Students,” *The Tennessean*, March 05, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112001118/?terms=New%20Charges%20Filed%20Against%20Sit-In%20Students&match=1>.

²³⁹ “New Charges Filed Against Sit-In Students.”

Divinity School faculty members offered to post it for him. Lawson would later change his mind and leave jail before 9 p.m.

Lawson would explain the reason why he changed his mind by saying: “I left jail because the approach of divinity school faculty marked the first time the white community had come to the Negro’s help in the sit-in. For me it was symbolic. I went in determined to remain in jail. But I was deeply touched by the action of the faculty, and I felt compelled to give the appeal the weight it really deserved because it represented the genuine affection and support of the Christian community at the divinity school.”²⁴⁰ Lawson was in the company with Vanderbilt Divinity faculty including Dean Nelson, Langdon Gilkey, Everett Tilson, and Gordon Kaufman. The Vanderbilt Divinity faculty discussed the collection of the bond money that contributors collected from 16 members of the divinity school faculty, where they posted \$500 in cash to bail Lawson out. Gilkey said, “The faculty wants to show it is horrified. We feel this very personally and well it very strongly. We feel the city had made a very serious mistake in arresting Lawson and we want to protest it as vigorously as we can.”²⁴¹

Lawson was not the only person charged with conspiring to violate the state’s trade commerce law. There were 79 other students who were also charged with Lawson on that day. Those students were accused of “unlawfully conspiring to commit acts injurious to public trade or commerce and obstructing the orderly business of McClellan’s restaurant by congregating in great numbers with others, blocking the serving of food to the patrons of said restaurant and

²⁴⁰ “New Charges Filed Against Sit-In Students.”

²⁴¹ “New Charges Filed Against Sit-In Students.”

preventing the orderly operation of business of said restaurant.”²⁴² On the same day, students picketed Vanderbilt University’s Kirkland Hall and circulated petitions in protest of the expulsion of Lawson from Vanderbilt. The students picketed around five hours under the window of Branscomb. Vice Chancellor Rob Roy Purdy and acting dean of men Sidney F. Boutwell met with Vanderbilt fraternity presidents and other undergraduate leaders in the afternoon to clarify the university’s actions in dismissing Lawson from the University.

Branscomb came to his office around 9 a.m. and he met with one of the students and said “Take me to your leader”. The students told Branscomb that they had no leader, but chose Albert William Martin Jr, a senior divinity student to talk to Branscomb. The matter was discussed in Branscomb office where Martin said “We are trying to implement in a dramatic way the statement of the divinity school student body protesting Lawson’s dismissal.”²⁴³ Branscomb would later walk down the steps and asked more students if any of them wanted to be interviewed and one accepted and went into Branscomb’s office. Around 15 students participated in the picketing which ended at 1:30 p.m. The students’ signs said, “Faculty not consulted. Trail by newspaper unfair. Is this Justice? Board betrayed our trust. Academic freedom stifled. Expulsion unfair, Whites suspended, Negro expelled.” There were around 100 Vanderbilt students at one time gathering to watch the students picketing. Some of the students threw snowballs at the students picketing signs while they were protesting. In the weeks following, nine downtown restaurants and stores would participate in the sit-ins on March 25, 1960.

²⁴² Mickey McLindem, “Would Agree To Delay Sit-In Cases,” *Nashville Banner*, March 07, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603204136/?terms=Would%20Agree%20To%20Delay%20Sit-In%20Cases&match=1>.

²⁴³ “Would Agree to Delay Sit-In Cases.”



Figure 4.4 With a warrant of arrest in hand, Nashville Police arrested the Rev. James Lawson, center, expelled Vanderbilt University divinity student, in front of the First Baptist Church March 4, 1960. Rev. Lawson, shaking hands with a supporter, was arrested on charges of conspiring to violate the state's trade and commerce law.

²⁴⁴ “Lost Nashville: “First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.



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Figure 4.5 With a warrant of arrest in hand, Nashville Police directs Rev. James Lawson, left, expelled Vanderbilt University divinity student, into the paddy wagon in front of the First Baptist Church March 4, 1960. Rev. Lawson was arrested on charges of conspiring to violate the state's trade and commerce law.

On March 19, 1960, more than 160 white and black ministers issued a statement urging downtown businesses to desegregate their lunch counters. The ministers said the issue was a moral one and issued a statement: “In a community noted for its churches we are confident that most of our people will support such a practice.” Smith said, “Unofficial word-of-mouth boycott

²⁴⁵ “Lost Nashville: “First Baptist Church had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

is now going on among Negroes of stores already involved.”²⁴⁶ Two days before, four Black college students, including Nash, Matthew Walker, Stanley Hemphill, and Peggy Alexander, were served at the segregated Post House Restaurant at the Greyhound Bus Terminal. The four would be questioned by city detectives concerning attacks by White youths when they were leaving the restaurants. The four gave statements to Detective James P. Godsey about what occurred at the restaurant. They told Godsey that both Walker and Hemphill were struck from behind by the White youths, who make insulting remarks for several minutes before the attack. Godsey claimed the statements were being taken as an attempt to arrest Whites who attacked them. Police detectives also found two explosive detonators inside the men’s restroom. The explosive devices were found by Eddie Ross, a teen.

Two days later, Dr. Liston Pope, dean of Yale Divinity School, criticized Vanderbilt for dismissing Lawson for his involvement in the Nashville Sit-Ins. Pope mentioned, “Only so has the reputation of the school been preserved among its sister institutions.” He also mentioned that “The only legitimate distinction for such a community is between those who confess the name of Christ and those who do not.”²⁴⁷ Despite his comments, Pope did praise Vanderbilt for pioneering in admitting Blacks to its student body. On the same day, around 150 Vanderbilt Divinity alumni issued a statement urging reinstatement of James Lawson. Lawson was also offered scholarships at Yale and Boston University.

²⁴⁶ “Ministers Urge Lunch Freedom,” *The Tennessean*, March 20, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112121158/?terms=Ministers%20Urge%20Lunch%20Freedom&match=1>.

²⁴⁷ Edmund Willingham, “Dean Criticizes Lawson Ouster,” *The Tennessean*, March 22, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112125112/?terms=Dean%20criticizes%20Lawson%20ouster&match=1>.

On March 25, 1960, the sit-ins resumed with demonstrations at nine downtown stores and restaurants. Approximately 120 Black students, 10 White students, and some older Blacks sat down at the restaurants' lunch counters. The sit-in demonstrations began around 2 p.m. after the students attended a briefing session at First Colored Baptist Church. The lunch counters that were targeted that day included Woolworth, McLellan, Kress, Walgreens, Harvey, Bus Trailways terminal, Cain-Sloan, and Moon-McGrath. At Moon-McGrath, four Black students named Lewis, Miss Jean Fleming, Dennis Foote, and O.D. Hunt were arrested for sitting at the lunch counters. The four were charged with disorderly conduct and released on a \$50 bail. Despite the arrest, they were given police protection unlike the protestors who participated in the protest that occurred on February 27. The police were known to be located at every store that the students protested at on that day. The police moved White segregationists who were planning to attack the students at the lunch counters on that day out of the stores. At the Grant's store, a White student attacked Garnett Bound, who was a Black demonstrator, by hitting him on the back of his head as he sat at the lunch counter. The white student then ran out of the store and escaped.²⁴⁸

Seven white students from Vanderbilt Divinity school, a white professor from Scarritt College, and several other Whites and older Blacks from the Nashville community also joined the students in their lunch counter protests. Inspector Carney Patterson said: "It's the Whites who're leading them into the stores. The Whites come in first and then the Negroes. They got more Whites this time."²⁴⁹ Smith would tell reporters, "They asked me what the Negro

²⁴⁸ David Halberstam, "Negro Sit-ins Resumed Here," *The Tennessean*, March 26, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112126521/?terms=Negro%20Sit-ins%20Resumed%20Here&match=1>.

²⁴⁹ "Negro Sit-ins Resumed Here. "

community would be satisfied with. I thought it was quite late for that question.” Smith also mentioned that he gave the Biracial Committee a statement on part of the Black community asking for lunch counters to be desegregated. Smith mentioned that the committee would make their report the next week. Both Grant and Woolworth would close their lunch counters immediately as the Black students appeared at the store. At McLellan, the lunch counters remained open, but the students were not served. After half an hour, the McLellan’s lunch counter was closed, but the students remained seated there. McLellan’s manger C.H. Handley closed the store around 3:30 p.m. and cleared everybody out. McLellan’s reopened about 45 minutes late. Soon afterwards, four Black students would enter McLellan’s and attempted to get service at the lunch counters which they were refused. Harry Lanauze, a Meharry student said, “They won’t let us eat standing up. They told us we’d be served if we wanted to carry the food out.”²⁵⁰

At Woolworth, students sat for two hours without service. At Walgreens, there were put-up signs saying, “Closed for Public Safety” and Walgreens closed. Despite this, the Black students remained there. At Trailways bus station, the Blacks found locked doors. At Cain-Sloan, the students entered the dining room but were kicked out by the manager. Rodney Powell, a Meharry student and a Nashville Student Movement member, said, “We decided not to push our way through.” The store manager told them, “We reserve the right to refuse to serve Negroes.” They then asked to talk with the store owner named John Sloan, who was also the president of Cain-Sloan. Sloan talked to them, “Segregation was the store’s policy, that he as president back it up.” Vivian mentioned what Sloan told him, “You set this thing back for years. You don’t have to take my word for that. You can ask Dr. Stephen Wright at Fisk. He’s on that committee.” At

²⁵⁰ “Negro Sit-Ins Resumed Here.”

Moon-McGrath drug store, four students including Lewis entered the drug store around 2:30 p.m. Lewis would mention, “As we walked in the manager locked the store behind us. We all took seats together. Then we were told by the waitress that they did not serve Negros.” Lewis would also mention that while White people at the restaurant were being served, the manager at the restaurant told them to leave or he would call the police and the students refused to leave. Lewis said, “A few minutes later the police came and told us we were under arrest. They did not ask us to leave first.”²⁵¹

On the same day, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) was in Nashville to film a documentary on the sit-ins called *Anatomy of a Demonstration*. At the First Colored Baptist Church, Jim Delihias, the researcher with CBS, was with the documentary film crew, taking notes on the sit-ins planning meeting at the church. Budford Ellington, who was Tennessee Governor at the time, accused CBS of instigating and planning the sit-ins that occurred that day while they were at First Colored Baptist Church. Ellington said, “I have learned that the sit-in demonstration by Negro students in downtown Nashville was instigated and planned by, and staged for, the convenience of the Columbia Broadcasting System. I believe that this is unquestionably the most irresponsible piece of journalistic trickery I have ever heard of.”²⁵²

CBS officials from New York to Nashville denied that CBS was responsible for the sit-in demonstrations. The CBS officials also mentioned that they were pulling out of Nashville, Thomas B. Baker Jr, vice president and manager of WLAC-TV said, “This was done because of

²⁵¹ “Negro Sit-Ins Resumed Here.”

²⁵² Charles L. Fontenay, “Ellington Says Demonstration For TV Benefit,” *The Tennessean*, March 26, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112126521/?terms=Ellington%20Says%20Demonstration%20For%20TV%20Benefit&match=1>.

publicity over suspicion by Nashville police that CBS was responsible for the sit-ins.” John Lynch, director of the public affairs department of CBS News said, “The public affairs department of CBS news categorically denies any attempt to influence the demonstration in any way whatsoever.” Harry Reasoner, CBS news correspondent, made a three-point statement officially for CBS: One, “No CBS cameras were set up in advance to cover the sit-in demonstration.” Two, “CBS news never attempts to influence news happenings, to stage news or stir up news.” Three, “CBS policy in dealing with local officials was violated by the failure of the documentary crew to report to officials of WLAC-TV here.”²⁵³

Lawson said, “The CBS documentary crew had gained permission in advance to attend the meeting, but the demonstrators did not want newsmen inside. The plans for resuming the sit-ins had no relation to the fact that the CBS people were here.”²⁵⁴ Lawson continued by saying, “We received calls from the CBS people some time ago. They asked for permission to come in and get documentary or background information. They wanted to attend our workshops, our meetings and see what went on in these sessions and what we thought.” Smith said, “There was no connection at all between the sit-ins and the presence of the CBS personnel. The decision to resume the sit-ins was reached without any conference with CBS and without any request from them.” Photographer Bill Preston and reporter John Seigenthaler from *the Tennessean* entered First Colored Baptist Church following the sit-in demonstrations. Preston started snapping photos of Lawson, who was talking to reporters about student leaders and their participation in the sit-ins. A Black student approached him and told him, “I’m sorry, this is a closed meeting, you will have to leave.” Preston and Seigenthaler instead sat down. Seigenthaler said, “We’re

²⁵³ “Ellington Says Demonstration for TV Benefit.”

²⁵⁴ “Ellington Says Demonstration for TV Benefit.”

staging a non-violent sit-in.”²⁵⁵ Both Preston and Seigenthaler were permitted to stay. Lynch also said, “The documentary crew was assigned to Nashville to document the training methods by which Negroes are coached in how to conduct themselves in sit-in demonstrations.”²⁵⁶



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Figure 4.6 Jim Delihis of New York, a researcher with the Columbia Broadcasting system's documentary crew here, takes notes on a sit-in demonstration planning meeting at the First Baptist Church March 25, 1960. CBS television cameras rest in the aisle behind him. Tennessee Gov. Buford Ellington accused the CBS of staging the sit-in demonstrations here for its own convenience.

²⁵⁵ “CBS Sit-In Rigging Charged,” *The Tennessean*, March 26, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112126534/?terms=CBS%20sit-in%20rigging%20charged&match=1>.

²⁵⁶ “CBS Sit-In Rigging Charged.”

²⁵⁷ “Lost Nashville: “First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

The next day, the Biracial Committee had a meeting regarding sit-in demonstrations. Sarratt mentioned the sit-ins that occurred the day before. Sarratt said, "I think we are back where we started, with the Negroes sitting in and the merchants not serving them. I think it practically wiped out of three weeks work."²⁵⁸ There were no demonstrations on that day at the lunch counters. Ellington would begin an investigation on CBS's role in the sit-in that occurred the previous day. Ellington had a report on CBS that he got from his best detectives. He planned on using the report toward some legislation on CBS where he still blamed them for instigating the sit-in demonstrations the previous day. Vivian told reporters, "We are noning to drop the idea of the sit-in. I don't think anyone is fooled by the governor's statement about outside interference." Vivian would continue to say, "I think that people in this community know that this comes from the heart and the desire and the deep feeling of the Negro on the street. The merchants know this. They know where it comes from, they know because of the Negroes who haven't been in the stores." Vivian was also asked if the sit-ins would continue later in the week if a solution to the problem was not reached which he responded by saying, "If there is no settlement on the basis of Christian principles, then we cannot cooperate with the evil of segregation."²⁵⁹

On March 28, 1960, four Black college students, including Lewis, Foote, Hunt, and Fleming, appeared in City Court on charges of disorderly conduct. Assistant City Atty. Walter Leaver asked Judge Doyle that the cases be tried separately. Doyle overruled the motion on objection of the Negroes council. John C. McGrath, who was a part time owner of Moon-

²⁵⁸ "CBS Asks Ellington Apology," *The Tennessean*, March 27, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112126866/?terms=CBS%20asks%20Ellington%20apology&match=2>.

²⁵⁹ "CBS Asks Ellington Apology."

McGrath drug store, testified that the four students came to his store where they sat at the lunch counters. McGrath would say, “He had no animosity toward any of the students.”²⁶⁰ He also said he went to church with them, his children went to school with them, but he was concerned about his business and the sit-in protests were costing him money. Defense lawyer Ennix asked McGrath on why he objected to the Blacks being seated in his store. McGrath replied, “I just don’t serve colored people.” McGrath said a soda fountain waitress told the Blacks to leave the store because they would not be served. He told the students to leave but they remain at the lunch counters. McGrath then said he called the police and Sgt. Morgan Smith answered the call and arrested the four students. McGrath then turned to the defendants during the testimony and said, “I don’t see why you have to come up and force me into a thing like this.”²⁶¹ Despite his comment, McGrath did say he would serve the Blacks at the lunch counters if other Nashville lunch counters agreed upon it. Lewis, Foote, Hunt, and Fleming were fined \$10 each on disorderly conduct charges.

On the next day, an announcement was made indicating sit-ins demonstrations downtown would continue despite the Biracial Committee’s request for a temporary halt. Sarratt gave no specific date for the demonstrations to resume. Nash made a statement to a reporter by saying, “We feel that this statement and our announced intention to continue the sit-ins should prove to the governor and anybody else who is interested that CBS had nothing to do with the Friday sit-

²⁶⁰ “Four Negroes Face New Charges on Friday Sit-Ins,” *The Tennessean*, March 29, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112129909/?terms=Four%20Negroes%20face%20new%20charges%20on%20Friday%20sit-ins&match=1>.

²⁶¹ “Four Negroes Face New Charges on Friday Sit-Ins.”

in and that it and any future demonstrations come from the Negroes and only the Negroes.”²⁶² The NCLC and Vivian made two additional points in regard to the sit-in demonstrations. The first one was the sit-ins moved the community in Nashville to recognize the need for such a special committee. Also, continuing nonviolent actions would create the climate in the Biracial Committee and it should be taken seriously. Two, if a truce would occur that it should be a two-way truce. They said, “If the committee feels that it is necessary for us to discontinue the sit-ins, we feel in good faith that the merchants should also close their counters until the committee formed by the mayor finds a solution acceptable to the Christian conscience.”²⁶³

On March 30, 1960, around 200 Blacks gathered on the courthouse steps and prayed for West to help them protest segregation in Nashville. Despite this, West did not appear and did not respond to the group. The students who also protested that day included Lewis, Foote, Hunt, and Fleming, who were arrested the previous Friday. A statement that was made on that day said, “We cannot but voice disappointment that in this city orderly young people have been arrested on a charge of disorderly conduct. We appeal to the conscience of the mayor to speak out against this misuse of otherwise useful law.”²⁶⁴ The demonstration would last for 30 minutes. Rev. Bayard Clark, rector of St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church and vice president of the Nashville Ministerial association prayed among the group. Some of the ministers who were among the group included Vivian, Rollins, Rev. James Glasse, a member of Vanderbilt Divinity School

²⁶² David Halberstam, “Negro Sit-Ins To Resume Here,” *The Tennessean*, March 30, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112130130/?terms=Negro%20Sit-Ins%20To%20Resume%20Here&match=1>.

²⁶³ “*Four Negroes Face New Charges on Friday Sit-Ins.*”

²⁶⁴ David Halberstam, “Negroes Pray For West’s Aid,” *The Tennessean*, March 31, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112130356/?terms=Negroes%20Pray%20For%20West%27s%20Aid&match=1>.

faculty and president of the Tennessee Council of Human Relations, and others. Following the sit-in protests in Nashville, a merchant boycott will occur at department stores, which will negatively affect Nashville businesses.

In early April of 1960, Blacks and Whites who shopped at the Nashville department stores began to stay away from these stores as a result of the sit-in protests. On April 4, 1960, a mass meeting occurred at Pleasant Green Missionary Baptist Church located on Jefferson Street, where more than 500 Blacks filled the church. Dr. Vivian Henderson said, "If there is anybody here who has not spent any money downtown in the last two weeks, stand up."²⁶⁵ Almost everybody in the church stood up. Henderson asked the audience, "Is anybody going to spend any money downtown the next two weeks? If so, stand up." Nobody stood except Vivian who did it as a joke. Sarratt mentioned that the Biracial Committee would submit their report to West in the afternoon. Henderson and other speakers called the boycott "our savings program" and "an economic withdrawal." Vivian gave the principal address where he said, "We have learned that there are more places to buy than downtown. Everyone downtown realizes our buying power. They will realize our problems quicker if we let our economic withdrawal affect them all." Vivian also mentioned that the sit-in demonstrations that were occurring at the lunch counters downtown had united Blacks in Nashville against segregation. Vivian argued that passive resistance was a method that Mahatma Gandhi said is "twice blessed".²⁶⁶

He claimed that the economic boycott was "an economic withdrawal against evil." Vivian said, "To destroy radical evil, you must be radically good. It's radical evil that rules this

²⁶⁵ James Talley, "Negroes Boycott Downtown Firms," *The Tennessean*, April 05, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111839292/?terms=Negroes%20Boycott%20Downtown%20Firms&match=1>.

²⁶⁶ "Negroes Boycott Downtown Firms."

town and it will take radical good to break it.” Henderson would tell the audience, “Regardless of what comes out, we ought to contemolate the fashions for Easter but not just Easter. We ought to stay smart from here on in. When I see what has happened to our own Negro enterprises the past few weeks, it makes me glad and at the same time it makes me mad we haven’t supported them all along.” Henderson also said that the boycott was more than 90 percent effective in downtown Nashville at the time. Henderson said as the sit-in protests were going on in Nashville, they had cost the city millions of dollars. He mentioned, “There’s no doubt the United States at large is looking at the city, looking at millions of dollars being lost by the city of Nashville over a 25-cent hamburger.” Henderson pointed out to the audience about the “legal vote and the dollar vote. “When Henderson spoke to the audience last Thursday, he suggested using their legal vote, while on that day, a dollar vote was suggested.” He said, “Both of those are what that man downtown understands.”²⁶⁷ Smith mentioned that King was supposed to come to Nashville for the next meeting on April 18, 1960.

The next day, Smith explained that the Blacks would withhold all direct comments on the report until they met with the merchants. Smith said, “The mayor’s committee said there was a gap, a chasm between what we asked and what was given. We want to see if we can bridge that gap with the merchants.” Smith would also say, “We are still seeking desegregation of this community.”²⁶⁸ They asked the merchants to meet with them on that day around 10 a.m. Greenfield Pitts, treasurer of Harveys and chairman of the retail merchants committee who

²⁶⁷ “Negroes Boycott Downtown Firms.”

²⁶⁸ David Halberstam, “Mayor’s Group Files Report, Asks Support,” *The Tennessean*. April 06, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111839610/?terms=Mayor%27s%20Group%20Files%20Report%2C%20Asks%20Support&match=1>.

received the letter from Smith, said the meeting on that day between merchants and Blacks was out of the question. Pitts would continue saying, “Whether we meet with them is up to the merchants. I’m going to present their letter to the merchants we’ve got a meeting coming up.” Pitts said that the meeting with the merchants would be held “in a day or two, in the near future.”²⁶⁹

The Biracial Committee recommended that Nashville’s downtown stores open sections of all-white eating facilities for both Blacks and Whites. They handed their report to West, and they recommended him to have desegregation done on a 90-day trial basis. The report urged that “the total community give the recommended plan a fair chance to work.” According to the committee members, the recommendation would leave part of the eating facility for Whites only, and part where both Whites and Blacks could be served. The committee also asked that all legal action against the 147 sit-in demonstrators arrested be dropped if the trial period was successful. West received the report from the committee without comment. In the afternoon, a two-hour session meeting that was composed of 30 students and adults met in the First Colored Baptist Church. During the meeting at the church, the students and adults requested total desegregation and rejected the committee recommendation of their original plan. Smith would be asked by a reporter if it was true that Blacks deem the Biracial Committee’s report unacceptable. Smith said: “It is not wholly true that it is not acceptable. We are not rejecting it not at this point.” Smith was then asked by the reporter whether he felt the Blacks dealing directly with the merchants could accomplish what the Biracial Committee could not do. Smith said: “One thing we want to do is find out what their position really is. We haven’t heard from them on this. We’re not sure whether this (the divided eating facility) is what they offered the committee, or

²⁶⁹ “Mayor’s Group Files Report, Asks Support.”

what.”²⁷⁰ Smith was one of the four named to the negotiating committee to meet with the merchants. The others included Lawson, Nash, and Powell.

The next day, Nashville merchants agreed to meet with the Black leaders and discuss the report of the mayor’s biracial committee. The meeting was set to occur at 1:30 p.m. at the Chamber of Commerce building the next day. Pitts gave a statement regarding the meeting by saying: “Although the exact purpose of such a meeting is not entirely clear to the merchants, they have agreed to meet with the Negro delegation at 1:30 p.m. Saturday.”²⁷¹ Pitts mentioned the merchants who would take part in the meeting including himself; E. Mack Cates, manager of Sears, Roebuck; H.C. Nottehart, manager of Grant’s; and Oren Williams, of Wilson Quick pharmacy. The committee was represented by Smith, Lawson, Nash, and Powell at the meeting. Smith also mentioned that three more people were expected to be at the meeting, including Rev. James Glasse, a Vanderbilt Divinity school professor, and president of the Tennessee Conference of Human Relations; Mrs. L.C. Redick, a state P-TA official; and Dr. Herman Long, director of the Fisk Race Relations Institute. The merchants had a meeting to discuss the Committee letter. They did not make a statement about whether they would accept the Committee report or not.

On April 09, 1960, the Nashville merchants met with the Committee members at the Chamber of Commerce. During the meeting, the merchants decided not to accept the report of the mayor’s Biracial Committee. The merchants said, “it was most impractical for a small group

²⁷⁰ “Mayor’s Group Files Report, Asks Support.”

²⁷¹ David Halberstam, “Negroes Seek Merchant Talks,” *The Tennessean*, April 07, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111840035/?terms=Negroes%20Seek%20Merchant%20Talks&match=1>.

of stores to assume the role of leading such a social change.”²⁷² The merchants would issue a statement which said: “We must take the necessary time to carefully study all aspects of the matter and arrive at a decision that will be satisfactory to most citizens of our trading area. Thus it should be clear no decision has been reached with reference to the recommendations of the committee.” Pitts said, “We answered some of their questions. It was a very lengthy meeting.” The merchants also made a statement by saying:

We recognize the vital importance of a settlement of this issue to the welfare tranquility and future growth of our community. Through necessity we must be concerned with the economic issue, but we are unmindful of human and moral aspects. The impact of this problem has thus far been forced upon a limited number of downtown stores. It should be obvious to everyone that it’s not our problem alone.²⁷³

The Committee would offer the merchants “a constructive plan that took into account both the validity of the principle of desegregation and the economic factor about which the merchants expressed great concern.” They were asked whether the demonstrations would continue. Nash pointed out the last paragraph of the statement which said, “Our struggle does not end here. Rather we shall continue to insist in a non-violent Christian, loving fashion that the inequalities of segregation be recognized and dealt with in such a manner that true brotherhood within this democratic society can be achieved.”²⁷⁴ The Committee would issue a statement:

²⁷² David Halberstam, “Merchant Delay Action On West Biracial Plan,” *The Tennessean*, April 10, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111841962/?terms=Merchant%20Delay%20Action%20On%20West%20Biracial%20Plan&match=1>.

²⁷³ “Merchant Delay Action on West Biracial Plan.”

²⁷⁴ “Merchant Delay Action On West Biracial Plan.”

Our meeting with the representatives of the merchants was characterized by courtesy and frankness on the part of all persons involved. While we made it clear that we did not accept all aspects of the mayor's committee's report, we offered to the merchants a proposal which took into account both the moral principles for which we stand and the economic involvement for which we stand and the economic involvement for which the merchants are mainly concerned. In our conference we expressed to them our nonacceptance of the total report. We, the members of the Nashville Student Movement and the Nashville Christian Leadership Council, feel it is our responsibility to the community to clarify our position concerning the central issue contained in the biracial committee's report to Mayor Ben West.²⁷⁵

The committee came up with two recommendations. The first recommendation suggested that segregation be removed entirely. The second recommendation suggested a 90-day trial period that would suggest that the principle of desegregation was on trial. Another part of the recommendation suggested that there be a countywide advisory committee on racial matters. The merchants would also issue a statement: "The merchants of Nashville have been placed in the unenviable position of deciding on a social practice which will be a radical change in the custom of our community. The very nature of our business is such that it is most impractical for a small group of stores to assume the role of leading such a social change." The statement continued "Thus it should be clear that as of now no decision has been reached with reference to the recommendations of the bi-racial committee."²⁷⁶ Sit-ins resumed two days later.

²⁷⁵ "Leaders Confer Student's Statement."

²⁷⁶ "Merchant Delay Action on West Biracial Plan."



Figure 4.7 Diane Nash, left, Fisk junior and chairman of the student protest group, and the Rev. Kelly Smith, pastor of the First Baptist Church and president of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council, confer before releasing a statement to reporters on their views of the sit-in demonstrations April 9, 1960.

²⁷⁷ “Lost Nashville: “First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

On April 11, 1960, the sit-ins would resume, which was the first time since March 25. The protests were conducted at Dime Store Row, Memorial Square, and the city courthouse. A White segregationist named Virgil Glenn struck Wilson Yates, a White Vanderbilt divinity student from behind. Yates was carrying an anti-segregationist poster that said "Equal Rights for All" when he was struck by Glenns and did not strike back. Before the attack, Glenn himself was protesting, carrying a poster that said, "Throw Coons Out." Glenn would be arrested and charged for disorderly and offensive conduct for attacking Yates. He would become the first White segregationist arrested since the sit-ins started in Nashville. Glenn would claim that the reason why he hit Yates was, "I hit him because he called me a white SOB." The police would also arrest Yates on disorderly and offensive conduct since Glenn claimed that he cursed him out. Yates would say, "He asked me why I was doing this. I asked him if he wanted to talk about it. Then he just started cursing me. The next thing I know he hit me."²⁷⁸ Bail was set for both men at \$25. Yates would be bailed out by members of the faculty of the Vanderbilt Divinity School including Dean Nelson, assistant Dean James Sellers, and protestor Dr. Gordon Kaufman.

The attack on Yates by a White segregationist was one of the incidents that would occur at Memorial Square. Before that incident, an unidentified White segregationist hit a Black man and then ran out of Memorial Square. Police officer, Earl Cullum, chased the man for two blocks but lost him. In another incident, Glenn and an elderly Black man dressed like a porter yelled insults against each other before going their separate ways. Nobody was arrested for that incident. Lunch counters at Grant, Harvey, Cain-Sloan, Woolworth, and Kress were closed

²⁷⁸ David Halberstam, "Downtown Area Stores Scene of More Sit-Ins," *The Tennessean*. April 12, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111845436/?terms=Downtown%20Area%20Stores%20Scene%20Of%20More%20Sit-Ins&match=1>.

immediately. Lunch counters at Walgreens and McLellan remained open but the Blacks were not served. After the sit-ins, a prayer meeting occurred under West's office window. While being there, they sang songs and prayed for West to lead them with their fight against segregation. They were told that West was in Miami and could not be reached for comment.²⁷⁹

The next day, more sit-in demonstrations would occur at Kress, Woolworth, and McClellan. A young black named Rufus Jamison, a Camron High School student, was beaten by an angry crowd of White segregationist attackers at Nashville downtown Arcade, as Blacks and Whites clashed with each other. Five Blacks and two Whites would be arrested that day. The four Blacks were all Tennessee A&I University students, including Matthew Jones Jr, Earl Williams, Williene Clardy, and Henry Clotsal Hall, and they were arrested for disorderly conduct at the Cain-Sloan's Store. Jamison was arrested after he struck back at the White crowd who was attacking him at the Nashville Arcade. The two Whites, Danny Halliburton and Robert Glennon, were arrested for attacking Black demonstrators. Jamison would be later released from jail. On the same day, City Court Judge Doyle later suspended the fine for Glenn after Yates forgave him for attacking him the previous day.²⁸⁰

The next day, three incidents of racial violence between Blacks and Whites occurred in Nashville. The first incident occurred after a 23-year-old Black man named Henry Stewart told police that a carload of White men shot at him around 9 p.m. as he stood near the home of his

²⁷⁹ "Downtown Area Stores Scene of More Sit-Ins."

²⁸⁰ "4 A&I Students May Be Expelled," *The Tennessean*, April 13, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111845756/?terms=>.

friend. Stewart mentioned that the Whites said, “You’re shot, ain’t you nigger.”²⁸¹ Stewart was with two of his friends named Donald Williams and James Moten when he was shot. Stewart would also tell Homicide Investigator F.C. Neal, “The shot hit me, and I heard them yell and then they were gone.” The second incident occurred when a 20-year-old white man named Jerry Reed, told police that a carload of Blacks passed him around 7:30 p.m. on Woodland Street. Smith at the time was with his friends Gunnar Tieds and Eugene Devonport at Tieds house with one cutting his pants with a knife and the other hitting him with a piece of hose. The carload of Blacks included Harry Gilmore, James Howard, Bruce Howard, Roy Cowan, William Beard, Albert Collins, and James Walden Perkins. Reed said, “This car slowed down beside us. One of those colored boys reached out the window and cut at me with this big knife. Another one hit with this hose from the rear window.” Reed would continue by saying, “The negros laughed and kept going.” He mentioned that they were driving a 1951 Chevrolet, and they got the license.

The car was found around 10 p.m. at Seventh and Main Street and the Blacks were arrested. Gilmore was charged with assault with a knife with intent to kill. Cowan was charged with assault with battery. The others were charged with disorderly conduct. One of them would tell Sgt Cobb that they just wanted to frighten the White youth since they were angry over the violence that was occurring in the lunch counter sit-in demonstrations. The third incident occurred when Jacqueline Sweeney, a Vanderbilt hospital nurse, told Inspector Donoho that a Black person threw a brick through the window at her car at Seventh and Main streets when she was headed to work around 12:10 a.m. On the same day, the four Tennessee A&I University students, Jones, Williams, Clardy, and Hall, appeared in court and were charged with disrupting

²⁸¹ “Racial Tension Eases Downtown,” *The Tennessean*, April 14, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111846186/?terms=Racial%20Tension%20Eases%20Downtown&match=1>.

trade or commerce in state warrant taken out on the recommendation of Walter Leaver Jr, assistant city attorney. The four would be released on \$500 cash bonds each.²⁸² After this, Nashville leaders attended a conference at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, leading to the formation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

On April 15, 1960, fourteen Nashville leaders in the sit-in demonstrations left the previous day for a South-wide conference on segregation protests in Raleigh, North Carolina. The conference was scheduled at Shaw University, a private Baptist HBCU located in Raleigh, North Carolina. The conference was sponsored by SCLC and the event was supposed to be from April 15 to April 17, 1960. Nashville leaders who attended the conference included Lawson, his wife Dorothy Wood, Nash, Berry, Alexander, LaPrad, Powell, Bevel, Lewis, Lafayette, Gloria Johnson, Dick Dickerson, Kenneth Frazier, and Mike Penn. Lawson would tell reporters the previous day, “The conference will be a chance for those who have participated from all over to swap ideas and experiences.”²⁸³

The conference was organized by Ella Baker, a civil rights organizer, and SCLC’s Executive Secretary. Baker convinced King to drain SCLC’s funds by providing \$800 to finance a conference of student sit-in leaders. Baker issued a call for a Youth Leadership Conference that was signed by King. It invited student activists to “chart new goals and achieve a more unified sense of direction for training and action in Nonviolent Resistance.” The call of conference also

²⁸² “Racial Tension Eases Downtown.”

²⁸³ David Halberstam, “Sit-In Leaders Here Take Trip,” *The Tennessean*, April 15, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111846907/?terms=Sit-In%20Leaders%20Here%20Take%20Trip&match=1>.

stated, "Adult freedom fighters would be present for counsel and guidance, the conference would be youth centered."²⁸⁴ Diane Nash recalled:

I remember receiving the invitation to attend the conference that would bring together student leadership from many campuses where sit-ins were going on. Ella Baker saw how important it was to recognize the fact that the students should set the goals and directions and maintain control of the student movement. I never had to worry about where Ella Baker was coming from. She would speak her mind honestly, and I turned to her frequently, because she could emotionally pick me back up and dust me off. ... I think she was constantly aware that the differences that the students had were probably not as important as the similarities that we had, in terms of what we were trying to do. So, very often, she was the person who was able to make us see and work together.²⁸⁵

The conference was held at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, over the Easter weekend from April 15 to 17, 1960. The conference attendance was supposed to be 126 student delegates from 58 sit-in centers in 12 states, along with delegates from 19 northern colleges, NCLC, NSM, SCLC, CORE, FOR, National Student Association (NSA), Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Atlanta Coalition, and Nonviolent Action Group. The open session was scheduled on Friday, April 15, 1960, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday was supposed to be the day that would be devoted to workshops, buzz-sessions, and committee work. A public meeting would also occur that day in the evening. On Sunday, the conference was to close around lunchtime. Back in Nashville, there were no sit-in demonstrations that occurred as Lawson and the

²⁸⁴ "Sit-In Leaders Here Take Trip."

²⁸⁵ Henry Hampton and Steven Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement 1950-1980* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), Compendium of some of the interviews that formed the basis of the PBS series "*Eyes on the Prize*."

Nashville group were at the conference. Despite not having any sit-in demonstrations, racial tensions between Blacks and Whites were still high, especially in the downtown area. Police and firemen received an anonymous tip at 4:55 p.m. about a bomb in the Cain-Sloan Department. There was no bomb found at the store.²⁸⁶

There were other developments that occurred in Nashville the previous day. State charges were placed on the carload of Blacks who were involved in the knife attack on the White youth on Wednesday. Three carloads of University of Minnesota students left Minneapolis en route to Nashville to protest segregation, and the group was expected to arrive on Sunday, April 17, 1960. Paul Rilling, Southern regional conference director, told the Nashville Community Relations conference that Nashville might set the pattern of other southern cities if it found a solution to the lunch counter problem. Rilling mentioned, "The status quo has been shaken up, and now we can now make progress toward a new stability if we will."²⁸⁷ The same day as the conference was occurring, violence would break out between picketers and onlookers. Police reported a White youth named John J. Northrop, a student at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York, who joined the demonstrations, was beaten by another White man. Northrop suffered a cut on the chin that required seven stitches. The picketers who were protesting were joined by the college students who were attending the conference for the weekend.

Back in Raleigh, Lawson would give the keynote address at the conference, where he emphasized both the need for immediate direct-action and the power of Nonviolent Resistance based on its philosophy, strategy, and tactics. During his speech, he criticized the NAACP as being too conservative. Lawson called the NAACP magazine *The Crises* "The magazine of the

²⁸⁶ "Sit-In Leaders Here Take Trip."

²⁸⁷ "Sit-In Leaders Here Take Trip."

Black bourgeoisie.” Baker mentioned Lawson's criticism against NAACP as “Lawson’s criticism of the NAACP reflected his own opinion and certainly does not represent a policy opinion of the student group.” Baker would also mention, “There is no fight between the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. There is naturally a difference in emphasis.”²⁸⁸

It was argued that Lawson’s presentation during the keynote address at the conference was so powerful that nonviolent philosophy should be established at the conference. With Baker’s support, the students at the conference set up their own independent organization rather than becoming a youth branch of the SCLC. They adopted a Founding Statement based on Lawson’s presentation at the conference. The Founding Statement said:

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the presupposition of our belief, and the manner of our action. Nonviolence, as it grows from the Judeo-Christian tradition, 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 transcends hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Faith reconciles doubt. Peace dominates war. Mutual regards cancel enmity. Justice for all overthrows injustice. The redemptive community supersedes immoral social systems. 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. Although each local group in this

²⁸⁸ “Sit-In Leaders Here Take Trip.”

movement must diligently work out the clear meaning of this statement of purpose, each act or phase of our corporate effort must reflect a genuine spirit of love and good-will.²⁸⁹

The name that was chosen for the new organization was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The SNCC clearly stated their intentions: "Student" denoting an independent group as opposed to the youth arm of an existing organization, "Nonviolent" indicating their commitment to nonviolent direct-action, and "Coordinating Committee" establishing a democratic, non-hierarchical, group-centered culture and structure. Said one student: "The greatest progress of the American Negro in the future will not be made in Congress or in the Supreme Court; it will come in the jails."²⁹⁰ The SNCC would play an important role in the Civil Rights Movement as it was going on. Julian Bond, who was also at the conference when the SNCC was formed, said:

I can remember [Ella Baker] warning against entanglement with adults. Not political entanglements, not against leftists or anything like that. But just to keep our movement pure. That we had started it, we had carried it forward, and we could carry it on by ourselves. And she didn't say that directly; you got the feeling that that's what she meant. She didn't say, "Don't let Martin Luther King tell you what to do," but you got the real feeling that that's what she meant. You know, "He's a good man and so on, but don't let him tell you what to do."²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ "Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Founding Statement" Civil Rights Movement Veteran, last modified May 10, 2023. <https://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc1.htm>

²⁹⁰ "Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Founding Statement."

²⁹¹ "Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement 1950-1980."

On April 17, 1960, Easter Sunday, as the conference was concluding in Raleigh, North Carolina, back in Nashville, twelve students from the University of Minnesota arrived in Nashville the previous day in support of sit-in demonstrations. They arrived in Nashville in three different cars, including a 1953 Hudson, a 1954 Buick, and a 1953 Chevrolet. Each car had a paper sign, "Motorcade for Civil Rights." The twelve students included three coeds, one was the wife of one of the students, Khosrow Riggi, an Iranian, Promod Batra, who was originally from New Delhi, India, and the rest were White Americans from Minneapolis. They were met by Black leaders of the sit-in movement in Nashville. They stayed at the homes of Blacks and Whites for two days.²⁹²

On Sunday morning, they went to First Colored Baptist Church for Easter Services, where they had the chance to meet with Smith. After the Easter Services at First Colored Baptist Church, the students lunched at the Fisk University student union. After Fisk, they went to Tennessee A&I University and attended a meeting with more than 200 students and a few adults at the student union at the University. At the meeting, there were also five students from the University of Wisconsin. They were there to arrange for an expense paid trip to the Wisconsin campus of 30 Nashville students.²⁹³

After the meeting at Tennessee A&I University, University of Minnesota student Thomas D. Olson was on his way to the home of Dr. C.J. Walker, who he spent Saturday night with, to get his baggage. Olson was stopped and arrested after the police said that he ran a red light.

²⁹² Charles Coates, "Minnesota Sit-In Ordered Off to Jail Backer Arrested On Traffic Count," *The Tennessean*, April 18, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112100348/?terms=Minnesota%20Sit-In%20Ordered%20Off%20to%20Jail%20Backer%20Arrested%20On%20Traffic%20Count&match=1>.

²⁹³ Coates, "Minnesota Sit-In Ordered Off to Jail Backer Arrested on Traffic Count."

Olson was charged with reckless driving. Traffic Officer Harold Hess said Olson stopped for a red light at Centennial Boulevard and Thirty-Fifth Avenue, North, but started making a right turn into Centennial before the light turned green. Olson would say that he did not run the red light. Two other University of Minnesota students who were with him at the time also said he did not run the red light. Some of them would say the actual reason Olson was arrested was a form of harassment from the police. The students claimed that since they had been in Nashville, they had been followed by the police. Student Phil Schrader Jr would say, “It carries the annus of a Gestapo technique. But I suppose they could have been doing it thinking it was for our own protection.”²⁹⁴

Patrol Sgt. Gordon Vance said, “He had been taking special care to keep track of the visitors. Because I think it benefits the police to know what is going on. We’ve kept an eye on them but we haven’t hindered their movements in any way, shape or form.” Hess had first charged Olson with running a red light, but it was changed to reckless driving on Vance’s instruction. Vance said, “The reason why he did this was because he had information that the Minnesota cars had been running stop signs and red lights all day.”²⁹⁵ Vance would also say that the information came from a Black person he had spoken to on the street. Vance put Olson’s bond at \$50 rather than \$25 where most reckless driving charge cases were set. Vance said that the students were closely monitored by the Order Hosse as he gave special attention to the occasions that were connected to the sit-in movements in Nashville.

After Olson was arrested, the University of Minnesota students joined students from Fisk University and headed to the police station. There was discussion among them whether Olson

²⁹⁴ Coates, “Minnesota Sit-In Ordered Off to Jail Backer Arrested on Traffic Count.”

²⁹⁵ Coates, “Minnesota Sit-In Ordered Off to Jail Backer Arrested on Traffic Count.”

should make a bond or stay in jail. One of the University of Minnesota students, Susan Riggi, wanted Olson to stay in jail and tried to get put in jail herself. Riggi began to talk to the officer at the police desk where she said, “Why must he be in jail? But I’m trying to get in there too I don’t care.” Her husband pulled her away and told her that she should not go to jail. Olson was released on a \$50 bond. A Meharry Medical student named Maryann Morgan called Smith, Vivian, Williams, and Walker and asked them to go to the jail. Walker who was responsible for releasing Olson on \$50 bond, said the bond money was not his, but he would not say where it came from. He mentioned, “Just say it’s everybody money.”²⁹⁶

The next day, Olson appeared in court because of the arrest. Olson said, “He waited until the light was green before he proceeded.” A witness named William Medcalf, a student at Tennessee A&I University, backed up Olson’s testimony. Medcalf said, “He was standing near the corner of Thirty-fifth avenue, North, and Central boulevard when Olson drove up to the light and stopped.” Hess said, “he had been keeping an eye on the Minnesota car for about four hours before arresting Olson on the reckless driving charge.” Looby, Williams, Ennix, and Lillard who were the defense attorneys, argued that even if Olson had run the red light, he still was not guilty of reckless driving. Special Judge Carl Hardin presided in court for the absent Judge Doyle. Hardin said “I think the offense of running a red light in a minor event is reckless driving. However, I won’t fine the Maximum, the maximum fine in city court is \$50.” Olson would be fined \$25. After the \$25 was paid, Olson said he was returning to school in Minneapolis. Olson said, “But I’d like to return to Nashville again sometime.”²⁹⁷ Some days later, a bomb destroyed

²⁹⁶ “Minnesota Sit-In Ordered Off to Jail Backer Arrested on Traffic Count.”

²⁹⁷ Mac Harris, “Sit-In Supporter Given \$25 Fine,” *The Tennessean*, April 19, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112100700/?terms=Sit-in%20supporter%20given%20%2425%20fine%2C&match=1>.

Looby's home, triggering a mass march to city hall where Nashville ministers and students demanded answers.

On April 19, 1960, around 5:30am, dynamite was thrown through the front window of Looby's home near Meharry Medical College. Looby and his wife were asleep at the time when the bombing occurred. Both thought that it was thunder that they heard and not a bomb. Students from Meharry came to the Looby's house to check they were safe. The Looby's were taken next door to Mrs. Grace Jones apartment. Jones said "It broke the window I was looking out. All I could see was dust and smoke."²⁹⁸ According to Fire Chief John Ragsdale, 85 percent of Looby's house was damaged. In the dining room, much caught much of the force of the bombing. The living room window was also damaged, and the front door was blown away after the bombing. The window in the bedroom was also shattered. A brick pillar on the front was knocked off-center. The bomb also left a two-foot crater where it exploded near the southwest corner of the house. Jones's home was also damaged by the bomb. Her house windows were broken. Looby's other next-door neighbors named Mr and Mrs. David Ezell's house was damaged and their front yard.

The blast was so loud that it was heard throughout West Nashville. Police Inspector Carney Patterson said that he heard the bomb noise while he was driving at Seventeenth avenue North, and Church Street and was among the first police on the scene when the bombing occurred. Patterson would say, "These were killers, you don't throw that much dynamite to scare somebody." The bomb also damaged two other residences and shattered 147 windows of Meharry Medical College. Hosse mentioned "If that bomb had gone in the window, Looby's

²⁹⁸ Pat Anderson, "Looby Bombing Reward Voted," *The Tennessean*, April 20, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112101198/?terms=Looby%20bombing%20reward%20voted&match=1>.

house would have been blown off the face of the earth.” Hours before the bombing occurred at Looby’s home, an anonymous caller told police a bomb was set to go off at 5 am at Meharry Medical College and Hubbard Hospital. Donoho led eight patrolmen through the college, hospital, Alumni hall, intern quarters, and student dormitory rooms. No bomb was found, but the students were up all-night alert for the bomb scare. Hosse said “he believes a bomb of 10 to 20 sticks of dynamite was thrown from the street at a picture window in the front of Looby’s house. The bomb apparently missed the window by about four feet, fell to the ground and exploded at the foundation as the bombers drove away.”²⁹⁹

Looby said after the blast: “They tried to kill me and they almost succeeded.” Looby would continue by saying “I’ve done all I could for my people in the past and I will continue to work for them in the future. This won’t stop me. This shows what kind of people some of our opponents are. Some others are more subtle. A man can be a segregationist and I can respect his honest opinion, but I can’t respect the man who did this. I can’t say I would turn the other cheek. If I could find the man who threw the bomb, I would prosecute him. He said the bombing was connected with Negro student sit-ins protesting lunch counter segregation.”³⁰⁰ Many Nashville Black leaders came to aid Looby after the bombing. One of the first to arrive was Williams. Williams said, “This is the manifestation of the violent elements that have been condoned by the powers that be.” Smith mentioned the bombing and said, “This a miracle, that you were spared.” The Rev. William James Simmons, Tennessee A&I University minister, arrived on the scene of the bombing and offered a prayer in which he said “Thou art always bringing good after evil. Let sanity come after insanity; let us work for the victory to come.”

²⁹⁹ Anderson, “Looby Bombing Reward Voted.”

³⁰⁰ Anderson, “Looby Bombing Reward Voted.”

At 7a.m., West made a visit to Looby where he “termed this a dastardly act; he showed grave concern at the violence.” The NAACP also made a statement, signed by Kelley and Henderson, regarding the bombing at Looby’s house that said:

The failure of city officials to act at the inception of hoodlumism encourages violence; distortion of truth by responsible officials and the inflammation of race hatred by public media also encourages violence. Furthermore, it is unfortunate that decent law-abiding citizens and organizations devoted to human welfare and religious principles default on their responsibility to the community by their silence on matters involving justice and moral responsibility. Negroes will not be intimidated by these acts of violence, nor will the vigorous efforts of the NAACP be deterred in the pursuit of unrestricted citizenship to Negro Americans.³⁰¹

Even Harvey’s department store treasurer Pitts criticized the bombing of Looby house calling it “a tragic thing inexcusable.” Pitts would continue by saying “It’s hard for me to understand why anybody will do such a thing. All it does is make problems worse. All the merchants feel that way about it. They are disturbed about it and sorry it happened.”³⁰² The city council offered a \$10,000 reward to anybody who had information leading to the capture of the people responsible for the bombing of Looby’s house.

During that same day, around 3,000 Blacks marched on city hall in protest of Looby bombing. The march demonstration began at Tennessee A&I University. There were around

³⁰¹ Anderson, “Looby Bombing Reward Voted.”

³⁰² Garry Fullerton, “Community Leaders Deplore Looby Bombing; Urge Action,” *The Tennessean*, April 21, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112101728/?terms=Community%20leaders%20deplore%20Looby%20bombing%3B%20urge%20action>.

1,500 Blacks who started to march around noon. They were joined by students from Fisk, Meharry, American Baptist Theological Seminary, and Pearl High School. The students marched from Jefferson Street to city hall located in downtown Nashville. Some of the students who were a part of the march included Nash, Powell, Murphy, Lafayette, and Kenneth Frazier who was a student at Tennessee A&I University. Both Lawson and Vivian joined and acted as advisors to the students during the march. In reality, despite Lawson organizing the nonviolent workshops at Clark Methodist Memorial Church in training for the sit-ins and being expelled from Vanderbilt for his involvement in the sit-in, Lawson himself had not up to that point participated in a demonstration during the sit-in movement in Nashville.³⁰³

This was the third time that demonstrations were held at West's window and this time he finally answered the students. Around 1:30pm, West was on the steps when the students arrived. In his hand, West had a telegram from the leaders announcing they were there in non-violent protest. Vivian started reading the statement that was jointly written by the NCLC and NSM which criticized West's response to the sit-ins. The statement accused the mayor on four issues. The first issue was steadfastly ignoring the moral issues involved in segregation. The second issue was refusing to speak out against the injustice of the segregation statement offered him by his biracial committee. The third issue was not using the moral weight of his office to speak out against violence and hatemongers. The fourth issue was encouraging violence by "his lack of decision and by permitting the police to use their authority with partially. They have from the

³⁰³ Fullerton, "Community Leaders Deplore Looby Bombing; Urge Action."

beginning arrested the wrong people and have allowed hoodlum elements the freedom of violent action against peaceful demonstrations.”³⁰⁴

The statement also said, “During this critical situation, Mayor West has been most difficult to reach and has been out of the city making speeches while citizens been beating and abused.” Then Vivian read: “Because he the mayor has failed to speak; we ask that he now consider the Christian faith he professes and the democratic rights of all our citizens and declare for our city’s policy of sanity based on our common faith and our democratic principles.” After Vivian finished the statement, the crowd burst into applause. West then spoke, and he said that he resented what was in the statement. West and Vivian started arguing, and Vivian had to be restrained by another minister. West said “I intend to see that order is maintained. I stood up in front of three or four hundred yelling, screaming segregationists in the city council chambers who tried to intimidate me. I intend to see order is maintained in this city, and as God is my witness the law will be enforced here.”³⁰⁵

West would then continue saying, “As God is my helper, if anything can be done to find the man who bombed my good friend Looby’s home, we’ll do that. But if you violate the law, you will be arrested. No man can decide what law he will obey.” West then said: “I want to say to you students some of your leaders haven’t told you about the great advances that have been made in this city. To say that a mayor can decide what store owners can do is just wrong. I can’t tell a man how to run his business.”³⁰⁶ West then mentioned several references to Christianity,

³⁰⁴ David Halberstam, “Crowd Told Decision Is Up To Stores,” *The Tennessean*, April 20, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112101198/?terms=Crowd%20Told%20Decision%20Is%20Up%20To%20Stores&match=1>.

³⁰⁵ Halberstam, “Crowd Told Decision Is Up to Stores.”

³⁰⁶ Halberstam, “Crowd Told Decision Is Up to Stores.”

and he said, “I ask each of you to search your soul and heart think about what you are saying about being better Christians. We are all Christians together. Let us pray together.” Earl Mays, a Fisk University graduate student yelled out West by saying “How about eating together!” West would ignore him and he said, “As long Ben West is mayor, it doesn’t make any difference if the sky falls, I’m going to protect you to the best of my ability.” Vivan asked West “if segregation was moral.” West responding by saying “No, it is wrong and immoral to discriminate.” Nash then asked the mayor “to use the prestige of your office to appeal to all citizens to stop this racial discrimination.” West responded: “I appeal to all citizens to end discrimination, to have no bigotry, no bias, no hatred.” Nash then asked, “Do you mean that to include lunch counters?” West responded: “Little Lady, I stopped segregation seven years ago at the airport when I first took office and there has been no trouble there since.” Nash asked one more question to West: “Then, mayor, do you recommend that the lunch counters be desegregated?” West responded by saying “Yes and it was up to the store managers of course.”³⁰⁷

Vivan then asked West: “Do you realize that this goes deeper than the lunch counter, that it can destroy us.” West responded: “You also have the power to destroy. I want you students to realize this. I live here, I own a house here and I will die here. You too, have a responsibility to treat your fellow man with your Christian love. God knows I don’t want all this publicity for our city.” Vivan suggested to West to debate Christian love with a preacher. West responded by saying “I’m not a very good Christian.” West was interrupted with shouts of Amen! West then said “I want you to remember that you are my brother and I am your brother.” Vivian then asked, “Is segregation Christian?” West would tell Vivian to look at his past record. “What a fellow does often speaks so loud that you can’t hear his words.” Vivian said that he was not asking

³⁰⁷ Halberstam, “Crowd Told Decision Is Up to Stores.”

about his pass record. West responded: “Look at what I’ve done. Ask my friend Alexander Looby, ask Avon Williams. This is the time for the truth. We’ve made great progress here. Talk to these people and find out what’s going on.”³⁰⁸

One student yelled out to West saying, “Can we ask Judge Harris too?” He was referring to Harris who served as city court judge during the original cases of the first 80 students arrested for disorderly conduct. A Tennessee A&I University student named Poe asked West about West’s lunch counter recommendation and West answered that he had suggested the end of segregation there.”³⁰⁹ After West finished speaking, the students gathered in small groups to discuss what West said. The students then started to walk back to their campuses and they went in small groups. There were no incidents of violence on the day after the march. The march was known to be the largest turnout of students during the Sit-In Movement on that day. The mayor’s response to the students and ministers would later be cited as a major turning point by activists and business owners in the sit-in movement.

The next day, King came to Nashville to speak at Fisk University. The meeting which was originally scheduled for 7:30pm, got underway at 7:45pm. The meeting opened with songs by Guy Carawan, a folk singer guitarist who was joined by leaders of the student sit-in group singing “We Shall Overcome.” At 7:55pm, Looby appeared on stage, and the audience stood and cheered as Looby waved and smiled. Looby was suddenly overcome with emotion, and he crumpled and had to be helped to a chair. He started to weep while the crowd started to cheer. Afterward’s, King came out, and he was accompanied by Smith, Vivian, and Lawson. King waved to crowd and shook hands with Looby and sat next to him. Before King could speak,

³⁰⁸ Halberstam, “Crowd Told Decision Is Up to Stores.”

³⁰⁹ Halberstam, “Crowd Told Decision Is Up to Stores.”

Looby told the audience: “This is just another bomb scare. The building has been gone over from top to bottom, every part of it, and it’s been guarded all day. But, despite this, the chief of police and the chief of fire department feel that it’s necessary for all of us to go outside and wait while they go over again.”³¹⁰ The audience responded with no and boos. Vivian responded by saying “There is very little we can do about this. But just remember, it’s an order of your city officials.”³¹¹

The bomb scare forced 4,000 people to evacuate from the Fisk gymnasium and delayed King’s speech for nearly an hour. Nashville police and firemen searched the building for the bomb. Donoho told reporters that the bomb threat had been relayed to the police headquarters by the Nashville office of United Press International (UPI). UPI reported that an anonymous caller said that he was from Montgomery, Alabama telephoned and said, “A young negro, 30 years old, has a small bomb. He is going to be at the meeting of the Reverend King, and he will leave the bomb and leave his seat. The bomb is set to go off three minutes after he walks out.” After 45 minutes, the meeting resumed, and King began to speak before 9:00pm. During his speech, King said, “Segregation is on its death bed now and the only uncertain thing about it is the day it will be buried.”³¹²

King would continue saying, “We have been told for years that Negroes are happy with segregation and would be all right if it weren’t for outside agitators. This sit-in movement is an eternal refutation of that lie. It has made it absolutely clear that the Negro is not satisfied with

³¹⁰ Garry Fullerton, “King Delayed by Bomb Scare.” *The Tennessean*, April 21, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112101728/?terms=King%20delayed%20by%20bomb%20s care&match=1>.

³¹¹ Fullerton, “King Delayed by Bomb Scare.”

³¹² Fullerton, “King Delayed by Bomb Scare.”

segregation.”³¹³ King said that the sit-in movements were a revolt and revelation of such in Nashville. He mentioned, “It a revolt by the students against the negative peace in race relations in the south.” He also said, “A revolution that the Negro now has a worldwide view.” King also mentioned about the bombing of Looby home and he said, “The diehards should know by now that bombs will not stop us.” King also praised the Nashville Sit-In Movement as “the best organized and the most disciplined in the Southland.” King furthered stated “I came to Nashville not to bring inspiration but to gain inspiration from the great movement that has taken place in this community.”³¹⁴ King argued that the leaders and students of the Nashville Sit-Ins “have gained a better understanding of the philosophy of non-violence than any other group.” The meeting of King at Fisk University was sponsored by the NCLC.

During the same day, President Dwight Eisenhower was asked to come to Nashville on May 01, 1960, in regard to efforts to achieve racial tolerance in the city of Nashville. The invitation came from a telegram from Nashville NAACP that was signed by Kelley and Henderson. The local NAACP leaders put out the telegram urging Eisenhower to come to Nashville because, “the weight of your office could substantially influence the climate of race relations in Nashville and the South for tolerance and the implementation of democratic principles.”³¹⁵ They would say that the reason why they decided to send the telegram to Eisenhower was because of the bombing of Looby’s house.

³¹³ Fullerton, “King Delayed by Bomb Scare.”

³¹⁴ Fullerton, “King Delayed by Bomb Scare.”

³¹⁵ David Halberstam, “NAACP Asks President Visit,” *The Tennessean*, April 21, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112101744/?terms=NAACP%20Asks%20President%20Visit&match=1>.

Eisenhower was on vacation at the time in Augusta, Georgia when the invitation was put out. They said, "This act of violence, is testimony to the unwholesome state of affairs relative to the safety of Negroes and their opportunity of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in the city of Nashville and the South."³¹⁶ Three Nashville religious leaders named the Rev. John Keister, pastor of the Holy Trinity Lutheran church, and President of the Nashville Association of Churches; Father William Morgan, editor of the Tennessee Register; and Rabbi William Silverman, of The Temple. They said, "As members of the three great religious groups of Nashville we wish to commend the mayor for his forthright statement in regard to the lunch counter situation here in Nashville." They continued saying, "We call upon the merchants of our city to follow the leadership of the mayor by resuming negotiations with representatives of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council, to work out a feasible plan to light of the mayor's statement. We feel that this is imperative if peace and harmony is to be restored to our community in keeping with our Judeo-Christian traditions. We deplore violence, prejudice, threats, intimidation, and bigotry in our community in any form. We urge our people to settle their dispute in a lawful and prayerful manner in the democratic tradition."³¹⁷

On April 23, 1960, it was decided that the CBS documentary on the Nashville Sit-Ins called *Anatomy of a Demonstration* would not be seen in Nashville, Memphis, and Chattanooga. CBS affiliate WLAC-TV decided not to air the documentary film because the news station aired at 10:30am. Sunday, an hour after the program was scheduled to be shown. Jack Michael, program director WREC-TV, Memphis said the reason why the news station would not air the documentary was because, "it reflected propaganda rather than objective reporting." He also

³¹⁶ Halberstam, "NAACP Asks President Visit."

³¹⁷ Halberstam, "NAACP Asks President Visit."

added showing it “would serve no useful purpose.” Program Director Morris Quave of WDEF-TV in Chattanooga said, “We don’t feel that it is in the best interest of the public we are serving.” A CBS spokesman in New York said all the news station affiliates were shown the program on closed circuit so they decided to carry it or not. They said, “If any station chooses not to carry it locally, its their prerogative.”³¹⁸ The next day, the documentary film was shown but not in Nashville, Memphis, and Chattanooga.

After weeks of secret negotiations between the protest leaders and merchants a resolution was formed. The department store merchants felt the pressure and economic burden as the sit-in demonstrations occurred. An agreement was reached in the first week of May. In the agreement, small selective groups of Blacks would order food at the lunch counters downtown on a day known in advance to the merchants. The merchants would prepare their employees for the event and tell them to serve the customers without incident. This arrangement would continue for a couple of weeks and then all controls would be taken off, at which point the merchants and protest leaders would reconvene to evaluate the results. Also, as part of the agreement, the media was to be informed of the settlement and requested to provide only accurate, non-sensational coverage. On May 10, 1960, several Black customers were served food at six Nashville downtown lunch counters. They were served along with White customers without incident. At 3 p.m., groups of two and three blacks entered Woolworths, Kress, McClellans, Walgreens, Harveys, and Cain-Sloan. Some ordered club steaks and others ordered hamburgers at the stores.

³¹⁸ “Local Station Won’t Show Sit-In Film,” *Nashville Banner*, April 23, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603225869/?terms=Local%20station%20won%27t%20show%20sit-in%20film&match=1>.

One store official said, “There was no reaction whatsoever from our White customers.”³¹⁹ The plan continued successfully, and the lunch counters were integrated without any further incidents of violence. Nashville thus became the first major city in the southern United States to begin desegregating its public facilities during the Sit-In Movement. Other restaurants around downtown Nashville would continue to be desegregated in the following weeks.

This chapter explained how Nashville Black Churches involved in the Nashville Sit-Ins led a successful sit-in campaign at the lunch counters downtown. What made the Nashville Sit-Ins unique is Nashville was the first southern city to desegregate. The success of the sit-ins can be credited to Lawson’s nonviolent workshops at Clark Memorial Methodist Church which gave the students the training in preparing for the sit-ins. It was able to train students on what they were going to encounter at the lunch counters from White segregationists who didn’t want them there. The students were indeed disciplined on how to react to White segregationists with nonviolence at the lunch counters during the sit-in campaign. It might be argued without the nonviolent workshop training for students by Lawson and NCLC conducted at Clark Memorial Methodist Church and First Colored Baptist Church, the sit-ins wouldn’t have been as successful as it was.

The First Colored Baptist Church played the most significant role as the sit-ins were occurring. This was seen when after the Greensboro Sit-Ins occurred, Moore called Lawson and asked him and others to start the sit-ins campaign in Nashville. Lawson would take his advice, and he and Smith would have meetings at First Colored Baptist Church for a couple of days before the start of the sit-ins on February 13, 1960. Even on the first day of the

³¹⁹ “Six Lunch Counters Here Serve Negroes,” *The Tennessean*, May 11, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111780340/?terms=Six%20lunch%20counters%20here%20serve%20Negroes&match=1>.

sit-ins, students gathered at First Colored Baptist Church before heading out to the lunch counters in downtown Nashville to protest segregation that day. The other events at First Colored Baptist Church included West meeting with Black Nashville leaders at the church to discuss the events that occurred on February 27, 1960, known as Big Saturday. On March 03, 1960, a day after Lawson got expelled from Vanderbilt Divinity School for his involvement in the Nashville Sit-Ins, Lawson was arrested at the First Colored Baptist Church. He and 79 students were charged in a state warrant with conspiracy to violate trade and commerce.

A documentary film on the Nashville Sit-Ins produced by CBS called *Anatomy of a Demonstration* did some of their filming at First Colored Baptist Church. As Lawson and the other Nashville activists were at a conference at Raleigh, North Carolina that led to the establishment of SNCC. University of Minnesota students came to Nashville and met with Smith at the church during Easter Sunday leading up to the arrest of University of Minnesota student Olson. The bombing of Looby's house on April 19, 1960, and the meeting with West by the students and ministers led to talks about desegregation of the lunch counters in May 1960. Despite the Nashville lunch counters being desegregated, other public accommodations would remain segregated in Nashville including grocery stores, movie theaters, and others. The next chapter will focus on churches' involvement in these protests at these public accommodations and the Freedom Rides.

Chapter 5: Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round: Nashville Black Churches involvement Grocery Store protests, the Nashville Open Theater Movement, and the Freedom Rides 1960-1961.

On May 10, 1960, the Nashville Sit-Ins movement ended with several of the lunch counters downtown desegregated, allowing black customers to eat in the lunch counter with white customers. Despite the lunch counters being desegregated downtown, there were still many other public accommodations across Nashville that were still segregated that included grocery stores, movie theaters, and other public accommodations. Nashville ministers and students who continue the civil rights activism protest in Nashville in targeting segregated grocery stores in like H.G. Hill and movie theaters like the Paramount. The civil rights activism also spread out of Nashville to a nationwide stage where Nashville activists from the NCLC, NSM, and SNCC participated in the Freedom Rides. The Freedom Rides was a Civil Rights Movement campaign where civil rights activists rode interstate buses in the Southern United States. The Freedom Rides was also supposed to challenge the United States Supreme Court decisions of *Morgan V. Virginia* and *Boynton v. Virginia*, which ruled that segregated buses were unconstitutional. Despite the ruling, The Southern states ignored the rulings, and the federal government did nothing to enforce it. This chapter explains the continued civil rights activism in Nashville among ministers and students that the black churches support and back. Along with Nashville ministers and students' involvement in the Freedom Rides.

On May 20, 1960, ten days after the lunch counters desegregated in downtown Nashville, the United Church Women of Nashville appealed for more money in their drive to help Looby and Ezell rebuild their homes from the bombing on April 19. The organization would claim that they only collected \$181 since they opened the drive on April 29th, 1960. The NCLC and

Nashville NAACP were also raising funds for Looby and Ezell as well, and they claimed that they raised thousands of dollars. The NAACP scheduled to meet at Gordon Memorial Methodist Church at 3:30pm to appeal for more funds in donations. Mrs. Bard Thompson, chairman of the United Church Women's committee on Christian social relations said: "We feel that a criminal or malicious act directed toward any of our citizens is a matter of concern of our entire community."³²⁰ She also mentioned how a Black member of the group contribute a check for \$50. The next day, Vanderbilt University board of trustees approved the action of its executive committee in ousting Lawson from the University for his involvement in the sit-in demonstrations.

On May 30, 1960, Ralph Abernathy was the guest speaker at Clark Memorial Methodist Church around 7:30pm. Other speakers at the meeting included Looby, Walker, and C.M. Hayes³²¹. Funds were raised at the meeting for Looby and Ezell. During that same day, Nelson and nine of the sixteen faculty members resigned from Vanderbilt Divinity School because the university refused to re-admit Lawson as a student. The nine faculty members included Sellers, Glasse, Gilkey, Lou H. Silberman, Hillel professor of Jewish literature and thought; Gordon D. Kaufman associate professor of theology; Brad Thompson, professor of church history; Leander Keck, assistant professor of theology; Ronald E. Sleeth, professor of preaching; and Arthur L. Foster; assistant professor of pastoral theology.³²²

³²⁰ "Church Group Pushes Looby Fund Drive," *The Tennessean*, May 21, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112115957/?terms=Church%20Group%20Pushes%20Looby%20Fund%20Drive&match=1>.

³²¹ "Church Group Pushes Looby Fund Drive."

³²² "Church Group Pushes Looby Fund Drive."

On the next day, Lawson said that he would continue his studies at Boston University and then return to Nashville later. Lawson also said that he planned to work with a methodist church after receiving his degree at Boston University despite not identifying the name of the church. He planned to enroll at Boston College if Vanderbilt did not re-admit him. Lawson also commented regarding the resignations of Dean and the nine faculty members who resigned from Vanderbilt by saying, “I think it indicates that throughout this process they’ve understood my role in the sit-in movement as a Christian minister.”³²³ If Lawson was not expelled from Vanderbilt back in March for his actions in the Nashville Sit-Ins, he would have graduated in that May. Despite the resignation, Branscomb did not yet accept the resignation of the Dean and nine faculty members but said he was taking the matter with members of the board of trust.

Three Vanderbilt students who just recently graduated from Vanderbilt two days before, returned their degrees and sixteen theological students, including the divinity school’s three remaining Blacks named Beresford Bailey, Paul Marchbanks, and Ottie I. West who was an assistant pastor at First Colored Baptist Church, said they would not return to the school in protest of Lawson being expelled and not being readmitted. A joint letter to Branscomb said: “Events of the past several weeks have made it clear that the expulsion of Mr. James Lawson Jr. was made at least partially on the basis of race.”³²⁴ The three made it apparent that Lawson would not be allowed to return to Vanderbilt, and it would be “morally intolerable for us to remain.” Branscomb would respond with no comment on the three letters.

³²³ Eugene Dietz, “Lawson Plans Boston Study, They Return,” *The Tennessean*, June 01, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112111598/?terms=Lawson%20Plans%20Boston%20Study%2C%20They%20Return&match=1>.

³²⁴ Dietz, “Lawson Plans Boston Study, They Return.”

Nelson and the other Vanderbilt University professors who resigned received job offers from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Former dean of the Harvard Divinity school said: “We join the whole Christian world in applauding you (Dean Nelson) and your colleagues for your heroic action.”³²⁵ Dean Liston Pope of Yale Divinity School said: “On the one hand it is a very courageous stand on behalf of racial justice by these faculty members. On the other hand, it is a serious loss to theological education in this country, and especially in the South., because Vanderbilt Divinity school was the outstanding non-denominational school in the South.” President James McCord, Princeton Theological seminary support said: “The Faculty Of the Princeton Theological seminary support you and your colleagues in your stand for Christian brotherhood and for academic integrity. You can count on our active support and prayers as you struggle for these ends.”³²⁶ Other faculty members gave support including Professor Richey Hogg of the Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University and James Watson of Forth Texas, an alumnus of the Vanderbilt divinity school.

The next day, another Vanderbilt University divinity school professor named Dr. Kendrick Grobel, professor of New Testament resigned. On June 03, 1960, the executive committee of the Vanderbilt University board of trustees had a meeting to accept the resignation of Nelson. The person who would replace Nelson as Dean of Vanderbilt Divinity School was Dr. Walter J. Harrelson, dean of the Chicago Divinity School. An agreement was reached where Harrelson would become the dean of the Divinity under three conditions. The first condition was Lawson was readmitted under the terms of the Divinity school. The second condition was Nelson

³²⁵ “*Teachers Get New Job Offers*,” *The Tennessean*, June 01, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112111598/?terms=Teachers%20Get%20New%20Job%20Offers&match=1>.

³²⁶ “*Teachers Get New Job Offers*.”

was to be retained as a full professor in the divinity school. The third condition was the ten faculty members in the divinity school who resigned along with Nelson was also retained. Harrelson was already employed the previous fall at Vanderbilt as Professor of Old Testament during the 1960-1961 academic year.³²⁷

During that same day, Lawson arrived and enrolled at Boston University theology school by an invitation of the University faculty for the summer term. The United Church Women of Nashville and the Fisk University faculty made statements in regard to the resignation of Vanderbilt faculty members. United Church Women said in a letter to Branscomb: “The United Church Women of Nashville and Davidson County wish to register their deep concern and distress at the recent developments in the Divinity school at Vanderbilt, which are not only of local but of worldwide significance. In order the work of the school may continue unimpaired, we hope that deeper consideration will be given to the issues involved and a just solution he sought in the light of the commandments of God, rather than the traditions of men.”³²⁸

There were no actions taken by the committee for the resignations of Dean and the nine faculty members of Vanderbilt Divinity school.

The Fisk faculty said in a letter to Nelson:

The faculty of Fisk welcomes this opportunity to express to Dean Nelson, his distinguished colleagues, and the dedicated students at Vanderbilt University, its admiration and profound respect for their stand on the soundest of American traditions; namely, respect for the rights and beliefs of the individual conscience. We believe that

³²⁷ Eugene Dietz, “Vanderbilt May Replace Nelson,” *The Tennessean*, June 03, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112112430/?terms=>.

³²⁸ Dietz, “Vanderbilt May Replace Nelson.”

your courageous and forth right stand will serve as a beacon light to all enlightened forces and persons in the United States who are earnestly seeking a firm foundation for meeting the principles of human equality. Such a stand seems to us to be highly appropriate to the dean, the faculty and students at a divinity school which functions according to the highest ideals of the Christian faith.³²⁹

The next day, the Vanderbilt committee decided not to act on Nelson and the nine other professors who decided to resign. Nelson was asked whether he would accept being professor, to which he responded with no comment. Nelson commented on the statement by his faculty members and said; I think the faculty is entirely justified in issuing this statement to counteract a decision of the executive committee which could have most deplorable consequences for all concerned. The solidarity of the divinity school faculty in resigning is not questioned.”³³⁰

On June 06, 1960, the NCLC weekly mass meeting occurred at 7:30pm at Pilgrim Emanuel Baptist Church. The main speaker at the meeting was Rev. Ottis L. West. The next day, Branscomb accepted the resignations of twelve divinity school professors after Branscomb rejected a compromise plan regarding James Lawson. Branscomb released a statement in which he said, “The refusal of the resigning members of the divinity school faculty to meet with Mr. Harold Vanderbilt and myself to discuss a possible resolution of the present difficulties gives me no alternative under present circumstances but to accept their resignations”³³¹. On June 09, 1960,

³²⁹ Dietz, “Vanderbilt May Replace Nelson.”

³³⁰ Eugene Dietz, “Harrelson Sets Terms To Take VU Dean’s Post,” *The Tennessean*, June 04, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112112938/?terms=Harrelson%20Sets%20Terms%20To%20Take%20VU%20Dean%27s%20Post&match=1>.

³³¹ David Halberstam, “12 Professors Reject VU Plan, Allowed to Quit,” *The Tennessean*. June 08, 1960,

around 161 Vanderbilt University teachers asked the executive committee of the University Board of Trustees to accept a negotiated settlement of the divinity school dispute. The committee refused to accept the agreement that would allow Lawson to receive his B.D. degree after completing examinations during that summer.

A statement was signed by 161 faculty members. The statement said:

It is crucial to the future of Vanderbilt University that the controversy concerning the divinity school resignations be resolved immediately. The undersigned members of several faculty strongly commend and endorse the action of the chairman of the board. Harold S. Vanderbilt, and Chancellor Harvie Branscomb for having successfully negotiated an agreement which was accepted by members of the divinity school faculty. The statement would continue to be said, We are shocked by the failure of the executive committee of the board of trust to accept their recommendations. In complete conviction of the seriousness of the situation, we urge that the responsible officials of the board of trust resolve the crises without delay and within the terms of the agreement negotiated by Mr. Vanderbilt and Mr. Branscomb.³³²

On June 14, 1960, Lawson mentioned that he would not return to Vanderbilt University. Lawson said, "Regretfully, I cannot return to Vanderbilt under the terms of the compromise reached at the expense of Dean Nelson. His departure and my expulsion are of the same character. Bearing no ill will toward any member of the Vanderbilt community, I can only wish

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/112114411/?terms=12%20Professors%20Reject%20VU%20Plan%20Allowed%20to%20Quit&match=1>.

³³² David Halberstam, "161 VU Teachers Ask Board To Accept Truce," *The Tennessean*, June 11, 1960,

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/112114785/?terms=161%20VU%20Teachers%20Ask%20Board%20To%20Accept%20Truce&match=1>.

that university well in the months and years ahead.”³³³ The next day, the nine Vanderbilt Divinity school faculty members withdrew their resignations from the university. Branscomb agreed with the withdrawals and said he would return their letters of resignation the next day. Lawson also agreed to reconsider his decision not to return to Vanderbilt to take examinations for his BD degree. Nelson issued a statement in which he said, “The faculty members insisted that the withdrawal of their registrations should not be interpreted as meaning that we accept Chancellor Branscomb’s views on the issues involved in the Lawson case, and termed Branscomb’s dismissal of Nelson from his duties as dean unjust and ungracious.

On June 16, 1960, the three black Vanderbilt students that included West, Bailey, and Marchbanks wanted to return to the university. West said the reason for the decision was “because of the belief the Lawson case has been settled honorably.” They also said in a joint letter, “We feel we can honorably return to the university with dignity and self-respect.”³³⁴ Despite Lawson being offered to come back to Vanderbilt to complete his BD degree, he still did not mention if he would come back or not. On June 22, 1960, Lawson returned to Nashville to speak at the Race Relations Institute at Fisk University. Lawson still did not indicate if he would return to Vanderbilt University. The next day, several Black students had made plans to stage a sit-in at Mickey’s restaurant located at 201 Fourth Avenue., N and the B&W Cafeteria. According to Bevel, around 14 students attempted to enter Mickey’s. The few who attempted to enter Mickey’s were pushed out immediately. At the B&W, a small group of students were

³³³ “Lawson Refuses Return to VU,” *The Tennessean*, June 15, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112114785/?terms=161%20VU%20Teachers%20Ask%20Board%20To%20Accept%20Truce&match=1>.

³³⁴ Eugene Dietz, “3 Negroes Ask VU Readmission,” *The Tennessean*, June 17, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/109009859/?terms=3%20Negroes%20Ask%20VU%20Readmission&match=1>.

refused admittance by a guard at the door. They would stand outside for about 30 minutes before leaving. While the redemonstrations were taking place at Mickey's, fires were reported at the Maxwell House and across the street where the Noel Hotel was located. The fires were reported to be false alarms by the police.

Two months later, on August 20, 1960, Lawson received his BD degree from Boston University. Two days later, Lawson was assigned to serve at a Black church called the Scott Memorial Methodist Church in Shelbyville, Tennessee. Lawson refused to comment on when he started there or why he was assigned to go to that church. *The Nashville Northstar*, a weekly Black newspaper published by Vivian said, "Lawson was not sent to Nashville because of a fear of bombing." The newspaper also said, "It was feared radical elements might bomb the church to which he would be assigned in Nashville."³³⁵ Two months later, on October 03, 1960, Lawson would address a mass meeting that was sponsored by the NCLC at the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. It was Lawson's first appearance in Nashville after leaving back in May. During his speech, Lawson spoke on the meaning of the nonviolence that was occurring in Nashville.

A month later, on November 02, 1960, around 150 Black students staged sit-ins at five Nashville lunch counters. The students staged the sit-ins against the advice of adult and White leaders and even older students. The students gathered at First Colored Baptist Church before walking to the downtown lunch counters. The lunch counters that were targeted that day included Trailways Bus Deport, Union Station, Wilson Quick Drug Store, and Moon-McGrath. The Wilson Quick Pharmacy Drug Store and Trailways would close their counters until the

³³⁵"Lawson Assigned To Shelbyville," *The Tennessean*, June 24, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112055370/?terms=Lawson%20Assigned%20To%20Shelbyville&match=1>.

student demonstrators left around 2 p.m. The Union Station lunch counter would continue to serve white customers while ignoring the Blacks. The Moon-McGrath Drug Store would not allow blacks to enter the store.³³⁶

Nash issued a statement on behalf of the central committee representing the students. The statement said: “We want the community to realize that we have made every possible effort in attempting to eliminate the evil of segregation in eating facilities by negotiating with the merchants in the downtown area. For the past several weeks we have put forth great efforts on many occasions to negotiate. At least 50 downtown eating establishments are still segregated. Therefore, after exhausting all other means, as a last resort, we have again found it necessary to witness in a dramatic yet loving fashion.” During that same day, nine restaurant owners met with Nichol to discuss the sit-ins. Nichol said, “They had been treated with sit-ins and wanted to talk over the law applying to the situation.”³³⁷ He declined to give further comment on the matter.

³³⁶ “Students Stage 5 Sit-Ins Here,” *The Tennessean*, November 03, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112055462/?terms=Students%20Stage%205%20Sit-Ins%20Here&match=1>.

³³⁷ “Students Stage 5 Sit-Ins Here.”



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Figure 5.1 The sit-in demonstrators leaves their home base of the First Baptist Church Nov. 2, 1960, to walk to nearby downtown lunch counters to begin another day of protesting.

³³⁸ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” The Tennessean. August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

On November 10, 1960, sit-ins occurred at the Krystal Lunch Counter where employees used water hoses, cleaning powder, wet brooms, and insect spray to disrupt Black sit-in demonstrations inside the restaurant. Around 2:30 p.m., three students that included Lafayette, Maryann Morgan, and Elmyra Gray would enter Krystal where they bought hamburgers while they were standing up. Lafayette said, "Then we sat down and started eating them. They told us the place was closed and we would have to leave." Lafayette would continue saying, "a waitress threw buckets of water at their feet, sprinkled cleaning powder down their backs and turned a small rubber hose on the counter, splashing water in their faces and over their clothes."³³⁹ When the three refuse to move, the waitress turned on the air conditioning as they sat there in their wet clothing. Morgan said, "It was just the one waitress that did it all. She went wild, the others just stood around and laughed."³⁴⁰

The three would remain there until after they finished their meal. Around 4:05pm, Lewis and Bevel came to the store to talk to the general manager of Krystal. Lewis said, "He told us we would have to leave because they were going to fumigate the place. He said it was a state law that required them to fumigate."³⁴¹ The two refuse to leave and the manager would turn on the fumigator to disrupt the two. The two would remain in the store for about half an hour while it filled up with the dense cloud of non-toxic insect spray. They finally left the store when Asst. Fire Chief W.D. Gallaher was called by the police. The manager of the store asked for no

³³⁹ Gary Fullerton, "Water, Insect Spray Fail To Stop Sit-in," *The Tennessean*, November 11, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112060243/?terms=Water%2C%20Insect%20Spray%20Fail%20To%20Stop%20Sit-in%2C%22%20&match=1>.

³⁴⁰ Fullerton, "Water, Insect Spray Fail to Stop Sit-in."

³⁴¹ Fullerton, "Water, Insect Spray Fail to Stop Sit-in."

charges to be made against Lewis and Bevel. Sit-In demonstrations occurred at six other restaurants on that day. These six restaurants included Mickey's, Langford's, B&W Cafeteria, The Cross Keys, Simple Simon, and Trailways Bus Depot. The students would be denied service in all six restaurants. At Mickey's, some students would be pushed out by restaurant employees after the police refused to arrest them without a warrant.

The next day, the sit-demonstrations continued around 5 p.m. when five Black demonstrators including Lawson, Paul Edward Brooks, Robert Fisher, Anderson Fritz, and Walter McElroy went to the Krystal lunch counter. The four would be accused of assault and battery after a Krystal employee complained that they shoved him aside and entered the restaurant against his orders after which warrants were put on them. The warrant would be later withdrawn after a Krystal employee named Tommy Davis told General Sessions Judge Herbert H. Moses that he could identify the Blacks who were at the restaurant.³⁴² Other lunch counters were targeted that day including B&W Cafeteria where 15 blacks were refused entrance. Others sat at Simple Simon's for a short time but did not get served. There were other Krystal restaurant's locations that were visited that day by other blacks for sit-in demonstrations where they were refused service.

On November 12, 1960, sit-in protests occurred at the Tic Toc, the Simple Simon, and Wilson-Quick drug store. Nash said that there were around 40 students from Nashville colleges and universities that took part in the sit-ins that day. She said, "they were refused service at the Tic Toc, the Simple Simon on Church Street at the Wilson-Quick drug stores at Eighth Avenue and Broadway and at Seventh Avenue and Church Street." She would continue to say, "In

³⁴² Steve Korpan, "Sit-In Warrants Voided by Judge," *The Tennessean*, November 11, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112060741/?terms=Sit-In%20Warrants%20Voided%20by%20Judge&match=1>.

addition, there were door guards at many, many restaurants, even at places where we had not tried to enter. The sit-inners did not get past the guards at any of such places.”³⁴³ At the Tic Toc Restaurant, five Blacks and one White were chased out by the restaurant owner named Herschel Erwin armed with a rifle. Erwin would say he had the rifle in hand to force them to leave the restaurant. He mentioned, “I had the rifle in one hand to show them I meant business.” The White protestor was named Tom Brooks, a student at Fisk University. Brooks was pulled from the stool by Erwin at the lunch counter and Erwin grabbed a Black female sit-in demonstrator next to Brooks by the arm. Erwin said, “They not going to eat in here.” No charges were placed in the incident at the Tic Toc restaurant for what occurred.³⁴⁴

On November 15, 1960, the NCLC would ask the Tennessee Baptist Convention (TBC) to desegregate its hospitals, schools, and other institutions in Nashville. Smith sent a telegram to Dr. Gaye L. McGlothlen, President of TBC and pastor Immanuel Baptist Church: “We earnestly call upon you to open the doors of your hospitals, schools, and institutions to all persons without regards to race, creed, or national origin.”³⁴⁵ McGlothlen responded saying that he received the telegram and interpreted it as “as a message of greeting from the Nashville Christian Leadership Council.”³⁴⁶ A month later, on December 07, 1960, Lafayette was fined around \$100 on charges of disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. The charges stemmed from a fight after a sit-in

³⁴³ “6 Sit-in Participants Driven Off With Rifle,” *The Tennessean*, November 11, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112062006/?terms=6%20Sit-in%20Participants%20Driven%20Off%20With%20Rifle&match=1>.

³⁴⁴ “6 Sit-in Participants Driven Off With Rifle.”

³⁴⁵ Edmund Willingham, “Baptist Asked To Desegregate Institutions,” *The Tennessean*, November 16, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112114773/?terms=Baptist%20Asked%20To%20Desegregate%20Institutions&match=1>.

³⁴⁶ “Baptist Asked to Desegregate Institutions.”

demonstration at the Trailways Bus Terminal restaurant. Lafayette reported a White taxi driver named Henry White attacked and beat him, and the police separated and arrested both. No charges were placed against the five other students that participated in the sit-ins. The five did attend court to testify for Lafayette.³⁴⁷

Two days later, Smith wrote a letter to fellow ministers in Nashville to come together to protest discrimination hiring policies by H.G. Hill. In the letter Smith wrote:

Dear Fellow Minister:

While other supermarkets and grocery stores are hiring Negro checkers and clerks, the H.G. Hill Stores refuse even to talk with us about it. For some months we have tried to get a conference with some of the officials, but they refuse to see us. We sent a registered special delivery letter to Mr. H.G. Hill himself, and to date he has not even answered. Yet, a number of our people our members are still shopping at H.G. Hills Stores. This is a time for us to assert our ministerial leadership. We, as leaders in the community, must do something. We are asking every Nashville Minister to meet us at the First Baptist Church, 319 Eighth Avenue, North Monday, December 12, at 3 p.m. so we can decide our action. You have failed us in the past, so don't fail us now. We expect you Monday afternoon at 3 o'clock.

Yours for Freedom
Kelly Miller Smith*³⁴⁸

On December 12, 1960, sixteen Nashville ministers from the NCLC, both Black and White, picketed three H.G. Hill grocery stores to protest what they called discriminatory hiring practices by the grocery company, despite H.G. Hill being the only major grocery chain that had stores in the Black neighborhoods in Nashville. It refused to hire Black individuals for positions

³⁴⁷ "Student Fined \$100 for Sit-In," *The Tennessean*, December 08, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111892302/?terms=Student%20Fined%20%24100%20for%20Sit-In&match=1>.

³⁴⁸ "Kelly Miller Smith Papers, "Nashville Christian Leadership Council" Box 1. December 09, 1960.

at the stores. Smith said, “They refuse even to talk with us about it.”³⁴⁹ The H.G. Hill stores that were picketed that day were located at 8th Ave, North and Jefferson, Charlotte and 20th Ave. North, and 16th Ave South and Grand. Leo P. Thweatt, executive vice president of the grocery chain said, “he was sorry they feel this way about it. We haven’t done anything to aggravate this situation, We have no grievance against colored people, and we do hire them in our establishments. Every truck driver we have is a Negro.”³⁵⁰

Two months later, on February 1, 1961, on the one-year anniversary of the Greensboro Sit-Ins which would be known as *Remember Freedom Day-February 1st*, several hundred Black students stood outside five downtown Nashville movie theaters silently. They were demonstrating for the end to racial barriers at the movie theaters. Four of the movie theaters closed their box office when Black students appeared. The other movie theater kept their box office open but refused to offer movie tickets to Black students. The students wore small lapel cards saying, “Remember Freedom Day-February 1st.” No incidents occurred at the movie theaters that day. Some also passed out leaflets saying that “Nashville theater managers had turned down their bid to negotiate.”³⁵¹ J.B. White, district manager of the Martin Theaters of Columbus, Georgia who had acquired the movie theaters where protest occurred said that he was not aware of the demonstrations.

³⁴⁹ “16 Ministers Picket Hills Stores for Bias,” *The Tennessean*, December 13, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111898193/?terms=>.

³⁵⁰ “16 Ministers Picket Hills Stores for Bias”.

³⁵¹ “Negroes Demonstrate Outside Movies Here,” *The Tennessean*, February 02, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111543389/?terms=Negroes%20Demonstrate%20Outside%20Movies%20Here&match=1>.

On February 07, 1961, about 150 Black students demonstrated in front of four Nashville movie theaters that included the Paramount, Crescent Cinerama, Loews Vendome, and Tennessee Theater but were refused admittance. John Piley, a White Vanderbilt University senior said, “he was slugged by three white teenagers during the demonstrations.”³⁵² Angeline Butler, a Fisk University student said, “she entered the Tennessee Theater with a White girl named Susan Wilber, a Vanderbilt Peabody College Freshman and sat through a complete showing of the movie.” Floyd R. Rice, manager of the Tennessean Theater said that he knew nothing about Butler coming in the movie theater. He said, “If she came in, sat down and watched the entire movie as she claims she did, I would have surely known about it.”³⁵³ The Crescent and Paramount theaters closed as soon as the demonstrations began and did not admit Blacks and Whites in the theaters. The Tennessee Theater and Loews Vendome remain open despite the demonstrations.

A few weeks later, on February 20, 1961, the theater protests would continue that day and became known as the “stand-ins.” Police would arrest around 28 Black students on charges of blocking fire exits at two of the downtown theaters. Earl T. Kemp, another manager of the Tennessee Theater, said that the students came around 6:25 p.m. and asked to buy tickets for a movie that they were showing there at the time. Kemp said, “When we refused to sell them tickets at first, they just stood in a line by the box office, but later they began blocking the fire exit. We asked them to move, and a city fire inspector asked them to move, but they just kept

³⁵² “Student Demonstrate at Theater Here,” *The Tennessean*, February 08, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111557567/?terms=Student%20Demonstrate%20At%20Theater%20Here&match=1>.

³⁵³ “Student Demonstrate at Theater Here.”

singing hymns and standing around.”³⁵⁴ Around 7:15 p.m., Nashville Police Sergeant Smith gave the students a choice: either to leave or get arrested and the students choose to get arrested. The students would be arrested under chapter 14, section 152 of the city code which declares, “Clear passage from all exits and on sidewalks must at all times be maintained outside of all theaters and other places of public assemblage.”³⁵⁵ As the demonstrators were being escorted into the police patrol wagons in front of the Tennessee Theater, they would be joined by others who were standing in line protesting at the Loew’s Theater which was half-block away. When the patrol wagon was full, three more students came up to the police and asked to be arrested but were turned away. R.D. Bolton, manager of Loew’s, said that the students had blocked the theater exit there. Despite Bolton’s claim, reporters noted that the line at Loew’s was far from the box office and did not block anything.

The next day, a crowd of White youths attacked several groups of Black college students on Eighth Avenue North, as they were returning from stand-in protests from the four movie theaters downtown heading to the First Colored Baptist Church. Several of the students were beaten and kicked before making it to First Colored Baptist Church. As the students were protesting at the theaters, the White youths had stood on Church Street across from the Tennessee Theater. They shouted insults to the students who were waiting in line to buy tickets. Around 8:45 p.m., as the students marched away from the theaters, the White youths marched behind them shouting, “Hup, two, three, four! Hup, two, three, four! That’s when the White

³⁵⁴ “*Police Arrest 28 Stand-Ins Here,*” *The Tennessean*, February 21, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111681559/?terms=Police%20Arrest%2028%20Stand-Ins%20Here&match=1>.

³⁵⁵ “*Police Arrest 28 Stand-Ins Here.*”

youths started to attack the Black students. During the same day, charges among the 26 students were dismissed by city judge Doyle.³⁵⁶

On February 22, 1961, Smith, and Andrew White, who was NCLC secretary wrote a letter in regard to what was occurring during the movie theater stand-ins in Nashville:

Dear Christian Friend:

The coverage in the newspapers and on the radio and television in recent weeks has failed to give factual information about the continuing non-violent movement both across the country and here in Nashville. We have had several weeks of “stand-ins” at downtown local theaters where violence has been the normal occurrence. In fact, on several occasions even the police have joined in the violence against the students. I think you realize more than many of our people that every problem of segregation is related to other problems and that those downtown demonstrations will open up other avenues for both recreation and employment. It will further help the people in the city to make continuing strides toward Christian brotherhood. There two things you can do right now:

1. Keep your people informed from the pulpit. You can gain information by visiting First Baptist Church during the evenings or on Saturday afternoons while demonstrations are going on.
2. Ask the members of your congregation to write a postal card or call the radio and television stations or newspapers telling them that if they will not publish all the news we will withdraw our patronage.

“If every church will do this these agencies of communication will help us keep better informed. In fact we urge you to form a committee that will keep the telephones and post office busy over the next two weeks. This is our fight and we need your full support!

Yours sincerely,

Nashville Christian Leadership Council

Kelly Miller Smith, President

Andrew White, Secretary³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ “White Youths Attack Negroes,” *The Tennessean*, February 22, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111682458/?terms=White%20Youths%20Attack%20Negroes&match=1>.

³⁵⁷ Kelly Miller Smith Papers, “Nashville Christian Leadership Council” Box 1. February 21, 1960.

During the same day, around 100 Black college students along with Whites, Mexicans, and Chinese among them demonstrated at the movie theaters. The group would divide into smaller units of 30 and stood in front of the four downtown theaters, trying to gain admittance. Police allowed a group of White youths to form opposite the Tennessee Theater. Two hours later, the police decided to break up the White youths who whistled “Dixie” through rolled up newspapers and said verbal insults across the street to the demonstrators. When the student demonstrators were leaving the theaters and heading back to First Colored Baptist Church, they would be attacked by the White youths. The White youths would attack them with sticks and umbrellas along with throwing rocks and kicking at them. Reporters and photographers were also attacked by the White youths. They were able to escape after the White youths drew a knife on a Black student. One of the demonstrators who got attacked with rocks was Rollins. Three demonstrators who were injured in the attack were sent to the hospital with minor injuries³⁵⁸.

Despite the violence, leaders of the demonstrations said that the stand-in demonstrations were a success. They said, “We had the best demonstrations we’ve ever had.” The Nashville branch of the NAACP sent a letter to West criticizing the brutal treatment of the students during the demonstrations. The letter would demand protection which said, “We protest the hoodlum atmosphere permitted in the area without restraint or arrests.”³⁵⁹ The next day, more than a dozen of police officers patrolled Church Street and told the White youths to keep moving when they attempted to gather at the four movie theaters where stand-ins’ demonstrations continue to occur. Despite the police presence, around 150 young Whites gathered in the Central parking lot

³⁵⁸ “Whites Attack Stand-Ins Here,” *The Tennessean*, February 23, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111683937/?terms=Whites%20Attack%20Stand-Ins%20Here&match=1>.

³⁵⁹ “Whites Attack Stand-Ins Here.”

opposite the Paramount theater. Some of the Whites threw eggs, rocks, and several darts at the demonstrators. Ben Garrett, the Paramount manager, was hit by an egg that hit his shoulders.³⁶⁰

Sam Wells, manager of the parking lot, asked the police to move the Whites out, which they did. There were around more than 100 Black demonstrators along with a handful of Whites aiding in the demonstrations. A 15-year-old Black boy named Lewis Miller was injured during the demonstrations when a rock hit his stomach. He was sent to Hubbard Hospital and later released. A Tennessee A&I University student named Harvey Hunter was arrested, and he was charged with malicious destruction of property by Helton at the Loew's Theater after the curved glass window of the ticket booth was broken. Hunter would post a \$250 bond and was released from county jail. Rollins and other demonstrators said, "appreciated the police protection they got last night."³⁶¹ Rollins also reported that a man who was employed by Paramount shoved a gun to a Black demonstrator's stomach when he refused to take his hand out of his pocket, which gave the impression that he was armed.

On February 24, 1961, the demonstrations continued when around 123 anti-segregation demonstrators marched downtown Nashville after a 75-minute stand-in at the four movie theaters. Rocks and eggs were thrown at them as they were marching by about 70 White boys. Despite the attack, no one was seriously hurt. A rock narrowly missed Traffic Officer Harley Jackson and hit a White youth who was passing by. Jackson would arrest a White youth named Morris Adcock who was accused of throwing eggs for disorderly conduct. During the stand-ins, theater personnel let White people in the movie theaters but held back the Black demonstrators.

³⁶⁰ "Police Prevent Stand-In Attack," *The Tennessean*, February 24, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111685820/?terms=Police%20Prevent%20Stand-In%20Attack%2C%22%20&match=1>.

³⁶¹ "Police Prevent Stand-In Attack."

Twenty minutes after the students arrived at the theaters, 10 Nashville Fire Department units pulled onto Church Street in response to a false alarm. Bevel would lead the demonstrators back to First Colored Baptist Church around 8:15 p.m. Lawson was also among the group. Two months later, on April 29, 1961, downtown movie theater owners agreed to experimental integration where the theaters were desegregated. Despite the downtown movie theaters being desegregated, movie theaters in Nashville suburbs would remain segregated.

Another important element part of the Nashville Black Churches's participation in the Civil Rights Movement was the Freedom Rides. On May 04, 1961, the first Freedom Ride began led by Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) Director James Farmer Jr. Thirteen young riders that included seven Blacks and six Whites left Washington D.C. on the Greyhound and Trailways buses. Lewis was the only rider from Nashville who participated on the Freedom Rides that day. The plan was to ride through the Southern States that included Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and finally making it to Louisiana where they would end up in the city of New Orleans.³⁶² There was no violence in Virginia and North Carolina, but once the Freedom Riders made it to South Carolina, the trouble began. On May 09, 1960, when they made it to Rock Hill, South Carolina, Lewis became the first Freedom Rider to face violence in the campaign. Lewis attempted to enter the White waiting room at the Greyhound Bus Terminal. He would get attacked by White segregationists, and Albert Bigelow, a White Navy veteran came to his rescue and suffered beating by the White segregationists.

This resulted in Lewis in pulling out of the Freedom Rides for a few days to travel to Philadelphia for an interview for a foreign service position in India with the American Friends

³⁶² Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (Oxford,UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 109-114.

Service Committee. After the interview, Lewis planned on returning to join the Freedom Riders in Birmingham on May 14, which was Mother's Day. The Freedom Rides would continue at Georgia without incident. Once they reach Alabama on May 14, they would encounter violence. When word came out that the Freedom Riders were coming to Alabama, Eugene Bull Connor, who was the police commissioner in Birmingham, Alabama got together with Police Sergeant Tom Cook to organize a plan to stop the Freedom Riders. Connor and Cook who was avid supporter of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), together planned to organize violence against the Freedom Riders with local Klan chapters. They got aid from a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informant named Gary Thomas Rowe who was also a member of the Eastview Klavern #13 who was a Klan group in Alabama.

On May 14, 1961, when the Freedom Riders made it to Anniston, Alabama, they were attacked by a mob of Klansman. The Greyhound bus driver tried to escape but was blocked after KKK members slashed the bus tires. The bus driver was to drive the bus a few miles out of town. The mob then threw firebombs into the buses which started to burn. As the buses burned, the mob attempted to hold the door shut so the riders could burn to death inside. The mob retreated after an undercover state investigator who had a revolver caused them to. This gave the riders a chance to escape the bus. Once they escaped the bus, the mob beat them until warning shots were fired by highway patrol. Some of the injured riders went to the Anniston Memorial Hospital. Most of them were refused care at the hospital and were removed from the hospital at 2 a.m. The reason for this was because the hospital staff feared the mob outside the hospital. Fred Shuttleworth, who was a local civil rights leader in Birmingham and minister of Bethel Baptist Church, organized several cars of Black citizens to rescue the Freedom Riders from the mob. The Trailways bus finally reached Anniston and pulled into the bus terminal an hour after the

Greyhound Bus was burned. A group of eight Klansmen boarded the bus and beat the riders on it.

Despite the attack, the Freedom Riders on the Trailways bus made it to Birmingham. When they arrived, the bus was attacked by a mob of KKK members including Rowe who was aided by the police. As the riders exited the bus, they were attacked by the mob with baseball bats, iron pipes, and bicycle chains. Among the riders that were attacked that day was a White Freedom Rider named James Peck. Peck was beaten so badly he needed 53 stitches to his head. He was taken to Carraway Methodist Medical Center, a segregated hospital which refused to treat him. He was later treated at Jefferson Hillman Hospital. News reports on the attacks of the Freedom Riders in Anniston and Birmingham reach the United States Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. Kennedy urged restraint on the Freedom Rides and sent an assistant named John Seigenthaler to calm the situation. Kennedy also arranged an escort to send the riders to Montgomery, Alabama but the Greyhound Clerks told the riders that they refused to drive them in fear of mob violence. The riders then decided to abandon the rest of the bus rides and fly to New Orleans from Birmingham. When they boarded the plane, they had to exit because of a bomb threat. When they arrived at New Orleans, Norman C. Francis who was at the time President of Xavier University of Louisiana housed the riders on campus in secret at St. Michael Hall, a dormitory.

News on what occurred in Anniston and Birmingham also went back to Nashville. An emergency meeting took place at the First Colored Baptist Church which the members of NCLC and NSM attended. It was decided at the meeting the Freedom Rides needed to continue and the NCLC and NSM needed to take part. Nash gave a phone call to Farmer where she told him that the NSM decided to continue the Freedom Rides rather than seek his permission to do so. Farmer

supported the decision despite him warning Nash of the dangers of the Freedom Ride. Vivian and Lawson encouraged the students to proceed while Smith and White explained to the students to proceed with caution. For the students to proceed with the Freedom Rides, they needed \$900 in travel expenses from the NCLC. The NCLC attempted to hold funds for the trip by only signing one signature to a check that required two signatures. The reason were NCLC hoped that the students would wait for several days to find a second signature to delay the trip. The students were able to find a big numbers man who cashed the check and was able to sign the second signature they were missing.³⁶³

On May 16, 1961, a decision was made on who would be sent. The people who were selected included Lewis, William Barbour, Paul Brooks, William Barbee, Allen Cason, Lucretia Collins, Catherine Burks, Jim Zwerg, Salynn McCollum, and Charles Butler. Before they left Nashville, Nash made a phone call to Shuttlesworth to inform them of their plans.³⁶⁴ Nash and Shuttlesworth came up with code words, referring to the Riders as a shipment of “chickens” bound for Birmingham on Wednesday, May 17. On the next day, Riders left Nashville and took the bus to Birmingham. When they made it to Birmingham, police officers pulled them over and took control of the bus. Brooks and Zwerg was both arrested because they were sitting together on the bus which was against the city segregation laws. The remainder of the Freedom Riders were put under protective custody from Wednesday night until after midnight Thursday when

³⁶³ Barry Everett Lee, *“The Nashville Civil Rights Movement: A Study of the Phenomenon of Intentional Leadership Development and its Consequences for Local Movements and the National Civil Rights Movement”* 173 (PhD diss., George State University, 2010), 243.

³⁶⁴ Lee, *“The Nashville Civil Rights Movement: A Study of the Phenomenon of Intentional Leadership Development and its Consequences for Local Movements and the National Civil Rights Movement,”* 244.

Bull Connor ordered the Riders to be taken to the Alabama-Tennessee border and dropped off at the roadside.

At the time, the Riders were told that they were going back to Nashville. As it turned out, the Riders were deposited around 3:00 a.m., on Friday near the tiny hamlet of Ardmore, a place that was located at the Alabama and Tennessee state line. It was also an area known for Klan activity. Fortunately, for the Riders they were able to find a local Black couple who took them in and fed them. The couple also had a telephone that they used to call Nash who sent Tennessee A&I University student Leo Lillard to return them to Birmingham. A second group of Riders from Nashville including Lewis arrived by train. This led to the Kennedy administration intervening. Robert Kennedy ordered Seigenthaler to Montgomery to negotiate with Alabama Governor John Patterson for the Riders to leave the state safely. On May 20, 1961, the Freedom Rides resumed. The bus was carrying the Riders to Montgomery who was protected by the Alabama State Highway Patrol.³⁶⁵

The Highway Patrol would abandon the buses and Riders at the Montgomery City Limits. A White mob awaited at the Montgomery Greyhound station. They beat the Riders with baseball bats and iron pipes. The local police allowed the beatings to go on without them intervening. Both Lewis and Zwerg were beaten severely. Seigenthaler was beaten and left unconscious laying on the street. Ambulances refused to take those who were wounded. Local Black residents were able to rescue them, and several Riders were hospitalized. The next day, a mass meeting was held at First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama where Abernathy was pastor. More than 1,500 people attended the meeting where speakers included King, Shuttlesworth, and

³⁶⁵ Lee, *"The Nashville Civil Rights Movement: A Study of the Phenomenon of Intentional Leadership Development and its Consequences for Local Movements and the National Civil Rights Movement,"* 249.

Farmer. Nash also attended the meeting. Outside the church, a mob of more than 3,000 White people attacked the Black church attendees. The United States Marshals Service protect the church from assault and firebombs. The civil rights leaders appealed to President Kennedy for protection. Kennedy threatened to send federal troops if the governor did not protect the people. In response to the threat, Alabama Governor John M. Patterson ordered the Alabama National Guard to disperse the mob. The guard was able to reach the church in the early morning.³⁶⁶

On May 23, 1961, five Nashville Black ministers that included Lawson, Vivian, Reverend Alex M. Anderson, minister of Clark Memorial Methodist Church; Reverend J.L. Copeland, pastor of Zion National Baptist Church; and the Reverend Grady Donald, pastor of Kanye Avenue National Baptist Church joined the Freedom Rides in Montgomery, Alabama. Lawson said, “that the entire Nashville delegation, students and ministers alike, probably will be with the freedom ride when it resumes the trip that was halted Saturday by mob violence at the Montgomery Bus Station.”³⁶⁷ Lawson was also not sure when the Freedom Rides would resume or whether any stops would be made en route to New Orleans. Lawson hoped that the techniques of nonviolence would have been reviewed by the participants of the Freedom Rides before they departed, “because the possibility of encountering violence is no longer hypothetical.” He also hoped that the group in Montgomery will be able to work out “a detailed statement of the purposes of the ride that can be released before leaving.”³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ Lee, “*The Nashville Civil Rights Movement: A Study of the Phenomenon of Intentional Leadership Development and its Consequences for Local Movements and the National Civil Rights Movement*,” 250.

³⁶⁷ “Lawson Leaves To Join Riders,” *The Tennessean*, May 24, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112887408/?terms=Lawson%20Leaves%20To%20Join%20Riders&match=1>.

³⁶⁸ “Lawson Leaves to Join Riders.”

Lawson did not consider himself to be the leader either of the Nashville or Montgomery group of Freedom Riders, but he did consider himself to be one of the leaders. Lawson said that King made the announcement the previous day that he would lead the nonviolent workshop. Lawson said, "I assume the workshop will be held this morning at Negro First Baptist Church of Montgomery, where the freedom riders have been meeting."³⁶⁹ He would continue to say, he believed he was asked to lead the Montgomery workshop, "because they figure I have done the most teaching of nonviolence as far as the movement against segregation is concerned. The workshop's purpose will be to try assuring that the freedom riders are able to continue reacting passively to violence." The next day, a Tennessee A&I University student named Carl Bush and others agreed to return to Nashville to take their exams. Bush said, "he has made such an arrangement with his instructors and understands that the others, most of them freshmen, have made similar arrangements."³⁷⁰

During that same day, two buses including the Greyhound and Trailways took 24 freedom riders, both Black and White including Lawson to Jackson, Mississippi where they would be arrested. Charges against the freedom riders included breach of peace and disobeying an officer. Bond was set at \$500 for each and none could make bail. Jackson Police Chief W.D Rayfield said "the freedom riders came to Jackson to violate city and state laws and they would be accommodated by being arrested for such violations."³⁷¹ On May 26, 1961, Nashville ministers and students stood trial around 4:00 p.m. Judge James Spencer convicted them of breach of the peace and sentenced them to a \$200 fine and 60 days in jail. Spencer suspended the

³⁶⁹ "Lawson Leaves to Join Riders."

³⁷⁰ "Lawson Leaves to Join Riders."

³⁷¹ "Lawson Leaves to Join Riders."

jail term at the request of the prosecution. Spencer told the Riders, “Their conduct flagrantly disobeyed the law” which led to mob action. He also said, “it would appear they wanted violence instead of taking their cases through the courts.”³⁷²

During the same day, it was planned for more freedom riders to come from Nashville to Jackson, Mississippi by train to continue integration attempts at public accommodations. Lillard said, “he expects 15 or 20 student integrationists to make the trip.”³⁷³ Nash was also in Jackson, and she left the previous day and flew to Atlanta to attend a conference with King and other officials of the SCLC. Nash flew back to Nashville that same day and was expected to fly either to Montgomery or Jackson. Lillard also said that the group planned to send a telegram to Kennedy explaining their reasons for turning down his request for a “cooling off period.” Lillard said, “We’ve been cooling off a long time about 98 years as a matter of fact.”³⁷⁴ After that day, the Freedom Rides would continue for the next couple of months until December of that year. Despite the Riders failure to reach New Orleans, Robert Kennedy petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to outlaw segregation in interstate travel. On November 01, 1961, the law went into effect across the United States.

Two months later, on July 17, 1961, the NCLC held a special recognition program for Vivian at First Colored Baptist Church. Vivian accepted the pastorate of the Community Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. During that same day, a group of Black and White students, picketed

³⁷² “Judge Says 27 Caused Mob Action,” *The Tennessean*, May 27, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112887697/?terms=Judge%20Says%2027%20Caused%20Mob%20Action&match=1>.

³⁷³ “Integrationists Off Again Today,” *The Tennessean*, May 27, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112887697/?terms=Integrationists%20Off%20Again%20Today%2C%22%20The%20Tennessean&match=1>.

³⁷⁴ “Integrationists Off Again Today.”

an H.G. Hill store at 20th and Charlotte Avenues. Leo Lillard said, “the biggest percentage of the store’s customers is Negro, and it is unfair not to employ Negroes. The Hill chain does not hire Negro clerks.”³⁷⁵ During the picketing, two busloads of Black students from Oklahoma and Texas arrived in Nashville including many veterans of the “freedom riders.” They spotted the pickets and screamed, which made the bus stop. The busload of students also came from an NAACP national convention in Philadelphia. A spokesperson said, “the stop in Nashville was because the students here need help picketing five Hill stores, each located in the predominantly Black neighborhood.”

A month later, on August 06, 1961, a mass meeting occurred at First Colored Baptist Church with both Black students and adult leaders attending. During the meeting, they criticized inadequate police protection and called for Black personnel that were qualified to “replace incompetent officers on the police force.” Smith who was the speaker at the meeting said, “If we had a strong city government, we’d have a strong police force.”³⁷⁶ The previous day, clashes occurred between Black and White picketers and White youths at the H.G. Hill store located at 16th and Grand avenues around 9:45 p.m. The picketers accused the police of arriving late when they arrested seven Blacks and six Whites. All would make bond except one. Inspector Patterson said, “police only arrested those who violated the law. I ordered patrols of the area stepped up as we always do in strikes and other situations where trouble may develop.”³⁷⁷ After the meeting,

³⁷⁵ “Negroes Picketing Grocery Store Here,” *The Tennessean*, May 24, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111649459/?terms=Negroes%20Picketing%20Grocery%20Store%20Here&match=1>.

³⁷⁶ Harry Pearson, “Negroes Stage Police Sit-Down,” *The Tennessean*, August 07, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111568268/?terms=Negroes%20Stage%20Police%20Sit-Down&match=1>.

³⁷⁷ “Negroes Stage Police Sit-Down.”

around 28 students went to the Nashville Police Department where they went to the lobby and sat. The students sang folk songs, ate hamburgers, and promised to “stick it out” at least until the trial is over. They were arrested about 2:45 a.m.

The next day, City Judge Doyle fined each of the 23 Black and White demonstrators \$10 for loitering in the police station. Five of the 23 demonstrators were given suspended fines when they testified, they were attempting to leave the police station when they were arrested. The other 18 were released on \$30 bond each. The five that received suspended fines were Diamond, Judy Pearlman, Charles McDew, Willie Thomas, and Arthur Shaw. Doyle said, “It’s all right to protest and it’s all right to picket. If you picket in the proper way. This is not the proper way.”³⁷⁸ On August 08, 1961, a group of 12 Black and White demonstrators marched on WLAC-TV’s studios to see Mayor West who was appearing on a news program that was being broadcast at the time. Nash said, “they wanted to protest lack of police protection in connection with their picketing of local supermarkets, and much police brutality.” West was not there when the group arrived because he had taped the program three hours earlier. A car that was used to haul Black picketers to the H.G. Hill store at 16th Ave. South and Grand Avenue was damaged by fire while it was parked near the store. A witness name Louis Miller told police that he saw smoke coming out the car after he saw two White boys get in and out of the car. Horace G. Hill, president of the H.G. Hill store expressed regret over the car burning. On Aug 10, 1961, more protests occurred at the H.G. Hill store located at Sixteenth Avenue South and Grand Avenue. Jerry Cantrell, a White youth was charged with disorderly conduct. Cantrell would post a \$5 bond.

³⁷⁸ “Picket Clash Trial Delayed,” *The Tennessean*, August 08, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111569092/?terms=Picket%20Clash%20Trial%20Delayed&match=1>.

On August 14, 1961, Smith and White wrote a letter to Hill titled *We Must Protest!: An Open Letter to Mr. H.G. Hill, JR.*

Dear Mr. Hill:

We regret that we must resort to this means of communicating with you, but our efforts to reach you privately have been in vain. We attempted to discuss employment matters especially important to the Negro community with a personnel officer of your firm, but he was unwilling to speak with us. Then, in December 1960, we sent a registered special delivery letter to you requesting a conference, but you did not do us the courtesy of a reply. The signed, return receipt indicates clearly that the letter was received. All of this was simply an effort to confer with you privately, without publicity or fanfare. We believe in a Twentieth Century Nashville, a city that can be proud of a progressive march toward the day when all men will be regraded not as things to be manipulated, but as persons with equal dignity under God. Recent violence directed at non-violent pickets at an H.G. Hill store has hurt the dream of an up-to-date Nashville. You have publicly disavowed responsibility for these outbreaks. We must protest. Experience in Nashville has shown conclusively that when management remains unyielding, violence is provoked. Conversely, when management has negotiated, unfortunate incidents have been almost nonexistent.

You have denied responsibility for the unfortunate occurrences of the past ten days. Again we must protest. According to both involved and uninvolved observers, it appears that eggs used to molest pickets at the store at 16th and Grand were supplied free by employees of the H.G. Hill Store. In your newspaper comment you mentioned that your business had not been demonstrably affected. It is not our purpose to hurt your business, or any other. We are seeking to point up to the public the fact that there is a moral issue involved and that is an immoral to support an evil system with our patronage as it is for management to perpetuate such a system. You, Mr. Hill, have the power to curb incidents such as these. Your only communication with us to date has been through remarks which were quoted in the press. You justify your present employment policy by the fact that you hire Negroes as truck drivers and warehouse men. You do not mention the fact that these are nonunion positions which pay below union scales. Further, we do not subscribe to the view that Negro employees should be relegated to only certain background positions. We ask that you consider meeting with us to discuss fair employment practices at H.G. Hill stores. We remain ready and willing to participate in such a conference.

Yours sincerely,
Nashville Christian Leadership Council, 319 8th Ave., North
Kelly Miller Smith, President

Andrew White, Secretary³⁷⁹

³⁷⁹ Kelly Miller Smith Papers, "Nashville Christian Leadership Council" Box 1. August 14, 1961

A month later, on September 08, 1961, a group of 18 Black and White demonstrators picketed the State Capitol. The reason why they picketed at the State Capitol was because they wanted to see Governor Buford Ellington to seek reinstatement of 14 Freedom Riders dismissed from Tennessee A&I University the previous June after their convictions on breach of peace charges at Jackson, Mississippi. The demonstrators carried signs that said “Remember Faubus,” “Academic Freedom; No Hearing Granted,” and “Does Christian Conscience Allow Injustice and Silence.”³⁸⁰ Ten of the demonstrators went to the governor’s office and asked if the governor was there. At first, they did not ask for an appointment but did later. They were told that Ellington would be out of town Monday and had a full schedule Tuesday. They were also told that they would be notified if any of the appointments were canceled. The 10 then formed a double line outside the governor’s office and waited there until they could see him. Ellington would leave his office by a side door where he never met with the demonstrators. As a result, the demonstrators departed about 30 minutes later.

On September 11, 1961, 35 Black and White students peacefully picketed against enrollment at Tennessee A&I University. They demonstrated against the expulsion of 14 Freedom Riders. More than 200 persons, along with city policemen were there to witness what was going on among the demonstrators. City policemen said, “they were on hand in case of violence left when it became obvious the picketing was continuing peacefully.”³⁸¹ The demonstrations also occurred at the home of the university president of Dr. W.S. Davis during

³⁸⁰ “Capitol Pickets Back Riders,” *The Tennessean*, September 09, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111737048/?terms=Capitol%20Pickets%20Back%20Riders&match=1>.

³⁸¹ “Picket Clash Trial Delayed,” *The Tennessean*, August 08, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111569092/?terms=Picket%20Clash%20Trial%20Delayed&match=1>.

that day. A few weeks later, on September 25, 1961, a small group of Blacks and Whites picketed in front the Hermitage Hotel where Ellington was in a conference that day. The demonstrators were protesting for the reinstatement of the 14 Freedom Riders dismissed from Tennessee A & I State University where students had been protesting for weeks.

On September 27, 1961, the annual meeting of the SCLC was held at Clark Memorial Methodist Church. The meeting was a three-day event that occurred from September 27-29. The theme of the meeting was *The Deep South In Social Revolution*. It was hosted by Smith, and guest speakers included Lawson, Farmer, Spottswood Robinson III, Dean Howard University Law School, and William Kunstler, ACLU Lawyer, and author. On the first day of the meeting, included registration and annual board meeting. During the evening, a dinner and a program called *Tribute To The Freedom Riders* took place at the church. A benefit concert was supposed to take place at the Ryman Auditorium featuring Harry Belafonte and The Belafonte Folk Singers but was cancelled after Belafonte was admitted to a New York hospital for a respiratory ailment.³⁸²

The next day, during the morning, a registration occurred following an opening session by Charles Kinsey Steele, who was the 1st Vice President of the SCLC and devotions by Dr. Major Jones. King gave a Formal Opening of the Annual Conference, the annual report was by Wyatt Tee Walker, reports came from Mrs. Dorothy Cotton, who was a member of the SCLC and Lawson gave the keynote address at 11:45 a.m. During the afternoon, Joseph E. Lowery, who was 2nd Vice President of the SCLC gave the afternoon session and Dr. Milton Reid gave devotions. At 2:15 p.m., Farmer spoke at the church, and the title of the speech was called

³⁸² “10 Riders Get Scholarships,” *The Tennessean*, August 08, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112890971/?terms=10%20Riders%20Get%20Scholarships&match=1>.

Nonviolence and Social Revolution. At 3:00 p.m., the workshops occurred including Section I: *The Philosophy and Technique of Nonviolence*. Matthew McCollum was the leader of the session and the consultants included Lawson and Farmer. At 4:15 p.m., Section II: *The Power of the Ballot In Social Revolution* occurred in which Edward T. Graham was the leader and the consultants included W.C. Patton, a member of the NAACP, Hosea Williams, who was apart of the Southeastern Georgia Crusade for Voters, and Harry Blake, Field Secretary of the SCLC. Later in the evening, King gave a speech at the War Memorial Auditorium. King said in his speech, “Did you ever stop and think that Senator James Eastland is elected a senator by only 100,000 votes? The only way we will change that is to go down to Mississippi and knock on doors and be ready to be arrested and be ready to die if necessary to get Negroes registered in Mississippi. We can change our nation. Even the President of the United States respect votes.”³⁸³

On Friday morning, Samuel W. Williams, 3rd Vice President of the SCLC gave the Plenary Session around 9:00 a.m. At 9:15 a.m., the workshops continued with Section III: *Role of Adults and Youth In Social Revolution*. Virgil Wood was the leader and the consultants included Nash, J. Charles Jones, Alice Cobb, and Paul Rilling. Next was Section IV: *Changing Rural/ Values In Social Revolution* where Cotton was leader and the consultant was Septima Clark who was member of the SCLC. Around 10:30 a.m. was the business session that included staff reports, committee reports, greetings, and election of officers. Around 12:15 p.m., D.E. King, pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky gave a conference sermon. At 2:30 p.m., C.O Simpkins, 4th Vice-President of SCLC gave the closing session and S.S. Seay Sr gave

³⁸³ “Negroes Plan South Vote Drive: King,” *Nashville Banner*, September 29, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603262982/?terms=Negroes%20Plan%20South%20Vote%20Drive%3A%20King&match=1>.

the devotions. At 2:45 p.m., Spottswood Robinson gave a plenary session. At 4:00 p.m., the closing business session and adjournment occurred during the meeting.³⁸⁴

During that same day, a meeting called *Lawyers Forum and Seminar* occurred at First Colored Baptist Church. At 10:00 a.m., there were greetings by I.M. Augustine, General Counsel of SCLC. At 10:30 a.m., William Kunstler, a member of the Civil Liberties Union gave a speech titled *Legal Significance of The Freedom Ride Trials To Interstate Travel*. It was a discussion group around 11:30 a.m. At 2:30 p.m., Cuthbert Ormond Simpkins, 4th Vice President of the SCLC gave the afternoon session. Solomon Snowden Seay Sr gave the devotions. At 2:45 p.m., Robinson gave a speech called *The Role of the Civil Rights Commission In Social Revolution*. At 4:00 p.m., the closing business session and adjournment occurred.³⁸⁵

This chapter explained Nashville Black Churches involvement in the Grocery store protests, movie theaters stand-in protests, and the Freedom Rides. The Black Churches in Nashville continued in civil rights events in Nashville after the end of the Nashville Sit-Its in May 1960. After the bombing of Looby's home on April 19th, religious organizations like the United Church Women of Nashville organized a money drive to help rebuild Looby's home and his neighbors' homes that were destroyed by the bomb. The First Colored Baptist Church continued to play an important role in the civil rights events in Nashville from late 1960 to 1961. Demonstrators gathered at the church before going to protest at public accommodations including Trailways Bus Depot, Union Station, Wilson Quick Drug Store, and Moon-McGrath. Nashville Black ministers even got involved with Smith writing a letter to fellow Nashville

³⁸⁴ "Gains For Citizens Cited By Robinson," *Nashville Banner*, September 30, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603263132/?terms=Gains%20For%20Citizens%20Cited%20By%20Robinson&match=1>.

³⁸⁵ "Gains For Citizens Cited by Robinson."

Ministers about protesting what they called discriminatory hiring practices at the H.G. Hill grocery stores.

As the Nashville Open Theater Movement stand-ins' protests were occurring in February 1961, First Colored Baptist Church was the place of refuge where demonstrators returned after their stand-in demonstrations at the movie theaters downtown. An example of this was seen when White youths attacked demonstrators who were returning to the church after demonstrations occurred. As news came back to Nashville on what occurred with the Freedom Riders down in Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama, an emergency meeting took place at First Colored Baptist Church where a decision was made for the NSM to continue the Freedom Rides. During the next couple of days, people like Nash, Lawson, and others would go down to Montgomery and Jackson to take part in the Freedom Rides. The annual SCLC meeting was held at Clark Memorial Methodist Church from September 27-29 where many civil right activists including King, Farmer, and others attended. The next chapter will focus on Nashville Operation Open City, where civil rights activists in Nashville attempted to protest other segregated accommodations in the city from 1961-1964.

Chapter 6: We Shall Not Be Moved! Nashville Black Churches and Operation Open City 1961- 1964.

By late 1961, the public accommodations like lunch counters and movie theaters were desegregated in Nashville. Ministers and students from the NCLC, NSM, and SNCC participated in the Freedom Rides after CORE sponsored Freedom Rides were abandoned following the violence they encountered at Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama. Despite this, other public accommodations were still segregated in the city. During the summer of 1961, conversations by the NCLC and other Nashville groups working in human relations with the view of uniting these groups on a project called “Operation Open City.” Operation Open City was an effort for Nashville to become the first major southern city to end evidence of racial segregation. It also was look for all facilities, businesses, jobs, and other public accommodations to be open to the public. The statement from the NCLC in regard to Operation Open City said, “The object here is to erase the color line in all of Nashville’s facilities and activities as completely as possible. The project is currently under way and already significant breakthroughs have been experienced. The NCLC calls upon the entire community to join in the effort to help the city of Nashville and Davidson County to become the beloved community.”³⁸⁶ This chapter discusses churches involvement in Nashville Operation Open City, where civil rights activists in Nashville attempted to protest other segregated accommodations in the city.

On October 25, 1961, Smith wrote a letter to fellow Nashville ministers where he told them the importance of their participation in Nashville civil rights campaign called “Operation Open City.”:

³⁸⁶ “Toward The Beloved Community: Story of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council, ” Civil Rights Movement Archive, Last Modified August 01, 2023, https://www.crmvet.org/docs/61_nclc.pdf.

Dear Fellow Minister:

The time has come for an all-out effort to make Nashville an open city. By this, we mean that all facilities, businesses, jobs, and everything else should be open to all peoples. We have come a long way but have a long way to go.

The Nashville Christian Leadership Council, The N.A.A.C.P., the Student Central Committee and the Community Conference on Employment Opportunity are working together to bring complete freedom to Nashville. But we know that ministers of our city are interested in this project and we would like to invite you to join with all of these other groups in laying the plans for the final thrust. We would like to have all ministers meeting Wednesday, November 1st, at 11:00am at the Ebenezer Baptist Church, 2624 Morena Street, Reverend N.S. Jones, Pastor Ministers of all denominations are asked to come and help with the plans.

Remember—Our goal is an entirely open city with no racial lines drawn in employment, restaurants, hotels, playgrounds, or anything. We are all involved in making history in Nashville.

We Shall Certainly Expect You!

Yours for the Cause,

Kelly Miller Smith³⁸⁷

On October 27, 1961, Berl L. Bernhard, staff director of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, spoke at the opening session of the 4th annual meeting of the Tennessee Council on Human Relations at Vanderbilt University. During his speech, Bernhard mentioned how the city of Memphis set an example in desegregating its public schools quietly for the entire state of Tennessee. Bernhard said, “No Section of our nation constitutes one entirely homogeneous society. Thus, acceptable solutions for one locale such as this one will not necessarily prove satisfactory in another.”³⁸⁸ Bernhard also said, “the government would much prefer that desegregation in the fields of housing, employment, voting, and schools be initiated in the local

³⁸⁷ Kelly Miller Smith Papers, “Nashville Christian Leadership Council” Box 1. October 25, 1961.

³⁸⁸ James Talley, “Memphis Called Rights Model,” *The Tennessean*. October 26, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112895326/?terms=Memphis%20Called%20Rights%20Model&match=1>.

level”.³⁸⁹ Bernhard complimented Tennessee for its leadership in the area of human rights and argued that segregation would be non-existing in the United States. Bernhard said, “The freedom rides and sit-ins have brought home to the American public this urgency. This protest movement, if it did nothing more, alerted the nation to the need to come directly to grips with the problems of discrimination in this country.”³⁹⁰

A month later, on November 18, 1961, the NCLC sponsored sit-in demonstrations in downtown restaurants in Nashville. Students from Tennessee A&I University and Fisk University attempted to gain service at the coffee shop at the Andrew Jackson Hotel, the Tick Toc Restaurant, the Krystal, Candyland, and the Wilson-Quick Pharmacy. The students were refused service at all establishments. The next day, students went to the Cross Keys Restaurant and the Capitol Park Inn where they were refused service at two of the establishments. Rollins said, “the demonstrations were part of the council’s Operation Open City and other mentioned would be employed.”³⁹¹ A prepared statement by the NCLC said, “efforts have been made to avoid direct action through negotiations with the mayor and the business leaders of the community. These have borne little fruit, therefore we are moved to act.” Smith said, “the present demonstrations would be played by ear.” He also said, “plans called for demonstrations on up till Dec 9.”³⁹²

³⁸⁹ Talley, “Memphis Called Rights Model.”

³⁹⁰ Talley, “Memphis Called Rights Model.”

³⁹¹ “Negroes Sit-in At Restaurants,” *The Tennessean*, November 20, 1961, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112898806/?terms=Negroes%20Sit-in%20At%20Restaurants&match=1>.

³⁹² “*Negroes Sit-in at Restaurants.*”

On November 21, 1961, the NCLC wrote a letter to Nashville clergymen about Operation Open City:

To All Clergymen of Nashville:

The Nashville Christian Leadership Council, together with a number of other local organizations, is presently engaged in a program which is called "Operation Open City". This is an effort to help Nashville become the first major southern city to erase completely, evidences of racial discrimination from its activities. We are confident that this can be done when responsible, fair-minded citizens express this concern. Many negotiations sessions have been held with civic and business leaders to this end. Frequently, we have had the question put to us: "Where do the ministers stand on this?" There are, then, those who recognize the moral and spiritual implication of the struggle and they to their moral and spiritual leaders for support or encouragement. Fortunately, there have been a few religious leaders in the city of Nashville who have expressed an active concern for this crucial problem. The concern of others have not been so clearly indicated. We are engaging in this program with implicit faith in the creative potential of Nashville. Our past experiences have taught us that our city is in the process of maturing and that its citizens can adjust social change.

We urgently request your consideration of the following steps which would be most helpful in leading us into the columns of the beloved community:

1. Use your influence to cause your local church and your denominational and interdenominational enterprise to desegregate in theory and practice. Unfortunately, we still have schools, hospitals and other enterprises which practice racial segregation. Some local churches do not welcome all persons who come to worship.
2. Face the issue squarely when it arises.
3. Encourage the members of your congregation who are in business or other responsible positions in the community to practice merit employment. Most of the civic and business leaders with whom we have conferred have some religious affiliation in Nashville. Encouragement from you would be most meaningful.
4. Encourage free and open discussion of the issue of racial integration.
5. Attend any meetings possible dealing with the problem
6. Inform those more actively engaged in this program of your concern and support.
7. Religious observances sometimes afford the opportunity to lift the thinking of the people on this problem. You may want to take advantage of these opportunities

8. Give us the benefit of any suggestions you may have on this matter.

As your fellow members of the Nashville religious community, we shall greatly appreciate your careful consideration of these proposals.

Your sincerely
 Nashville Christian Leadership Council
 Kelly Miller Smith, President
 Andrew White, Secretary³⁹³

A month later, On December 04, 1961, Smith gave a speech where he discussed Operation Open City at Fourteen Avenue Baptist Church located at 2501 Buchanan Street at around 7:30 p.m. Smith discussed plans that the NCLC and other groups sponsoring the project developed in hope to erase racial segregation in restaurants and employment.³⁹⁴ A month later, On January 06, 1962, a small group of Black and White students, including Lewis and Susan Wilbur, had sit-in demonstrations in front of the Wilson-Quick Pharmacy. As the demonstration was occurring, a Wilson-Quick Pharmacy employee threw a Black student out of the store. A Wilson-Quick Pharmacy official attempted to talk to the students as the demonstrations were occurring.

On January 09, 1962, Smith and White wrote a letter about the 5th Anniversary of the NCLC at First Colored Baptist Church on January 17, 1962:

Dear Friend of Freedom:

The Nashville Christian Leadership Council will celebrate its 5th Anniversary Observance January 17, 1962, 7:30pm at the First Baptist Church, 319 Eighth Avenue, North. Dr. William G. Anderson, the head of the Albany, Georgia Movement and who appeared on "Meet The Press," will be our guest speaker. We invite you to attend our 5th Anniversary and urge you to bring along your friends. May we express our deepest

³⁹³ Kelly Miller Smith Papers, "Nashville Christian Leadership Council" Box 1. November 21, 1961.

³⁹⁴ Kelly Miller Smith Papers, "Nashville Christian Leadership Council" Box 1. December 05, 1961.

appreciation for your support of the cause of freedom through the Nashville Christian Leadership Council. Your considerateness of this work is valued more than words can express. As you perhaps know, NCLC has no regular source of income except interested friends like yourself and others who recognize the real need for an organization such as ours.

During the year of 1962, we handled scopes of court cases, contacted many public officials and businessmen and prepared and distributed thousands of pieces of literature for the cause of freedom. On occasion, we have aided students who have given much of their school time for freedom, and have even paid hospital bills for those injured in the struggle for human rights. This is only a part of our activities. Complete reports are being prepared by our secretary for distribution. Let me hasten to state that NCLC activities for the year just closed have been greatly enhanced by you and many others like you.

Again we wish to thank you for the pledge made to the Nashville Christian Leadership Council which is as follows:

Total Pledge-----
 Amount Paid-----
 Balance-----

Method of Payments _____

Because our present responsibilities are greater than our resources, we would greatly help and be deeply grateful if you would contribute as much of your pledge balance as possible at the anniversary observance January 17th.

We sincerely thank you and look to see you at the anniversary celebration.

Yours sincerely
 Kelly Miller Smith, President
 Andrew White, Secretary.³⁹⁵

On January 13, 1962, the sit-ins demonstrations continued at Wilson-Quick Pharmacy among a small group of Black and White students. Violence would break out on this day, and Lewis had to break up a fight between Black and White students and Wilson-Quick Pharmacy employees. One female Black student would get injured in the fight, and she had to be put on a stretcher and sent to the hospital. On January 17, 1962, the NCLC held their anniversary celebration at First Colored Baptist Church. In the next

³⁹⁵ Kelly Miller Smith Papers, "Nashville Christian Leadership Council" Box 1. January 09, 1962.

coming weeks, ministers and church members would donate money for the NCLC Operation Open City campaign. Reverend. F.M. Corder from Mt. Gilead Baptist Church in Nashville donated \$20. Lawson, Reverend Will D. Campbell, Reverend G.W. Parker, and Reverend McCoy Ransom would donate \$5. Reverend J.E. Turner of Patterson Memorial Melodist Church in Nashville donated \$11.21. Reverend L.H. Woolfolk of Spruce Street Baptist Church donated \$14.25, and Community Service Club #3 donated \$10.00.³⁹⁶

On Monday, January 29, 1962, Abernathy spoke at a fourth annual meeting hosted by the NCLC at Mount Olive Baptist Church located at 3411 Albion Street. During his speech, Abernathy said, “Black supremacy would be just as great a tragedy for America as White supremacy is.”³⁹⁷ Abernathy would lash out on Black nationalist movements despite mentioning any by name. Abernathy said, “He has no wish to be superior to the white man but merely want his rights the same as anybody else.” Around 300 people, who were mostly Blacks attended the meeting at Mount Olive Baptist Church. Lawson also spoke at the meeting. New NCLC officers were installed during the meeting at the church. This included Smith, president; Braden, executive vice president; Lawson, first vice president; Rollins, second vice president; White, secretary; and Reverend Grady Donald, chaplain.

³⁹⁶ Kelly Miller Smith Papers, “Nashville Christian Leadership Council” Box 1. January 17, 1962.

³⁹⁷ “Abernathy Says Rights Sole Aim,” *The Tennessean*, January 30, 1962, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111849881/?terms=Abernathy%20Says%20Rights%20Sole%20Aim&match=1>.

Two days later, on February 01, 1962, protest demonstrations occurred at the Andrew Jackson Hotel downtown where around 24 Black male students including Lewis sat down in the hotel's lobby after a Black student demonstrator who attempted to register at the hotel was refused. Several White men attending the party shouted insults at the students. One threw an ice cube, and another threw a beer bottle that hit a student's shoulder. Another man tossed a drink at the students over the railing to the lobby. The students would remain there until four city policemen arrived at the hotel around 7:40 p.m. and stayed there until all the students left the hotel. During that same day, ten female students, eight Black and two White, attempted to register at the downtown Hermitage Hotel but they were refused.³⁹⁸

A month later, on March 04, 1962, the NCLC hosted a fundraising rally at First Colored Baptist Church for the Operation Open City campaign. Actor Sidney Poitier made an appearance at the rally and spoke at the church. Poitier said, "I was asked to speak a word of encouragement to you. But it would be ambiguous of me to say a word of encouragement to you. Instead, I want to say thank you for the work you have done and to ask that you give me some encouragement to take to my Northern friends who sometimes are too complacent and overlook the insidious segregation of the North because the spotlight is on the South."³⁹⁹ Poitier came to Nashville to take an ailing cousin named Dr. Jackson Burnside, Meharry Medical College graduate to Hubbard

³⁹⁸ "Negroes Try Entry Into Hotels Here," *The Tennessean*, February 03, 1962, [https://www.newspapers.com/image/111332891/?terms=.](https://www.newspapers.com/image/111332891/?terms=)

³⁹⁹ "Poitier Asks NCLC For Encouragement," *The Tennessean*, March 05, 1962, [https://www.newspapers.com/image/112070619/?terms=Poitier%20Asks%20NCLC%20For%20Encouragement&match=1.](https://www.newspapers.com/image/112070619/?terms=Poitier%20Asks%20NCLC%20For%20Encouragement&match=1)

Hospital for treatment of an undisclosed ailment. Dr. Matthew Walker Sr was Meharry department of surgery chairman and Burnside physician along with being chairman of the NCLC fundraising money campaign. Walker would invite Poitier to the meeting and introduce him when he arrived near the end of the program to speak.



Figure 6.1 Actor Sidney Poitier, right, gets ready to speak before the Nashville Christian Leadership Council at First Baptist Church on Eighth Ave. N. March 4, 1962. The meeting was held to kick off a fund-raising drive to finance the organization's desegregation movement.

Walker also spoke at the meeting where he said, “The citizens of Nashville are aware of the work of the NCLC and they will want to share in a tangible way.”⁴⁰¹ Lewis said, “the aim is to make desegregation complete in Nashville. More than concern on the

⁴⁰⁰ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

⁴⁰¹ “NCLC Hears Appeal From Sidney Poitier,” *Nashville Banner*, March 05, 1962, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/603542902/?terms=NCLC%20Hears%20Appeal%20From%20Sidney%20Poitier&match=1>.

part of the people in the community is needed.”⁴⁰² Lewis continued, “We must tell the mayor, City council and the Chamber of Commerce that we mean business.” Smith spoke and said, “that among number of reasons for concern here are segregated hospitals which would be of far greater to the community of they administered to the sick on the basis of their medical needs rather than the color of the skin. This was especially true in the case of Baptist Hospital and St. Thomas Catholic Hospital whose polices exclude the admission of Negroes. It is particularly disappointing hospital sponsored by religious organizations have not taken the step to correct this grievous wrong.”⁴⁰³

A month later, on April 15, 1962, Jackie Robinson spoke at the Ryman Auditorium where he told the audience, “The Negro’s vote is his greatest weapon for civil rights.”⁴⁰⁴ Robinson said, “The vote is our most priceless possession. In practically every election, you and I are the balance of power. Vote for those who will help you. Buy where you can work.” Robinson criticized President Kennedy for betraying Blacks in the field of public housing. Robinson said, “During the campaign, Senator Kennedy attacked President Eisenhower for not signing a housing bill. Now President Kennedy says he will sign a housing bill when it will be for the good for the people. He will sign it when the white people want it. Negroes allowed themselves to be charmed by a phone call by Mrs. Martin Luther King.” Despite Robinson’s claim he campaigned for Richard Nixon during the 1960 United States Presidential Election, he denied being a republican. Robinson

⁴⁰² “Poitier Asks NCLC For Encouragement.”

⁴⁰³ “Poitier Asks NCLC For Encouragement.”

⁴⁰⁴ “Robinson Says Vote Best Weapon,” *The Tennessean*, April 16, 1962, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111793295/?terms=Robinson%20Says%20Vote%20Best%20Weapon&match=1>.

said, “I am no more a Republican than you are. And I know this a Democratic stronghold. I vote for the man who will do the most good for Negroes.”⁴⁰⁵ Robinson continued, “Negro Americans are demanding that the Constitution written for all the people. It is not how far we have come out how far we have to go that counts.” He said, “he intends to stay in the civil rights fight until the most underprivileged Negro in the deepest part of the Deep South has equal opportunities.”⁴⁰⁶

Avon N. Williams Jr who spoke said, “Negroes have themselves to blame for many of their problems. They can do something about it.” Williams would tell the audience that the Davidson County group and the Tennessee Voters Council prepared questions which all candidates for governor would be asked. He said, “The candidate giving the most satisfactory answers will get the support of the Negro groups.”⁴⁰⁷ Williams continued, “It is time for Negroes to stop crying the blues and start learning about working citizenship. It is not enough to rely on a few people to eliminate legal barriers. It is time for a whole lot of people to work together to get something for our people. Why do we have to go ask some liberal person from another race to help us? Why we must we depend on two or three persons of our race.”⁴⁰⁸ Williams said that the questionnaires from candidates would be kept on record. Williams also said “The winners will be reminded: You promised us this. Why haven’t you kept your promise.” Williams urged an intensive campaign to get Blacks to vote and vote together. Four Tennessee

⁴⁰⁵ “Robinson Says Vote Best Weapon.”

⁴⁰⁶ “Robinson Says Vote Best Weapon.”

⁴⁰⁷ “Robinson Says Vote Best Weapon.”

⁴⁰⁸ “Robinson Says Vote Best Weapon.”

governor candidates for the 1962 Tennessee gubernatorial election were at the meeting, including Frank Clement, William Farris, Peter Rudolph “Rudy” Olgiati, and Carl Fry. West would give Robinson key to the city of Nashville that made him an honorary citizen doing the meeting.

A month later, on May 14, 1962, the Nashville branch of the NAACP hosted a Freedom Fund rally that they sponsored at the Fisk University gymnasium. Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the NAACP spoke at the meeting. Looby introduced Wilkins before he spoke. During his speech, Wilkins said, “Psychologically, Negroes have broken the back of segregation.”⁴⁰⁹ Wilkins would continue saying, “It’s no longer as a philosophy and it’s rapidly going out as a practice.”⁴¹⁰ Freedom is indivisible, White people can’t get theirs until we get ours.” Wilkins mentioned the United States Senate was “a club where no member wants to offend another member. The NAACP planned another major offensive against the filibuster rule next January. But the basic difficulty in the overall race relations situation is the stubborn refusal of a strategic white element in the Southern states to regard the Negro as a citizen, entitled to enjoy the rights of citizenship.” On May 17, 1962, King came to Nashville and spoke before a press conference where he criticized President Kennedy. King said, “He did not raise his voice to get the administration's literacy test bill passed in the Senate.”⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ “Segregation Broken: Wilkins,” *The Tennessean*, May 15, 1962, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112038873/?terms=Segregation%20Broken%3A%20Wilkins&match=1>.

⁴¹⁰ “Segregation Broken: Wilkins.”

⁴¹¹ “Segregation Broken: Wilkins.”

A few months later, on November 08, 1962, Lewis, and representatives of the NCLC and SNCC picketed to call for an end of segregation in places of public accommodation and demonstrated during Nashville City Council meeting on that day. Lewis said, “He and seven others were asking a public accommodations ordinance banning segregation in public places.”⁴¹² Lewis also said, “The protest was the first of a planned renewal of sit-in demonstrations. We plan to renew our attempts to desegregate the restaurants and places of public accommodation, and this is beginning of a larger movement.”⁴¹³ Lewis mentioned the NCLC had sent questionnaires to all candidates for the Metropolitan council asking if they would support such an ordinance. Lewis said, “The majority of those who answered us said they would support such an ordinance.”⁴¹⁴ Members of the council were unaware the demonstrations were occurring until late in the meeting. Pickets came into the council chamber demonstrations that showcase of Democracy and supported a Public Accommodations Ordinance. The Pickets made no disturbance and soon left the chamber. The council would approve the sale of a \$ 6.75 million combined bond issue to Halsey, Stuart, and Co., Inc., for a net interest rate of 2.73325 percent.

A few weeks later, on November 24, 1962, student demonstrators marched on the city police station, protesting the arrest of a member of their group. About 50 city

⁴¹² Bill Kovach, “Council Votes \$6.75 Million Bond Issues,” *The Tennessean*, November 09, 1962, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113002761/?terms=Council%20Votes%20%246.75%20Million%20Bond%20Issues&match=1>.

⁴¹³ “Council Votes \$6.75 Million Bond Issues.”

⁴¹⁴ “Council Votes \$6.75 Million Bond Issues.”

policemen under the direction of Inap Raymon Marler and Lt. C.P. Lynch were stationed in the downtown area where they were in position for whatever incidents would occur. During that same day, sit-in demonstrations at seven downtown restaurants caused a series of skirmishes which drew hundreds of spectators during a two-hour period. Two Wilson-Quick Pharmacy employees stood inside the double glass doors and blocked demonstrators from entering. Two young demonstrators were arrested at the Wilson-Quick Pharmacy. Those two demonstrators named Robert Talbert, a Black student from Fisk University and Jerry Wayne Fitzgerald, a White demonstrator was both arrested for disorderly conduct. Both were arrested by Sergeant Robert L. Tittsworth and other policemen. Bystanders witnessed what occurred. Fitzgerald who was had been called down numerous times by Tittsworth and other policemen earlier in the afternoon after arguing with the pickets, he started punching Talbert with his fists after Talbert tried to enter Wilson-Quick Pharmacy. Fitzgerald and Talbert were separated by Tittsworth and other policemen. Despite being attacked, Talbert did not hit back. Both were sent to jail. The sit-in demonstrators also attempted to get served at The Simple Simon on Church Street, The Krystal on Church Street, and the YMCA on Seventh Avenue, North but were unsuccessful. John Chiles, owner of the Cross Keys, stood at the door and refused to allow demonstrators that where compose of 25 students that included 8 White students to enter. Chiles told a newsman, "I feel they are infringing on my right to operate a private business as I see fit."⁴¹⁵ After two hours of protest, the demonstrators return to First Colored Baptist Church.

⁴¹⁵ Eugene Dietz, "Sit-in Attempts Bring 3 Arrests," *The Tennessean*, November 25, 1962, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112928842/?terms=Sit-in%20Attempts%20Bring%203%20Arrests&match=1>.

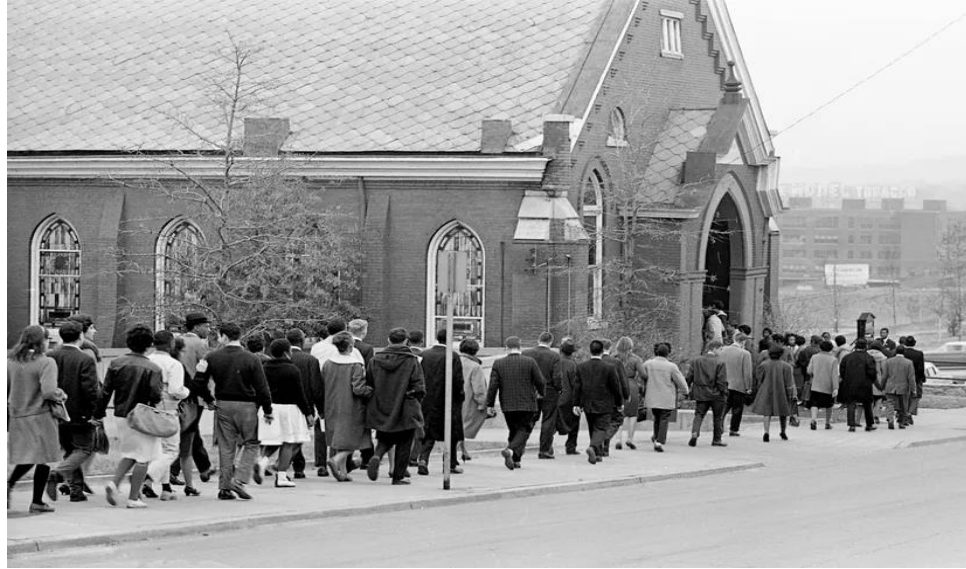


Figure 6.2 The group of sit-in demonstrators returns to their home base Nov. 24, 1962, the First Baptist Church, after two-hour sit ins at different locals on Church Street downtown Nashville.

⁴¹⁶ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.



Figure 6.3 The group of sit-in demonstrators returns to their home base Nov. 24, 1962, the First Baptist Church, after two-hour sit ins at different locals on Church Street downtown Nashville.

On November 26, 1962, Fitzgerald did not appear in court for trial and forfeited his \$25 cash bond. Talbert was represented by attorneys Looby and Williams. John J. Hollins, assistant city attorney, asked for the case to be continued, but Doyle overruled the motion. Doyle said, “So far, I haven’t heard that this boy Talbert did anything.”⁴¹⁸ Doyle then would dismiss the charge against Talbert. During that same day, the Nashville White Citizens Council, a White

⁴¹⁷ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

⁴¹⁸ “Negro Freed In Sit-In Case,” *The Tennessean*, November 27, 1962, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112930320/?terms=Negro%20Freed%20In%20Sit-In%20Case&match=1>.

segregationist group headed by Lewis Frazer, issued a statement in support of the restaurant owners that said:

“The Nashville Citizens Council and the white population of Davidson County stand behind the restaurant owners of Nashville in their defense of property rights, freedom of choice, and social separation of races. The Sit-In Demonstrations in our community (Saturday) were precipitated by misguided Negro youths, white trash beatniks, black radical Marxists, and Communists. The Nashville Christian Leadership Conference, the National Student Non-Violent Committee, and the NAACP, which were all responsible for these agitations, deserve the contempt and ostracism of every thoughtful Nashville Citizen.”⁴¹⁹

On December 01, 1962, demonstrations occurred at Herschel’s Tic Toc and B&W Cafeteria restaurant downtown. A White Fisk University student named Jan Emmert and Herschel’s Tic Toc restaurant employee named Bobby Gene Taylor were arrested. Taylor shoved Emmert after he pressed against the front door of the Herschel’s Tic Toc restaurant. Despite Taylor working at another restaurant nearby, he was there to help the Herschel’s Tic Toc employees to block the door preventing any demonstrators from coming in. Police made the move to arrest the demonstrators. Lewis said, “18 persons tried unsuccessfully get served at the Tic Toc, the nearby Krystal and B&W Cafeteria.”⁴²⁰ Lewis also said that a White minister named the Rev. James Rawlings, field secretary for,

⁴¹⁹ “Negro Freed In Sit-In Case.”

⁴²⁰ “2 Arrested In Sit-Ins,” *The Tennessean*, December 02, 1962, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112926294/?terms=2%20Arrested%20In%20Sit-Ins&match=1>.

the Presbyterian Church, took part in the demonstrations. He also mentioned most of the demonstrators came from Fisk University and Tennessee A&I University.

The next day, the demonstrations continued, when three students who were arrested including Lewis, Lester Gene McKinnie, and Frederick Leonard. The protests occurred at Herschel's Tic Toc and Cross Keys restaurants. They attempted to go to Cross Keys restaurant to sit-in but were turned away. Next, they would go to Herschel's Tic Toc restaurant where they were met at the door by a restaurant employee named Johnny Rebel, who blocked the entrance and said: "We don't serve Niggers here and you ain't going to get inside."⁴²¹ McKinnie and Leonard attempted to get inside the restaurant but were driven out when Rebel turned a fire extinguisher on them. When the police arrived, they were told by Sergeant George Griffin to "move away from the door." The students walked up and down the street in front of Herschel Tic Toc for 20 minutes as police officers looked on. Leonard, Lewis, and McKinnie placed themselves against the front door and refused to move away. Officers moved in and arrested the three men. All would be released by \$5 bond each from jail.

On December 08, 1962, demonstrations continue at Herschel's Tic Toc and B&W Restaurants. Four Whites named Berry Robert Clinard, David Wayne West, and two juveniles who were heckling the student demonstrators who were arrested for disorderly conduct and released on \$5 bond. The student demonstrators who included 13 who were mostly Black were heading back to First Colored Baptist Church after two-hour of demonstrations. Lewis said, "The ones arrested were part of a crowd of perhaps 50 or 60

⁴²¹ "3 More Seized In Sit-in Effort," *The Tennessean*, December 03, 1962, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112926474/?terms=3%20More%20Seized%20In%20Sit-in%20Effort&match=1>.

who began following us near Capitol Boulevard and Union Street.” Lewis said, “the mob had been elbowing the marchers, and had us names. There were five women and eight men in the sit-in demonstration.”⁴²² Students from Vanderbilt, Fisk, and Tennessee A&I universities took part. One Vanderbilt faculty member Dr. David Kotelchuck, assistant professor of physics took part in the demonstrations. A restaurant employee named Gene Taylor attempted to swing at Kotelchuck during a demonstration in front of the Tic Toc Restaurant.

The demonstrators attempted to eat at the B&W Cafeteria and Herschel’s Tic Toc, but could not get inside the doors, which were blocked by the employees. Sergeant E.F. Underwood was in charge of the policemen who made the arrests of the four Whites who were hackling the protestors. Underwood said, “We kept the crowds moving. That is the way to avoid serious trouble in these things.”⁴²³ Lewis said that there was quite a bit of elbowing and shoving at the Tic Toc and that someone dropped a paper bag filled with water from an upper floor onto the heads of the students trying to get inside the restaurant. The demonstrations on that day marked the third consecutive Saturday that students had tried to desegregate downtown restaurants.

On December 28, 1962, King made an appearance in the Underwood Auditorium on the University of Vanderbilt Law School campus. King was the keynote speaker there to open a three-day conference on racial problems in the United States sponsored by the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen and the Southern Regional Council. King said, “That

⁴²² “Sit-in Hecklers Arrested Here,” *The Tennessean*. December 09, 1962, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112927886/?terms=Sit-in%20Hecklers%20Arrested%20Here&match=1>.

⁴²³ “Sit-in Hecklers Arrested Here.”

the price America will pay if it refuses to deal with the problems of racial discrimination is destruction of our democracy.”⁴²⁴ King continued on to say, “The clock of destiny is ticking out. The bells of history definitely are tolling an end to segregation.”⁴²⁵ He continued “Our course would be much easier if our leaders would stand up and say publicly; We must obey the mandates of the court because they are right.” King mentioned the integration crises that was occurring in Oxford, Mississippi in regard to James Meredith and his attempt to integrate the University of Mississippi. King said, “Political leaders urged acceptance of court decrees because they are law. Rather than this, they should tell the mobsters of Mississippi, not only has the court issued an order, but James Meredith is your brother. Racial discrimination is this nation’s greatest moral dilemma, and its resolution will determine our moral health as individuals, our cultural health as a region, and our political health as a region, and our political health as a nation.” King continued, “It is to work toward the achievement of the democratic dream of integration. At present, we are elbow to elbow physically, but separated, as far as the heart is concerned.”⁴²⁶ King predicted that desegregation will, “be reality in most of the South in less than 10 years.” Desegregation, however, is only the means to the end Negroes are seeking, “which is complete integration.”

⁴²⁴ Frank Ritter, “King Says Race Hate Could Kill Democracy,” *The Tennessean*. December 29, 1962, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112928750/?terms=King%20Says%20Race%20Hate%20Could%20Kill%20Democracy&match=1>.

⁴²⁵ “King Says Race Hate Could Kill Demoncracy.”

⁴²⁶ “King Says Race Hate Could Kill Demoncracy.”

Two months later, on February 24, 1963, a group of 60 demonstrators both Black and White gathered at First Colored Baptist Church. The NCLC instructed demonstrators for their protest at Nashville downtown YMCA against its segregation policies. The 60 demonstrators marched from First Colored Baptist Church to the downtown YMCA. Smith read a statement which said: “The YMCA is not alone in practicing segregation. But it was selected for this demonstration because it symbolizes the fact that segregation still dominates the scene in downtown Nashville.”⁴²⁷ Charles M. Gray, manager of YMCA said, “the YMCA board of directors decided last October on a policy of segregation.” He added, “to my knowledge, the board has not been contacted since last fall about possible negotiations.” Rollins said, “Since 1960, when the movement reached its peak, interest in protest demonstrations seems to have declined. We wanted to show that there still is a substantial adult leadership interested and active in these matters today.”⁴²⁸ The group also consisted of men, women, and children. The group would sing hymns and hear prayers from several of the demonstration’s leaders. After 20 minutes of demonstrations and protest, they would disperse and walked back to First Colored Baptist Church.

A month later, on March 04, 1963, sixteen demonstrators including a 61-year-old minister named William David Jones, would stage the largest assault on Nashville segregation since 1960 when the Nashville Sit-Ins occurred. The demonstrators would hold a large-scale sit-in at the Cross Keys Restaurant around 6:30 p.m., at the peak of early evening rush hour when crowds were heaviest. The police arrived almost

⁴²⁷ “60 Marchers Urge YMCA To Integrate,” *The Tennessean*. February 25, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112900489/?terms=60%20Marchers%20Urge%20YMCA%20To%20Integrate&match=1>.

⁴²⁸ “60 Marchers Urge YMCA To Integrate.”

immediately after the demonstrators had entered the restaurant and ordered them to leave. Sergeant Morgan Smith told the demonstrators, “You can either walk out of here like ladies and gentlemen or we will drag you out. When they refused, Smith and his eight policemen arrested the demonstrators.”⁴²⁹ Restaurant officials said, “The students may demonstrate in front of the place as long they wish just so they don’t block the door.” The patrolmen moved in on the demonstrators and carried or dragged them feet first from the Cross Keys Restaurant into the street. The Sit-inners were then loaded into waiting paddy wagons and taken to jail.

The sixteen demonstrators who were arrested included Jones, Lewis, McKennie Henderson Little, Douglas Frazier, Paul Edward Brooks, Rigins Renal Earls Jr, Frederick Leonard, Melvin Milus Sutton, George LeRoy Cumberbatch, Vencen Horsely, Elizabeth Ellan Harbor, Betty Jana Rush, Varolyn Delores Ward, Yolande Aleta Jacobs, and Michele Lenore Paul. Cross Keys Restaurant manager John G. Chiles Jr was asked about the demonstration and said, “They wanted to eat, we didn’t want them to. That’s all the statement I want to make.”⁴³⁰ Lewis would later mentioned that he and the other demonstrators first went to the downtown YMCA and asked be served at the lunch counter before going to Cross Keys Restaurant that day. Lewis said, “The lady manager of the cafeteria said she had been given orders to serve us so we were able to eat there.” Lewis continued to say, “I think their policy had been changed.” Despite Lewis’ claim, the YMCA said that there had been no official policy change.

⁴²⁹ “16 Sit-Inners Jailed Here,” *The Tennessean*, March 05, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112896558/?terms=16%20Sit-inners%20Jailed%20Here&match=1>.

⁴³⁰ “16 Sit-Inners Jailed Here.”

On March 19, 1963, the NCLC outlined plans at a mass meeting of Mount Zion Baptist Church for a full-scale assault on segregation in Nashville. Around 500 people attended the meeting at the church. They were told by Katherine Jones, executive director of the Tennessean Council on Human Relations: “The question is whether we are going to settle for creeping tokenism in race relations or let it be known what we really want which is first-class citizenship.”⁴³¹ Several other leaders spoke at the church including Rollins where he said, “The plan of action recommend increased sit-in activity and called for kneel-in demonstrations at local churches, freedom marches, mass prayer meetings, and conferences with public officials.” Rollins continued, “If these measures fail to end discriminatory practices. Then we will ask for a total and full-scale economic boycott.”⁴³²

The proposals by the NCLC at the meeting hoped to bring about the largest organized protest against segregation in Nashville since the movements of desegregation in the city that occurred in 1960 and 1961 when the downtown department store lunch counters and movie theaters were desegregated. The meeting at Mount Zion Baptist Church was also to called to discuss the recent trial and conviction of the eight Black demonstrators on conspiracy charges from the B&W Cafeteria sit-in demonstrations. Smith said, “That mass meetings will be held each week so that leaders may be informed of progress in the current segregation protest movement.”⁴³³ Rollins outlined several steps to be taken by the NCLC in the coming weeks of the movement. This included:

⁴³¹ Frank Ritter, “Negroes Plan All-Out Drive,” *The Tennessean*, March 20, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112900357/>.

⁴³² “Negroes Plan All-Out Drive,”

⁴³³ “Negroes Plan All-Out Drive,”

1. Forming of a committee to meet with public officials, including the outgoing and incoming mayors, the Chamber of Commerce, newspaper editor's restaurant owners and the leaders of all religious bodies in Nashville.
2. Putting pressure on public officials, especially the district attorney general and law enforcement officials protesting the handling of sit-in demonstrations.
3. Initiating a "drop-in" program whereby housewives and ordinary citizens would attempt to eat at downtown restaurants which refuse service to Negroes. These people would not seek to be arrested but would request to see the manager of the restaurant to register protesting.
4. Organizing mass freedom marches; the first to be held next Saturday, March 23 in the Jefferson Street area.
5. Using kneel-ins to stir church leaders from their complacency regarding race questions.

On March 23, 1963, on what will be known on that day as "the Freedom March", demonstrations continued when 85 demonstrators staged a march in the afternoon through the downtown area. The purpose of the march was to protest racial discrimination in Nashville. The demonstrators, who consisted of mostly university students but also included several small children and severely elderly people, were led by Lewis. They marched in a long, orderly file through the crowded downtown streets, singing hymns and distributing leaflets as they went. According to Lewis, the group was pelted with eggs by several White youths who passed in an automobile near 18th Avenue, North, and Jefferson Street. Several of the demonstrators later attempted to enter Wilson-

Quick Pharmacy. Two women clerks held the door and refused them entrance. The students, who carried signs and placards, moved on when a crowd began to gather.⁴³⁴

The “freedom march” began about 1:30 p.m. near Tennessee A&I University. The group marched down Jefferson Street to Eighth Avenue, North, and then marched to the downtown area. Several people joined the group along the way. Smith said, “the freedom march was designed to empathize that the current movement is a people cause and not just a leader’s cause.” Smith continued, “Everyone must join in the protest against segregation before we can clean up Nashville and make it a city without bias.”⁴³⁵ The demonstrators marched all through the downtown area and stopped in front of several places including B&W Cafeteria, Cross Keys Restaurant, the Krystal, Tic Toc Restaurant, and Wilson Quick Drug Store. Some of the signs which the demonstrations carried read: “Segregation and Democracy Don’t Mix”; “Make Nashville Great, desegregate”; “Does Brotherhood Include Segregation?”; “Sacrifice for Freedom, Christ Did”; and “We Want Justice to Come to Nashville”; and “Father, Forgive Judge Draper. “The placard “Father, Forgive Judge Draper” which referred to Judge John L. Draper was in reference to the recent trial and conviction of eight sit-in demonstrators. Draper meted out 90-day workhouse terms and \$50 fines to the eight.

On March 27, 1963, a meeting occurred at Gay-Lea Christian Church located at 2201 Osage Street where more than 400 Nashville Blacks attended the meeting organized

⁴³⁴ “NCLC Invites Metro Aides,” *The Tennessean*, March 23, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112901920/?terms=NCLC%20Invites%20Metro%20Aides&match=1>.

⁴³⁵ Frank Ritter, “Orderly March Protests Bias,” *The Tennessean*, March 24, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112901926/?terms=Orderly%20March%20Protests%20Bias&match=1>.

by the NCLC. The NCLC decided during the meeting the best way to protest segregation was for “a complete economic withdrawal” until situation in Nashville improved. The NCLC also voted unanimously to boycott all of Nashville downtown department stores and all Nashville area shopping centers. Smith said, “The boycott will remain in effect until we get all the forces in the city concerned with our problem.”⁴³⁶ Smith added, “We are asking that the Negro community not buy goods from these places until positive steps are taken to make Nashville an open city until every vestige of segregation is removed.”⁴³⁷ Reverend J.L. Campbell, pastor of Pilgrim Emanuel Baptist Church, made the recommendation for an immediate economic withdrawal after Smith discussed the issue. The NCLC announced that another “freedom march” would occur during the week.

On March 30, 1963, a second “freedom march” occurred when demonstrators marched through the downtown area to picket places of business which practice racial discrimination. Around 60 demonstrators participated in the march which mostly consisted of university students. Their march started at Tennessee A&I University then proceeded to 17th Avenue, North, to Charlotte Avenue and down Charlotte into the business district. The demonstrators would carry signs which referred to the NCLC attempt to organize an effective boycott of the downtown stores and the suburban shopping centers. Some of the signs read: “Dignity Before Bargains.” “Don’t Shop Downtown,” “Don’t Buy Discrimination,” “End State Supported Segregation,” and “Full

⁴³⁶ Frank Ritter, “Negroes Push Boycott Plan,” *The Tennessean*, March 27, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112903677/?terms=Negroes%20Push%20Boycott%20Plan&match=1>.

⁴³⁷ Ritter, “Negroes Push Boycott Plan.”

Employment Opportunities.”⁴³⁸ The group would march all the way downtown where they stopped in front of the B&W Cafeteria, Cross Keys, Wilson-Quick Pharmacy, Harvey’s, and Cain Sloan’s. Several of the place’s marchers walked in a circle before the business.

On April 09, 1963, the NCLC held a mass meeting where Smith urged Nashville Blacks, “Keep your money in your pockets until we gain total and complete freedom.”⁴³⁹ Smith told people in the meeting to protest racial discrimination. Smith continued to say, “Indications are strong that the economic boycott launched several weeks ago by the council is beginning to have its effect. And it will continue because the battle against segregation is far from over.” Dr. Vivian Henderson spoke at the meeting where he said, “Flow of the applicants in the field of Negro employment does not match their opportunities.” Henderson continued to say, “Employment is still the No. 1 problem here. The most important thing is for us to remove from our thinking the antiquated assumption that certain jobs are not open. The Negro in the South must proceed on the theory that all jobs are open.”⁴⁴⁰

Around this same time, the Birmingham Campaign was occurring in Birmingham, Alabama. The Birmingham Campaign was a movement led by the SCLC and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) that sought to bring national

⁴³⁸ “Integrationists March Quietly,” *The Tennessean*, March 31, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112905439/?terms=Integrationists%20March%20Quietly&match=1>.

⁴³⁹ “NCLC Pushes Store Boycott,” *The Tennessean*, April 10, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112903710/?terms=NCLC%20Pushes%20Store%20Boycott&match=1>.

⁴⁴⁰ “NCLC Pushes Store Boycott.”

attention to the efforts of local Black leaders to desegregate public facilities in Birmingham, Alabama. The campaign was led by King, Bevel, and others. The goal of the campaign was to attack the city's segregation system by putting pressure on Birmingham's merchants during the Easter season, the second biggest shopping season of the year. On April 03, 1963, the campaign was launched with mass meetings, lunch counter sit-ins, a march on city hall, and a boycott of downtown merchants. The campaign expanded to kneel-ins at churches, sit-ins at the library, and a march on the county courthouse to register voters. On April 10, 1963, the city government obtained a state court injunction against the protests. After debate, campaign leaders decided to disobey the court order. On Good Friday, April 12, 1963, King was arrested in Birmingham after violating the anti-protest injunction and was placed in solitary confinement. During that same day, an open letter statement was published by eight White Birmingham clergymen called *A Call for Unity* condemning the protests. This would lead King writing his *Letter From a Birmingham Jail*, in response to their open letter a couple of days later.⁴⁴¹

Back in Nashville, on April 13, 1963, an effigy of King was found hanging at Metropolitan Nashville Police Headquarters. The effigy of King was first found hanging on the railroad overpass on Murfreesboro Road the previous day. Metropolitan police officers were summoned, and the dummy cut down and taken to the police headquarters. Sergeant Joe Casey said, "The thing was brought in by two policemen. How it came to be hanging in the rear of the headquarters, I don't know. It was put in the dumpster to be

⁴⁴¹ Samuel Momodu, "The Birmingham Campaign," (1963)," Blackpast.org, Last Modified August 31,2016. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/birmingham-campaign-1963/>.

thrown away.” Police Chief Hubert Kemp said, “It was just somebody’s idea of prank. That any member of the police department who might have anything to do with it will be reprimanded.” The words ‘Martin Luther King’ were printed on the front of the dummy in large black letters. One employee at the police station said he first noticed the effigy dummy at 3:30pm and was still hanging in the evening around 8:30pm. Casey was asked if the effigy dummy been hanging in the station all day which he said, “I wouldn’t think so, as soon as I heard about it I cut it down.”⁴⁴²

A few weeks later, on April 28, 1963, approximately 200 persons demonstrated peacefully in front of the Metropolitan Courthouse to petition local government leaders for help in destroying racial discrimination. The demonstration included prayer, hymns, and short talks. The demonstration was led by the Interdenominational Ministers Committee for Social Action. Reverend Joseph Echols Lowery, chairman of the committee said, “The demonstration was an outward expression of an inward longing for freedom.” Lowery termed the prayer vigil “A call to all religious people in the community to join us in the drive for justice and equality for all men.” The demonstration lasted from 1 p.m. to 2pm. Lewis said, “Several Negroes churches cut Sunday services short yesterday in order to participate in the demonstration.”⁴⁴³ The council also asked Metro Mayor Beverly Briley to appoint a biracial committee to study Nashville’s race problems.

⁴⁴² Harold Lowe Jr, “King Effigy Hanged,” *The Tennessean*, April 14, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112904854/?terms=King%20Effigy%20Hanged&match=1>.

⁴⁴³ “200 Conduct Vigil For Racial Justice,” *The Tennessean*, April 29, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112908453/?terms=200%20Conduct%20Vigil%20For%20Racial%20Justice&match=1>.

Back in Birmingham, on May 02, 1963, what became known as the Children's Crusade was organized by Bevel. More than one thousand black students attempted to march into downtown Birmingham where hundreds were arrested. The following day, Public Safety Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor directed local police and fire departments to use force to halt the demonstrations. Over the next few days, images of children being blasted by high-pressure fire hoses, clubbed by police officers, and attacked by dogs appeared on television and in newspapers, sparking international outrage.⁴⁴⁴ Attorney General Robert Kennedy sent Burke Marshall, his chief civil rights assistant, to negotiate between the Black citizens and Birmingham city business leadership. The business leaders sought a moratorium on street protests as an act of good faith before any settlement could be declared. Marshall encouraged the campaign leaders to halt demonstrations and accept this interim compromise.

On May 08, 1963, King and the other leaders agreed to the compromise and called off further demonstrations in Birmingham. During the same day, around 600 demonstrators protested in downtown Nashville. The march began at 9:30 a.m. after demonstrators, the youngest being 8 years old, assembled for instructions at the First Colored Baptist Church. According to the NCLC, the purpose of the demonstration was to express sympathy for Birmingham Blacks and to point out that all is not well in Nashville. 600 demonstrators marched to downtown Nashville to demonstrate at

⁴⁴⁴ Momodu, "The Birmingham Campaign."

restaurants, department stores, and the Metro Courthouse. Several Black high school students would also join the demonstrations.⁴⁴⁵



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Figure 6.4 Black demonstrators race back to the safety of their First Baptist Church after the day-long protest marches downtown May 8, 1963. One of the leaders of the demonstrators, Rev. J. Metz Rollins, center, guide the protesters back home. After they returned from the final march, a group of about 30 white youths began throwing rocks and soft drink bottles.

⁴⁴⁵ “Paraders Here Hear Estes,” *The Tennessean*, May 09, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112908507/?terms=Paraders%20Here%20Hear%20Estes&match=1>.

⁴⁴⁶ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.



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Figure 6.5 A down demonstrator gets help from his fellow demonstrators as they arrived back to the First Baptist Church after the day-long protest marches downtown May 8, 1963. This demonstrator and two others were injuries when struck by eggs or bricks from young white hecklers following them.

The demonstrators would take a break and return to First Colored Baptist Church for lunch. After lunch, the demonstrators would continue demonstrations in the downtown area. Nine people would be arrested including seven Black demonstrators and nine White hecklers. Three would be released on bond and the rest of the six were released to the custody of their parents by the juvenile court. They would be met with violence by a group of 30 White youths who began throwing rocks and soft drink bottles. Demonstrators would rush back to safety to First Colored Baptist Church where Rollins guided them. Back at First Colored Baptist Church, Billie Sol Estes made a surprised speech at the church. Estes told the demonstrators “If America

⁴⁴⁷ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*. August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

does not mean integration we should give Indians back their land and pray for forgiveness for taking their land.”⁴⁴⁸

The next day, Doyle dismissed disorderly conduct charges against Vencen Horsley, a 19-year-old protest leader arrested Wednesday near the Cross Keys Restaurant, and fined Joseph Frank Tanksley for striking Horsely. Six juveniles who were taken in custody on Wednesday did not appear in juvenile court. Aubrey Clinton Harding was arrested on Wednesday for grabbing traffic officer Clarence Kirkpatrick by the shirt. Harding was supposed to appear on trial at 2 p.m. but was arrested at 2:22 p.m. by police for drunkenness in an alley behind 417 Deadrick Street. His trial was postponed to the following week. A group of 100 demonstrators marched from First Colored Baptist Church to the Metropolitan Court to hear Horsely’s case. Onlookers that included some White segregationists’ hecklers, massed near the paraders on Sixth Avenue between Union and Church streets. During the noon lunch hour, a false alarm caused two Nashville Fire Department hook and ladder trucks and four engine companies to siren their way into the midst of the crowd, answering a false alarm.⁴⁴⁹

Chief Hurbert O. Kemp appealed directly to Negro leaders and to groups of young spectators to avoid any trouble. Kemp told the youthful White agitators “Move out of the area. You have no business here please move. You’re just contributing to the confusion.” Kemp told the demonstrators “Don’t congregate, we will protect you as long as you just march and go along with us.” He then told both groups “I assure you that when laws are violated, an arrest will be

⁴⁴⁸ “Paraders Here Hear Estes.”

⁴⁴⁹ “No Marchers Arrested Here,” *The Tennessean*, May 10, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112908737/?terms=No%20Marchers%20Arrested%20Here&match=1>.

made regardless of who is involved. But we don't want to arrest anybody if we don't have to."⁴⁵⁰ The NCLC confirmed that more marches and demonstrations were planned the next day but said only college students and adults would participate in it.

On May 10, 1963, a demonstration occurred which included a sporadic battle of violence. A series of exchanges between youthful Black demonstrators and gang of White youths who followed them in the downtown area. Rollins and a youth named Carolyn Smith were struck in the head by brick bats, and both were injured. Both were treated and released at Hubbard Hospital. Another youth named Ewingella Bigham was knocked unconscious when she was pulled from the back of the police patrol car earlier in front of the B&W Cafeteria. Bigham was also sent to Hubbard Hospital where Hubbard attendants said she had a head injury, which looked like it was caused by a blow. Her sister and several other Black demonstrators charged that a policeman struck her with a billy-club as she was pulled from the patrol car, while officers were loading some of five Blacks arrested during demonstration. Police Inspector Donald Barton said, "He saw the incident and she was not struck." Another witness said, "She struck her head accidentally on a light pole."⁴⁵¹

The demonstrators who were arrested that day and taken to city jail for disorderly conduct included William Penn Boulden, a Fisk University student and Frederick Leonard, a Tennessee A&I University student. They would both be released on bond. Three juveniles named Johnny Gannon, Jerome Olstein, and Belinda Davis were arrested and taken to juvenile detention quarters. The demonstrators moved in two groups to Sixth Avenue from First Colored Baptist

⁴⁵⁰ "No Marchers Arrested Here."

⁴⁵¹ Frank Ritter, "Negro Group Pledges Curb On Marchers," *The Tennessean*, May 11, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112908789/?terms=Negro%20Group%20Pledges%20Curb%20On%20Marchers&match=1>.

Church after attending criminal court and hearing Judge John L. Draper deny a motion for a new trial for eight Blacks convicted of conspiracy for sit-in demonstrations at the B&W Cafeteria last October. One group went to the B&W Cafeteria and the other went to the Cross Keys Restaurant across the street. The group of students which consisted of 100 students, linked arms in front of the restaurant doors forming a barricade. Inside the barricade, several police officers guarded the doors. Each time a customer would try to make his way through the line of demonstrators, police would start pushing against the line, and demonstrators would push back. A crowd of 1,500 to 2,000 people had gathered in downtown Nashville by noon. Police cars moved in to line Sixth Avenue, and Church and Union Streets were closed to traffic, except for city buses and big trucks driving by there. Officers took sticks and home-made blackjacks away from several young demonstrators in the forefront of the crowd, and a superior officer sent away several patrolmen whose tactics against the demonstrators became too aggressive.⁴⁵²

At 12:12 p.m., Traffic Inspector John Wise appealed over a public address system for the crowd to disperse. The demonstrators left and returned to First Colored Baptist Church. When the demonstrators made it back to First Colored Baptist Church, they were standing on the lawn in front of the church before police arrived in the area. When about two dozen White men ranging from age 17 to 25, who followed the demonstrators, gathered in the parking lot across the street from the church and began hurling bricks, rocks, and bottles. Some demonstrators attacked back at the White segregationists hecklers. It went on for 15 minutes before the police arrived. Burton said, "The police were late because they were still trying to control the downtown crowd."⁴⁵³

⁴⁵² Ritter, "Negro Group Pledges Curb on Marchers."

⁴⁵³ Ritter, "Negro Group Pledges Curb on Marchers."

Later that day, Nashville Black leaders met with Mayor Clifton Beverly Briley and agreed that new demonstrations would be held that weekend. Briley also announced that he would appoint a biracial committee to attempt to resolve integration problems in Nashville, but he said it cannot be done effectively at this time. A mass meeting was held at Mt. Zion Baptist Church after the meeting with Briley. Smith said at the meeting, “Those who insist upon going to town will betray by that very act the sufferings of those who have gone before them.”⁴⁵⁴ During the same day back in Birmingham, King and Fred Shuttlesworth announced an agreement with the city of Birmingham to desegregate lunch counters, restrooms, drinking fountains, and department store fitting rooms within ninety days, to hire Blacks in stores as salesmen and clerks, and to release of hundreds of jailed protesters on bond. This resulted in the Birmingham Campaign ending that day. Their victory, however, was met by violence. The next day, a bomb damaged the Gaston Motel where King and SCLC members were staying.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ Ritter, “Negro Group Pledges Curb on Marchers.”

⁴⁵⁵ Momodu, “The Birmingham Campaign.”



Figure 6.6 The Rev. Kelly Miller Smith, right, president of Nashville Christian Leadership Council and John Lewis, chairman of the Student Non-violence Committee of the NCLC, told a mass meeting of demonstrators May 10, 1963, at Mt. Zion Baptist Church on Jefferson St., not to protest in town until the outcome of the meeting between Nashville business officials and black leaders.

⁴⁵⁶ “Nashville Then: 1963 Civil Rights Movement in Nashville,” *The Tennessean*, March 02, 2017, <https://www.tennessean.com/picture-gallery/news/2017/02/07/nashville-then-1963-civil-rights-movement-in-nashville/97600584/>.



Figure 6.7 A single Metro patrolman, center, tries to turn back a group of white hecklers following the black demonstrators who started back to the First Baptist Church after a demonstrations at downtown restaurants May 10, 1963.

Back in Nashville, a committee of Nashville Black and business leaders gathered at a meeting that began at 3:30 p.m. in the Chamber of Commerce Building at Third Avenue and Union Street. The Black leaders at the meeting included Smith, Lewis, Rollins, Campbell, Braden, Reverend Claude Walker, President of Nashville NAACP, and Dr. Herman Long, race relations director at Fisk University. White leaders at the meeting included Pitts, Belvins, P.R. Currey, Western Electric; James P. Bass, American Airlines; Bill Davis, director of information for the Metro Government; J.B. Ragland, Ragland and C.O.; Dr. Felix Robb, president of George Peabody College; Attorney Edwin Hunt; Edward J. Shea, executive vice president of the

⁴⁵⁷ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

Nashville area Chamber of Commerce, appointed by Briley to head the meeting, and Don Washburn, administrative assistant to Briley.⁴⁵⁸

The purpose of the meeting was to attempt to resolve the race problems and prevent demonstrations like had been going on the last couple of days. The main concern for the Black leaders in the meeting was immediate desegregation of all Nashville downtown facilities and equal employment opportunities. The meeting also discussed city-wide problems that were going on in the city. A truce was called, and no demonstrations occurred that day. An incident would occur at First Colored Baptist Church when two black youths would be arrested in the afternoon after a rock throwing incident. Two youths, Charles Dunlap, and Louis Miller were arrested and charged with destruction of property, after another youth named Steve Haralson told police that both attacked his car with bricks and rocks, breaking the windshield and causing dents. Dunlap would be released on bond and Miller would be sent to juvenile detention.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁸ Ritter, "Negro Group Pledges Curb on Marchers."

⁴⁵⁹ Ritter, "Negro Group Pledges Curb on Marchers."



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Figure 6.8 Louis Miller, 16, one of two blacks arrested on charges of brick throwing that broke a car windshield, is getting escorted to the paddy wagon May 11, 1963, by a Metro policeman at the First Baptist Church. Miller will be on his way to juvenile detention.

⁴⁶⁰ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement.” The Tennessean, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.



Figure 6.9 Members of the First Baptist Church and demonstrators, including pastor Rev. Kelly Miller Smith, center, look on as two of their members got arrest on charges of brick throwing that broke a car windshield May 11, 1963.

Two days later, on May 13, 1963, demonstrations would occur at downtown Nashville at the B&W Cafeteria, the Cross Keys Restaurant, and the Hermitage Sundries Shop. Clashes between Black demonstrators and White segregationists occurred in other places. The first group of marchers headed to Sixth Avenue downtown, a group of 15 young Whites hurled large rocks and boards from the lawn in front of the Public Library. Several Black demonstrators were struck. Alman E. Runyan, 68-year-old disabled veteran of World War I, who came out of B&W

⁴⁶¹ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement.” The Tennessean, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

Cafeteria pulled a pocketknife on demonstrators who jostled him. Police Chief Herbert Kemp, who was on the scene most of the afternoon, ordered Runyan arrested. When Runyan told Kemp “He was not going to allow himself to be jostled,” Kemp said, “What do you think they’re here for?” Kemp continued, “You’ve broken the law and I’m going to have to arrest you.”⁴⁶² As Runyan was standing on the curb in the custody of a patrolman, he suddenly bent over and began gasping that he was having a heart attack. Police rushed Runyan to General Hospital, where he was checked into the emergency room. He was reported to be in satisfactory condition. A Hospital spokesman said, “They did not believe he suffered a heart attack.” Runyan was released by police after he was dismissed from the hospital.

As the demonstrations were occurring at B&W Cafeteria, police arrested Lamar Richardson, a Fisk University student, who was blocking the door to the cafeteria by kneeling on his hands and knees. Other Black demonstrators surrounded the police car shouting, “Take us too” and clapping their hands. Kemp approached Lewis and told him, “The Negroes would have to move on.”⁴⁶³ Lewis told Kemp, “When you release this man (Richardson), sir, we’ll move.” When Kemp refused to release Richardson, the crowd began chanting “Let’s all go to jail.” Police then bodily threw the demonstrators back on the sidewalk and Inspector John Wise drove Richardson to jail. Briley issued a statement after an afternoon conference meeting relating to the demonstrations. Briley said, “We have met and made progress. We are going to meet again Wednesday. We have good communications, and I am at work appointing a mayor’s biracial committee. We are a town trying to solve its racial problems in a constructive way.”

⁴⁶² “6 Arrested as Clashes Sweep City,” *The Tennessean*, May 14, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112909147/?terms=>.

⁴⁶³ “6 Arrested as Clashes Sweep City.”

A group of White youths at Seventh Avenue, North, and Charlotte Avenue, began throwing sticks and planks at several Black youths who then attacked the Whites. Police arrived and one of the White youths pointed out the Black youth to the officers. They chased the Blacks around the War Memorial Building. As one of the Blacks rounded the building and turned into an alley, two of the Whites began throwing broken broomsticks at him but stopped as soon as police appeared. At 6:45 p.m., the Black demonstrators left the restaurant area and marched to the Metropolitan jail to protest the arrest of Richardson. A gang of Whites followed the protestors as they headed to the jail to protest the arrest when a pitched battle erupted between the two groups. At the Loveman Building at 5th and Union Street, a gang of White teenagers jumped the tail-end of the marchers in a slugfest. A length of heavy chain, wielded by a White youth, smashed into a plate glass window at Lovemans as the press of the crowd brought the window crashing down.⁴⁶⁴

The fighting continued across the street, stalling traffic. One Black demonstrator picked up a three-foot square of the broken plate glass and sailed it across the street into a crowd of White youths beside the Security Federal Building. The glass shattered without hitting anyone but smaller segments of it were thrown back and forth between the warring groups. A White youth hurled a city trash can into the crowd, knocking four Black demonstrators on to their knees. The melee continued around the corner where the two groups separated. As soon as the demonstrators began parading in front of the Municipal Safety Building, Whites across the street near the courthouse and gangs of youths in cars began hurling rocks into the crowd, hitting several Black demonstrators and driving police and newsmen behind parked patrol cars. For about 30 minutes, the group continued to march back and forth, singing “We Shall Overcome”

⁴⁶⁴ “6 Arrested as Clashes Sweep City.”

and “America the Beautiful,” as mobs of taunting and curious Whites and Negroes began gathering across the street.⁴⁶⁵

The demonstrators started to head back the First Colored Baptist Church, when several hundred Whites followed behind and across the street from them. Police drove along with the marchers, attempting to control traffic and to disperse the White youths. When the demonstrators reached the church, police who had preceded them began clearing the area near the building, but as the demonstrators entered the church from the front, lighted by television camera lights, a hail of stones began hitting into the crowd. Officers and newsmen took cover as rocks, short of their marks, began thudding on police vehicles. During the same day, a shotgun blast smashed through the living room window of Braden’s house that narrowly missed his wife as they watched television. Braden said, “The blast ripped through the lower portion of their front window at 921 21st Ave., North.” Braden continued, “The car raced by, shot and then spen on, the shot just missed where my wife was sitting.”⁴⁶⁶

The next day, Lewis and nine other student leaders met with Briley in an effort to discuss their problems and how to avoid other violent demonstrations that were going on the last couple of days in Nashville. Briley said, “We have made progress. There will be no demonstration tonight. There will be further meetings, and we hope there is further progress.”⁴⁶⁷ Shea said, “Student leaders would be invited to participate in future meeting of the group.” Lewis spoke at a

⁴⁶⁵ “6 Arrested as Clashes Sweep City.”

⁴⁶⁶ “6 Arrested as Clashes Sweep City.”

⁴⁶⁷ James Talley, “Student Leader Cancels March Tension Eases,” *The Tennessean*, May 15, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112909329/?terms=Student%20Leader%20Cancels%20March%20Tension%20Eases&match=1>.

meeting at Lee Chapel A.M.E. The Chapel was attended by around 250 blacks. Lewis said, “There are definite signs we are moving into the beloved community and will get there. In order to show our faith, to purge ourselves of our own sins, we have called off the demonstrations for the night.” Earlier in the day, Rollins made pleas for a temporary truce during an open-air meeting of some 150 demonstrators. Rollins said, “We cannot tolerate violence. We will not tolerate violence. We must confine our activities to those of nonviolent nature.” Rollins along with 10 other student leaders would also attend the meeting that Briley held. Rollins said after the meeting, “It was successful in that the students had a chance to listen to the mayor and he had a chance to listen to them. They heard first hand what we already had known. And they now have an understanding or appreciation of his feelings.” Rollins also said, “He feels the demonstrating students will listen to their peers.”⁴⁶⁸

The NCLC and Student Central Committee called for a temporary halt to the demonstrations. Walker of the Nashville NAACP made a statement that said:

We affirm the right of all people to exercise their right of protest in a peaceful manner. At this time, however, we suggest that all demonstrations cease to create an atmosphere in which constructive negotiations can take place. The NAACP, established over 50 years ago to remove segregation and discrimination in all aspects of American life, had guarded the rights of the Negro in the areas of voting, housing equal employment opportunities, recreational facilities, and education. We do not intend to relinquish the struggle until we have achieved full citizenship for all people.

Smith and the NCLC also released a statement that said:

Violence is a negative and destructive force which seriously hampers the positive and creative forces working toward the resolution of our problems. We deplore violence. Smith continue, “We condemn the recent attacks by white ruffians on the demonstrations with rocks, boards, and knives and we likewise condemn like retaliatory acts by a few undisciplined demonstrators and non-demonstrating spectators. We have every reason to believe that the mayor and others presently engaged in efforts to structure a biracial committee are acting in good faith. We

⁴⁶⁸ Talley, “Student Leader Cancels March Tension Eases.”

do, however, call upon the mayor, the interim committee, and all citizens of good will provide an immediate solution to some of the urgent problems of racial discrimination confronting us while machinery is being set in motion to deal with the overall problem.⁴⁶⁹

Rollins warned students, and he said, “In a nutshell, we’re sitting on top of a racial powder keg and we may as well face that fact because it involves all of us.”⁴⁷⁰ Lewis said, “For the first time, some politicians and businessmen have really become concerned because of our demonstrations. For three years we have been fighting. We made propositions to the old government and Negroes went to jail every weekend. Now we are in the area of real progress. The mayor is doing as much as any mayor in the South can do. But we must make it clear. This is the day. We may be in fire the next time.” Demonstrations were supposed to be held at First Colored Baptist Church at 4 p.m. but were cancelled after the NCLC recommended that the church not be used for further meetings by the students. Rollins said, “The church was damaged the other night by a flying rock. The council felt that the church also was rapidly becoming a symbol of the integration movement. We were afraid someone might want to destroy it.” The students then met at Fisk University’s Jubilee Hall and marched to nearby Watkins Park, where Rollins conducted the later afternoon meeting.

Two months later, on July 02, 1963, United States Justice Department attorney John Doar spoke at the Black voter registration in the South at the 20th annual Race Relations Institute at Fisk University. Doar said in his speech, “It is the day-to-day meetings between Negroes and

⁴⁶⁹ Talley, “Student Leader Cancels March Tension Eases.”

⁴⁷⁰ Talley, “Student Leader Cancels March Tension Eases.”

Whites that ultimately will break the back of resistance in the South to Negro voters.”⁴⁷¹ Doar continued, “We are gradually developing the technique, the procedures and the will to see the job through. But this personal contact between the races is absolutely essential to success.” He added: “The Southern white citizens is slowly beginning to see that there is something radically and scandalously wrong with his system of voter registration.” Doar cited several examples of how the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department was moving to correct the inequities of voter registration laws. Doar spoke for an hour and half at Fisk University. During the same day, demonstrations occurred at the Morrison Cafeteria located in the West End. The demonstrations were led by Lester McKinnie, protesting their segregation policy.

A few days later, on July 07, 1963, Smith resigned as pastor of First Colored Baptist Church. Smith made the announcement during morning Sunday church service at the church. Smith said, “I have had a most meaningful experience here at the church and in the Nashville community. And it is with a sense of regret as well as challenge that I go to a larger field of service. I have had experiences here and formed relationships which cannot be dissolved by distance or time.”⁴⁷² Smith was leaving First Colored Baptist Church to become pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio in September.

A month later, on August 25, 1963, Smith gave his farewell sermon at First Colored Baptist Church where he told his congregation goodbye and warned then, “Many can call on the name of Jesus but are adamant about retaining the practices of segregation.” Smith continued,

⁴⁷¹ Frank Ritter, “Race Contacts Called a Must,” *The Tennessean*, July 03, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112938977/?terms=Race%20Contacts%20Called%20a%20Must&match=1>.

⁴⁷² W.A. Reed Jr, “Reverend Smith Resigns Post,” *The Tennessean*, July 08, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112940035/?terms=>.

“There is still validity in the Christian religion. And it addresses itself to the root of all problems.” Smith mentioned how progress been made in Nashville in regards to minority rights. He said, “The progress has been encouraging, but not always as rapid as it could have been.” Smith added, “He believes Nashville is head and shoulders over other Southern cities in facing the problem of militant Negroes.” Smith predicted that in five or six years all major civil rights problems will be solved in Nashville. Smith urged his congregation to embrace Christianity when he said, “History shows that the brightest lights of every generation have been those imbued with Christian sprit.”⁴⁷³

Two days later, on August 27, 1963, a group of Nashville Blacks and Whites boarded buses at First Colored Baptist Church. They were headed to Washington D.C. for the March on Washington for jobs and freedom that was scheduled for the next day. The March on Washington for jobs and freedom was organized by Asa Philip Rudolph and Bayard Rustin. Rudolph and Rustin began planning the march back in December 1961. Both envisioned two days of protest, that included sit-ins and lobbying followed by a mass rally at the Lincoln Memorial. They originally wanted to focus on joblessness and to call for a public works program that would employ Black people. In 1962, discussions among civil rights activists occurred discussing a need for a larger national demonstration to push for Federal legislation to combat discrimination. Randolph, who was president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Porters (BSCP), proposed a mass march of on Washington D.C., modeled after the 1941 March on Washington which Randolph proposed to pressure the United States Government into providing fair working opportunities for Blacks and desegregating the armed forces during World War II. In response, Franklin Delano

⁴⁷³ W.A. Reed J.R, “Smith Leaving Says Ills Stay,” *The Tennessean*, August 26, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113221010/?terms=Smith%20Leaving%20Says%20Ills%20Stay&match=1>.

Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 in 1941, prohibiting discrimination in the defense industry under contract to federal agencies. Randolph and collaborators called-off the march.⁴⁷⁴



Figure 6.10 A group of Nashville black and white aboard a couple of buses Aug. 27, 1963, at the First Baptist Church downtown for a trip to Washington D.C. for the "March for jobs and freedom." They were part of 200,000 that massed before the Abraham Lincoln Memorial and hear the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech. In the white hat at the bus' door is one of the student demonstrator leaders, Lester McKinnie.

⁴⁷⁴ Luther Adams, "Asa Philp Randolph," (1963),"Blackpast.org, Last Modified January 19, 2007. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/randolph-asa-philip-1889-1979/>.

⁴⁷⁵ "Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church had major role in the Civil Rights Movement," *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.



Figure 6.11 A group of Nashville black and white aboard a couple of buses Aug. 27, 1963, at the First Baptist Church downtown for a trip to Washington D.C. for the "March for jobs and freedom." They were part of 200,000 that massed before the Abraham Lincoln Memorial and hear the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

The Big Six included King, Lewis, Farmer, Randolph, Wilkins, and Whitney Young. They were leaders of six prominent civil rights organizations. King was president of the SCLC, Lewis was Chairman of SNCC, Farmer was founder of CORE, Randolph was founder and president of BSCP, Wilkins was executive director of the NAACP, and Young was executive director of the National Urban League. These six men would form the Council for United Civil Rights Leadership (CUCRL), a group formed in June 1963 to organize and regulate the Civil Rights Movement. People all over the United States came to the March where it was estimated over 250,000 people attended. Lewis spoke at the event where he said:

We march today for jobs and freedom, but we have nothing to be proud of. For hundreds and thousands of our brothers are not here. For they are receiving starvation wages, or no wages at all. While we stand here, there are sharecroppers in the Delta of Mississippi who are out in the fields working for less than three dollars a day, twelve hours a day.

⁴⁷⁶ "Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement," The Tennessean. August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

While we stand here there are students in jail on trumped-up charges. Our brother James Farmer, along with many others, is also in jail. We come here today with a great sense of misgiving. It is true that we support the administration's civil rights bill. We support it with great reservations, however. Unless Title III is put in this bill, there is nothing to protect the young children and old women who must face police dogs and fire hoses in the South while they engage in peaceful demonstrations. In its present form, this bill will not protect the citizens of Danville, Virginia, who must live in constant fear of a police state. It will not protect the hundreds and thousands of people that have been arrested on trumped charges. What about the three young men, SNCC field secretaries in Americus, Georgia, who face the death penalty for engaging in peaceful protest? As it stands now, the voting section of this bill will not help the thousands of black people who want to vote. It will not help the citizens of Mississippi, of Alabama and Georgia, who are qualified to vote, but lack a sixth-grade education. "One man, one vote" is the African cry. It is ours too. It must be ours!

We must have legislation that will protect the Mississippi sharecropper who is put off of his farm because he dares to register to vote. We need a bill that will provide for the homeless and starving people of this nation. We need a bill that will ensure the equality of a maid who earns five dollars a week in a home of a family whose total income is \$100,000 a year. We must have a good FEPC bill. My friends, let us not forget that we are involved in a serious social revolution. By and large, American politics is dominated by politicians who build their careers on immoral compromises and ally themselves with open forms of political, economic, and social exploitation. There are exceptions, of course. We salute those. But what political leader can stand up and say, "My party is the party of principles"? For the party of Kennedy is also the party of Eastland. The party of Javits is also the party of Goldwater. Where is our party? Where is the political party that will make it unnecessary to march on Washington? Where is the political party that will make it unnecessary to march in the streets of Birmingham? Where is the political party that will protect the citizens of Albany, Georgia? Do you know that in Albany, Georgia, nine of our leaders have been indicted, not by the Dixiecrats, but by the federal government for peaceful protest? But what did the federal government do when Albany's deputy sheriff beat Attorney C.B. King and left him half-dead? What did the federal government do when local police officials kicked and assaulted the pregnant wife of Slater King, and she lost her baby?

To those who have said, "Be patient and wait," we have long said that we cannot be patient. We do not want our freedom gradually, but we want to be free now! We are tired. We are tired of being beaten by policemen. We are tired of seeing our people locked up in jail over and over again. And then you holler, "Be patient." How long can we be patient? We want our freedom and we want it now. We do not want to go to jail. But we will go to jail if this is the price we must pay for love, brotherhood, and true peace. I appeal to all of you to get into this great revolution that is sweeping this nation. Get in and stay in the streets of every city, every village and hamlet of this nation until true freedom comes, until the revolution of 1776 is complete. We must get in this revolution and complete the revolution. For in the Delta in Mississippi, in southwest Georgia, in the Black Belt of Alabama, in Harlem, in Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and all over this nation, the black masses are on the march for jobs and freedom. They're

talking about slow down and stop. We will not stop. All of the forces of Eastland, Barnett, Wallace, and Thurmond will not stop this revolution. If we do not get meaningful legislation out of this Congress, the time will come when we will not confine our marching to Washington. We will march through the South; through the streets of Jackson, through the streets of Danville, through the streets of Cambridge, through the streets of Birmingham. But we will march with the spirit of love and with the spirit of dignity that we have shown here today. By the force of our demands, our determination, and our numbers, we shall splinter the segregated South into a thousand pieces and put them together in the image of God and democracy. We must say: “Wake up America! Wake up!” For we cannot stop, and we will not and cannot be patient.”⁴⁷⁷

The other speakers at the March on Washington included Randolph, Walter Reuther, Wilkins, Bates, Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Young, and King. He gave his famous “I Have A Dream Speech.” Farmer was originally supposed to speak at the event but got arrested while he was doing civil rights protests in Plaquemine, Louisiana, a main town of Iberville Parish. CORE member Floyd McKissick took his place where he read his speech at the event. None of the official speakers were women. Josephine Baker gave a speech during the preliminary offerings and Bates spoke briefly. Rustin led a tribute to, “Negro Women Fighters for Freedom.” The tribute introduced women’s contributions to the movement including Bates, Nash, Rosa Parks, Gloria Richardson, Myrlie Evers, and Prince Melson Lee.⁴⁷⁸

A month later, on September 18, 1963, about 150 marchers did a “silent march” to the state capitol during the afternoon in Nashville.⁴⁷⁹ The march was a gesture of sympathy for the

⁴⁷⁷ “John Lewis, Speech at the March on Washington, August 28, 1963,” Bills of Rights Institute Last Modified August 02, 2023. <https://billofrightsintstitute.org/activities/john-lewis-speech-at-the-march-on-washington-august-28-1963>.

⁴⁷⁸ “150 Marchers Protest Bomb,” *The Tennessean*, September 29, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111483907/?terms=150%20Marchers%20Protest%20Bomb&match=1>.

⁴⁷⁹ Raymond J. Crowley, “200,000 in Capital Call for Equality Now,” *The Tennessean*, August 29, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113222200/?terms=200%2C000%20in%20Capital%20Call%20for%20Equality%20Now&match=1>.

families of four girls killed in the Birmingham church bombing. The church bombing occurred at 16th Street Baptist Church on September 15, 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama. Four young girls, Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins were killed in the racially motivated attack by the KKK. The bombing was a response to the church involvement in the civil rights campaign in Birmingham, Alabama. The perpetrators were four KKK members named Thomas Blanton, Robert Chambliss, Bobby Cherry, and Herman Cash. Blanton, Chambliss, and Cherry would be convicted for the crime. Cherry would never be tried for his alleged involvement in the bombing as he died in 1994 before he could be convicted.

The Nashville branch of the NAACP sponsored the march. Around 3 p.m., the marchers gathered in Watkins Park located at 17th Avenue, North, and Jo Johnston Avenue and marched to the capitol. When the marchers finally arrived at the state capitol, Reverend James Woodruff, Episcopal chaplain at Fisk University, prayed and asked that “the bloodshed in this tragedy wash away the scales from the eyes of those who will not see the futility of false superiority.”⁴⁸⁰ Lester McKinney led the group where they sang three verses of “We Shall Overcome.” The gathering was closed in prayer by Kendrick Grobel, professor of New Testament at Vanderbilt University who asked for a “renewal of efforts to unite us into one humanity.” More than 20 churches in Nashville held services for the four that were killed at 16th Street Baptist Church.

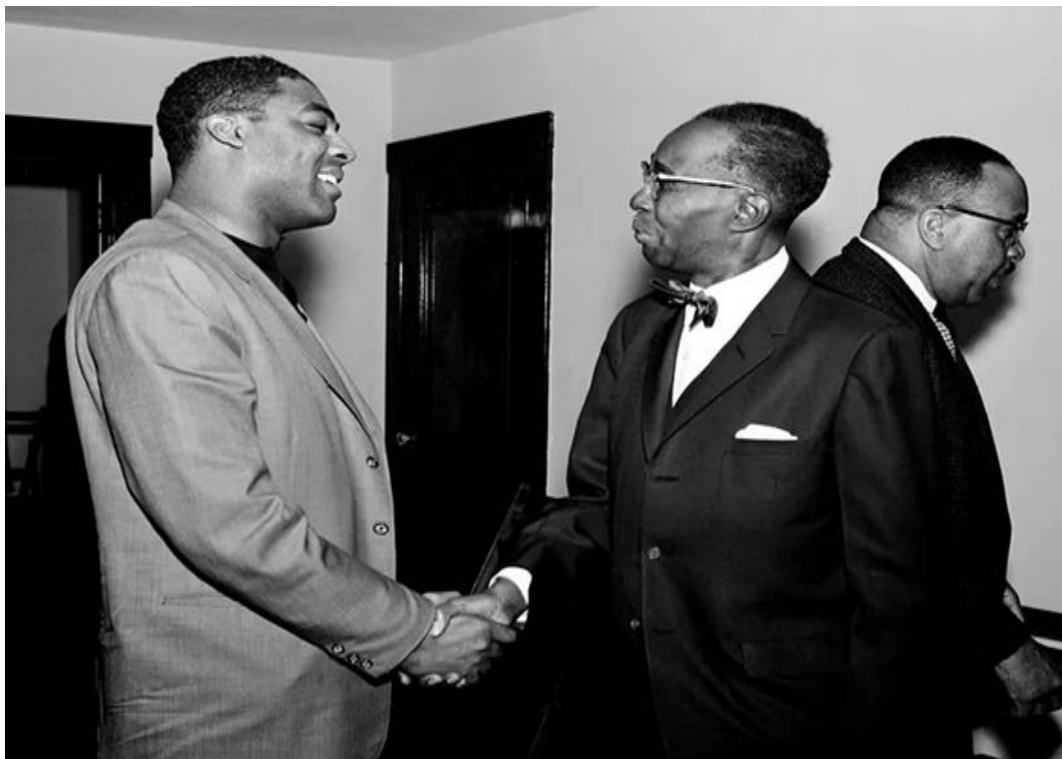
Two months later, on November 22, 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas while riding in a presidential motorcade through Dealey Plaza. Kennedy was riding with his wife Jacqueline, Texas Governor John Connally, and his wife Nellie. Vice President Lyndon

⁴⁸⁰ “Prayers, Offerings Asked of Churches,” *The Tennessean*, September 20, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111485840/?terms=Prayers%2C%20Offerings%20Asked%20of%20Churches&match=1>.

Baines Johnson would be sworn in as 36th President of the United States. The perpetrator who was responsible for the Kennedy assassination was Lee Harvey Oswald. Oswald would be murdered two days later in police custody by Jack Ruby. Back in Nashville, several hundred Blacks who were grief-stricken by the assassination of Kennedy, gathered at the state capitol and silently prayed for him.

A month later, on December 30, 1963, Smith who resigned as pastor of First Colored Baptist Church and left to become pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio in August 1963, returned to Nashville and First Colored Baptist Church. Smith said on his return, “The people of the South seem to have a much clearer concept of the race problem than people in the North.” Smith added, “In the South, both the negro and White communities appear to be more aware of the real issues involved in the negro revolution.” Smith said, “He is back in Nashville for good.”⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸¹ Frank Ritter, “Smith Returns To His Church,” *The Tennessean*, December 31, 1963, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111758111/?terms=Smith%20Returns%20To%20His%20Church&match=1>.



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Figure 6.12 The Rev. Kelly Miller Smith, left, is greeted by attorney Coyness L. Ennix Sr. upon his return back home Dec. 30, 1963 from Cleveland, Ohio. Rev. Smith, one of Nashville leaders in the fight for integration, returns to First Baptist Church after leaving last fall for the historic Antioch Baptist Church in Cleveland. Rev. Smith said he is back in Nashville "for good."

Smith said, "The dream that I have had for this city has not been fulfilled. We quit the job too soon. There is much work yet to be done and I hope we can be at it again quickly."⁴⁸³ The congregation at First Colored Baptist Church voted shortly after Smith left Nashville to invite him to return to be pastor of the church. During his absence, Revered Jerome Wright was the acting interim minister at the church. Wright became assistant minister with Smith returning.

⁴⁸² "Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement," *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

⁴⁸³ Ritter, "Smith Returns To His Church."

Smith was asked if he had immediate plans to launch a new offensive against racial barriers in Nashville. Smith said: "I've been out of contact with the leaders here and I'm not really conversant with what's been going on. However, there is still much to be done in Nashville in the way of race relations there is much progress still to be made." Smith, his wife Alice Clark Smith, and their children had a reception party at their home held by church members. Smith also received Christmas presents as well.

A month later, on January 24, 1964, news was put out there about First Colored Baptist Church's plans to erect a new building on its present site. The plan was to design the building to enhance the church's present function in the field of race relations. Smith said, "The new structure would seat 600. The congregation will attempt to recruit White members when the building has been completed."⁴⁸⁴ Smith added, "We think Nashville deserves a place of this kind where people can come to worship without regard of race."⁴⁸⁵ Three months later, on April 04, 1964, plans for a new building for First Colored Baptist Church continued after Philadelphia architect Harold E. Waggoner was hired for the job. Smith said, "The church's building committee decided to hire Harold E. Waggoner."⁴⁸⁶ Smith continue, "The new \$400 church, to be built on the present site of First Baptist, will be completely integrated and designed to promote the church's work in the Nashville racial movement." Smith continued, "A lot of white citizens, we feel, would be interested in being identified with a church which is not segregated. And a lot

⁴⁸⁴ Edmund Willingham, "Baptist Board Talk Monday," *The Tennessean*, January 25, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112106259/?terms=Baptist%20Board%20Talk%20Monday&match=1>.

⁴⁸⁵ Willingham, "Baptist Board Talk Monday."

⁴⁸⁶ Frank Ritter, "1st Baptist Hires Famed Architect," *The Tennessean*, April 04, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111413628/?terms=1st%20Baptist%20Hires%20Famed%20Architect&match=1>.

of people perhaps are unaware they would be welcome to worship here.” Smith added “That a church committee has been established to map out an aggressive program to encourage whites to attend the church after the new structure is built.”⁴⁸⁷



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Figure 6.13 The Rev. Kelly Miller Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church, discusses plans April 4, 1964, for building a new structure at the present church site, 319 Eighth Ave., N. Behind him is the historic, 69-year-old church building that will be razed when the new one is constructed.

A few months later, on April 27, 1964, demonstrations occurred at the Krystal, Tic Toc, and Morrison’s Restaurants. The demonstrations began at 10 a.m. as nearly 200 people, most of them junior high school students marched to the downtown area. After demonstrations at the

⁴⁸⁷ Ritter, “1st Baptist Hires Famed Architect.”

⁴⁸⁸ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” The Tennessean, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

Krystal and Tic Toc Restaurants, the demonstrators marched several blocks to Morrison's on West End Avenue. On that day, ten demonstrators, including three White college students, would be arrested. Police started to make arrests after demonstrators sat down in the driving lanes on West End Avenue, tying up traffic. Assistant Police Chief Braxton Duke said the violence in the demonstrations started when McKinnie struck him in the stomach. Duke said, "That was carrying things too,"⁴⁸⁹.

McKinnie was injured in the demonstration, and he was taken to the hospital where he was treated for scalp cuts and a sprained arm. He was also arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and released under \$500 bond. Others who were charged included Allen Phillip Wolfe, a Vanderbilt University Student; Frederick Leonard, a Tennessee A&I University student; and William Taylor Barbee, a Scarritt College student. All three were also charged with disorderly conduct and released on \$250 bond. The six other demonstrators were charged in warrants signed by James A. Burgess of Morrison's Cafeteria with conspiring to obstruct trade. The six included Connie Midworth, a White Fisk University co-ed; William S. Bollinger, also a White Fisk University student; John Thomas Betsch, a Fisk University student; Mitchell Lee Johnson, a part-time preacher and filling station attendant; Priscilla Harmer, a youth; and Jaunita Bryant. Both Hamer and Bryant were released on \$250 bonds. After the violence and the arrests, the demonstrators returned to First Colored Baptist Church where they regrouped and marched to the police headquarters to protest the arrests and police brutality. Several members of the NCLC met

⁴⁸⁹ Paul Carden, "Street Sit-Ins Bring Arrests," *The Tennessean*, April 28, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111445300/?terms=Street%20Sit-ins%20Bring%20Arrests&match=1>.

in Chief H.O. Kemp's office with top police officials for nearly three hours.⁴⁹⁰ After the meeting, NCLC and Kemp issued a joint statement that said:

The officials of the Metropolitan government of Nashville and Davidson County recognize the rights of all citizens to demonstrate and to protest in a peaceful and non-violent manner. Whenever these demonstrations are carried out in a peaceful and lawful manner the role of the Police Department will be to see that this right is protected. The leaders for the Nashville Christian Leadership Council have assured us they abhor the use of violence and have pledged their good offices to see that all demonstrations are carried on in a peaceful manner.⁴⁹¹

The Reverend Andrew White said, "The meeting that the NCLC abhors police brutality and hopes the policy of the Metro Police Department, which does not condone brutality, will be carried out by law enforcement officers."⁴⁹² White added, "Several of the demonstrators arrested told him they were beaten and slapped by police after being arrested." Kemp said that the charges were being investigated. McKinnie denied that he struck Duke. McKinnie said, "Why would I attack a policeman with him armed with a club and a half a dozen others standing around?" The NCLC and a group of students including McKinnie met with Robert Warner Jr, chairman of the Metropolitan Committee on Human Relations, to discuss the problems.

The next day, demonstrations continued where it was estimated around 300 marchers, mostly junior high school and high school students protested. The demonstration started at 10:25 a.m. from the First Colored Baptist Church to the downtown area. The violence started after a leader of the demonstration, Nathan Winters, a Tennessee A&I University student, was arrested and placed in a patrol wagon. The demonstrators surged around the wagon, climbing on its bumpers and hood, beating on the sides and lying in its path. Police at first attempted to lock

⁴⁹⁰ Carden, "Street Sit-Ins Bring Arrests."

⁴⁹¹ Carden, "Street Sit-Ins Bring Arrests."

⁴⁹² Carden, "Street Sit-Ins Bring Arrests."

arms around the wagon and push the demonstrators back. When that method failed, Police then tried to move them bodily and both sides started swinging at each other. When a path was finally cleared for the wagon, the demonstrators went to Church Street between Seventh Avenue, North and Capitol Boulevard. Demonstrators remained sitting in the street, shouting and singing as they blocked traffic. A pumper truck from Metro Fire Department was called and the hoses attached to a hydrant. Police Lieutenant J.W. Irvin and Patrol Chief Donald Burton attempted to clear the streets without using water hoses.⁴⁹³

Violence would erupt as club-swinging police surged through the marchers. The demonstrators fought back, and 16 demonstrators were injured and taken to Hubbard Hospital. Several policemen were injured. One White onlooker named William R. Wyrick Jr was arrested for attacking a Black patrolman named Thomas Dozier. The other demonstrators who were arrested included Thelodis Miller, William Taylor Barbee, Meryle Joy Leonard and Julia Ann Talbutt. Five Juveniles named Danny Lewis Smith, Willie Thomas Maupln, Joyce Ann Knowles, Albender Lee Bingham, and William Atkins were taken to juvenile detention quarters and charged with disorderly conduct by refusing to obey a police officer. A White segregationist named Paul M. Mount was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct after he slapped McKinnie across the face.⁴⁹⁴

Around 1p.m., a second march occurred in the downtown area. The marchers gathered at the Chamber of Commerce where they sang, chanted, and clapped their hands. McKinnie

⁴⁹³ Paul Carden, "Briley Returns To Seek Racial Dispute Truce," *The Tennessean*, April 29, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111445633/?terms=Briley%20Returns%20To%20Seek%20Racial%20Dispute%20Truce&match=1>.

⁴⁹⁴ Carden, "Briley Returns to Seek Racial Dispute Truce."

addressed the marchers, and he shouted and said, “We stand in protest to Nashville Chamber of Commerce and you people of Nashville who vote and who are responsible for police brutality.” Around 20 police officers gathered at the area to protect the marchers from a huge crowd that gathered in the streets. Marchers moved from the Chamber of Commerce to the Metro Courthouse where he again shouted and said, “You people got a right to be free. After so many years of struggle we’re still in bondage.”⁴⁹⁵ McKinnie vowed there will be larger demonstrations “Tomorrow and the next day and the next.” McKinnie urged the younger students to continue to stay out of school and disregard the orders of W. H. Oliver, superintendent of city schools. The marchers responded to McKinnie with a loud “no.” A group of marchers met in a closed-door session with Donald Washburn, administrative assistant to Mayor Beverly Briley. After a two-and half-hour meeting, Washburn issued a statement which said in part that Mayor Briley had laid down the following guidelines for handling the situation:

1. Law and order will be maintained, No brutality will be tolerated on the part of anyone police or demonstrator.
2. Peaceful and lawful demonstrations will be permitted but the rights of all our citizens will be protected.
3. Lying down in the street is a violation of the law and extremely dangerous and will be handled as any other obstruction to traffic.

White of the NCLC said, “The purpose of the demonstrations is to make Nashville an open city. We are protesting the stand still attitude in the community, inactivity of the mayor’s committee and this blanket of tokenism in our city.”⁴⁹⁶ On April 29, 1964, demonstrators gathered at First Colored Baptist Church and were instructed by Rollins and NCLC not to offer any

⁴⁹⁵ Carden, “Briley Returns to Seek Racial Dispute Truce.”

⁴⁹⁶ Carden, “Briley Returns to Seek Racial Dispute Truce.”

resistance to police. The demonstrators then march from First Colored Baptist church to the Morrison's Cafeteria where they were shielded by a solid wall of patrol cars to prevent possible interference. Thousands of bystanders lined the route of the demonstration march. Many heckled both the demonstrators and police. Led by Lewis, an estimated 300 demonstrators marched to Morrison Cafeteria and began to sit down in the street after leaders of the march walked to the door. The door was locked in their faces and one of the leaders asked, "Would you let an American citizen in?"⁴⁹⁷ The Black leaders then took out their wallets and displayed money. Despite this, the doors remained locked and the demonstrators stretched out on the sidewalk in front of the building and then in the street.

⁴⁹⁷ "Admit All to Worship, 3 Faiths Ask," *The Tennessean*, April 30, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111446117/?terms=Admit%20All%20to%20Worship%2C%203%20Faiths%20Ask&match=1>.



Figure 6.14 The Rev. J. Metz Rollins is speaking to a group of civil rights demonstrators at the First Baptist Church on Eighth Ave. N., before going out on their march April 29, 1964. They were instructed not to offer any resistance to police.

Lewis was the first demonstrator arrested by the police in front of Morrison's Cafeteria. Following Lewis' arrest, other demonstrators would be arrested and dragged from the street and placed in patrol wagons to be sent to jail. A scuffle would occur between a Black policeman named Charles Hamilton and White policeman named Joe Standley because of an argument over a prisoner. Accused Hamilton of drawing back to him which Hamilton deny. Despite the incident, both men were ordered back to work and Kemp said the incident was being investigated. Later, the day, four Nashville ministers, three White and one Black, issued their plea after 76 people were arrested at Morrison's Cafeteria demonstrations in the afternoon. The

⁴⁹⁸ "Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement," *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

four ministers included Randall M. Falk, a Jewish rabbi; Revered Sam Dodson, Methodist minister; Reverend Lawrence Jones, Fisk Union pastor; and Reverend Albert Siener, a Catholic minister. The four ministers also asked that all churches and synagogues open their services that weekend to men and women of every race to pray for racial peace and equality.⁴⁹⁹

A meeting with Briley occurred after leaders requested it after the arrests of demonstrators at Morrison's Cafeteria. The leaders who met with Briley included Vivian, Rollins, White, McKinnie, Reverend Grady H. Donald, vice president of the NCLC; Daniel L. Williams Jr, a member of the NCLC; and Julia Talbutt, a Vanderbilt coed who had been active in the demonstrations. Briley told the leaders he recognized the right of peaceful demonstrations but not violating the law. The leaders told Briley they expected to be arrested and they were not asking that demonstrators not be arrested. After the interview, Briley met with Kemp, Barton, and Washburn at a conference. A meeting occurred at Kayne Avenue Baptist Church attended by both Blacks and Whites where Vivian said, "Demonstrators in Nashville can set the mood for rest of us throughout the South. He promised a long hot summer of discontent as civil rights marchers strike all over the South, even in Alabama and Mississippi." Vivian continued, "If Charlotte and Louisville can have public accommodations bill, Nashville can do the same thing."⁵⁰⁰

The next day, Paul Good, ABC News Southern bureau chief interviewed McKinnie and Lewis before marchers got ready to march downtown to stop briefly at five restaurants on their

⁴⁹⁹ "Admit All to Worship, 3 Faiths Ask."

⁵⁰⁰ Paul Carden, "Prayer Urged This Weekend For Equality," *The Tennessean*, April 30, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111446097/?terms=Prayer%20Urged%20This%20Weekend%20For%20Equality&match=1>.

way to the trials of demonstrators who were arrested at Morrison's Cafeteria the previous day. As planned, the marchers would stop briefly at five restaurants downtown without incident on their way to the trials. Attorneys for the demonstrators included Looby, David Vincent, and A.A. Birch. Lobby, Vincent, and Birch indicated to Judge John Boone that all convictions would be appealed in criminal court. Boone set appeal bonds at \$250 each. The lengthy session began at 1 p.m. and continued until 11:30 p.m., with an hour recess for supper. District Lucian Dale said, "The long session was held because we have a duty to those people in jail."⁵⁰¹ Looby argued that the defendants should have been charged under a city ordinance prohibiting blocking traffic, rather than the state disorderly conduct law.

⁵⁰¹ "Paul Carden, "More Clerics Urge Services Open To All," *The Tennessean*, May 01, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111855528/?terms=More%20Clerics%20Urge%20Services%20Open%20To%20All&match=1>.

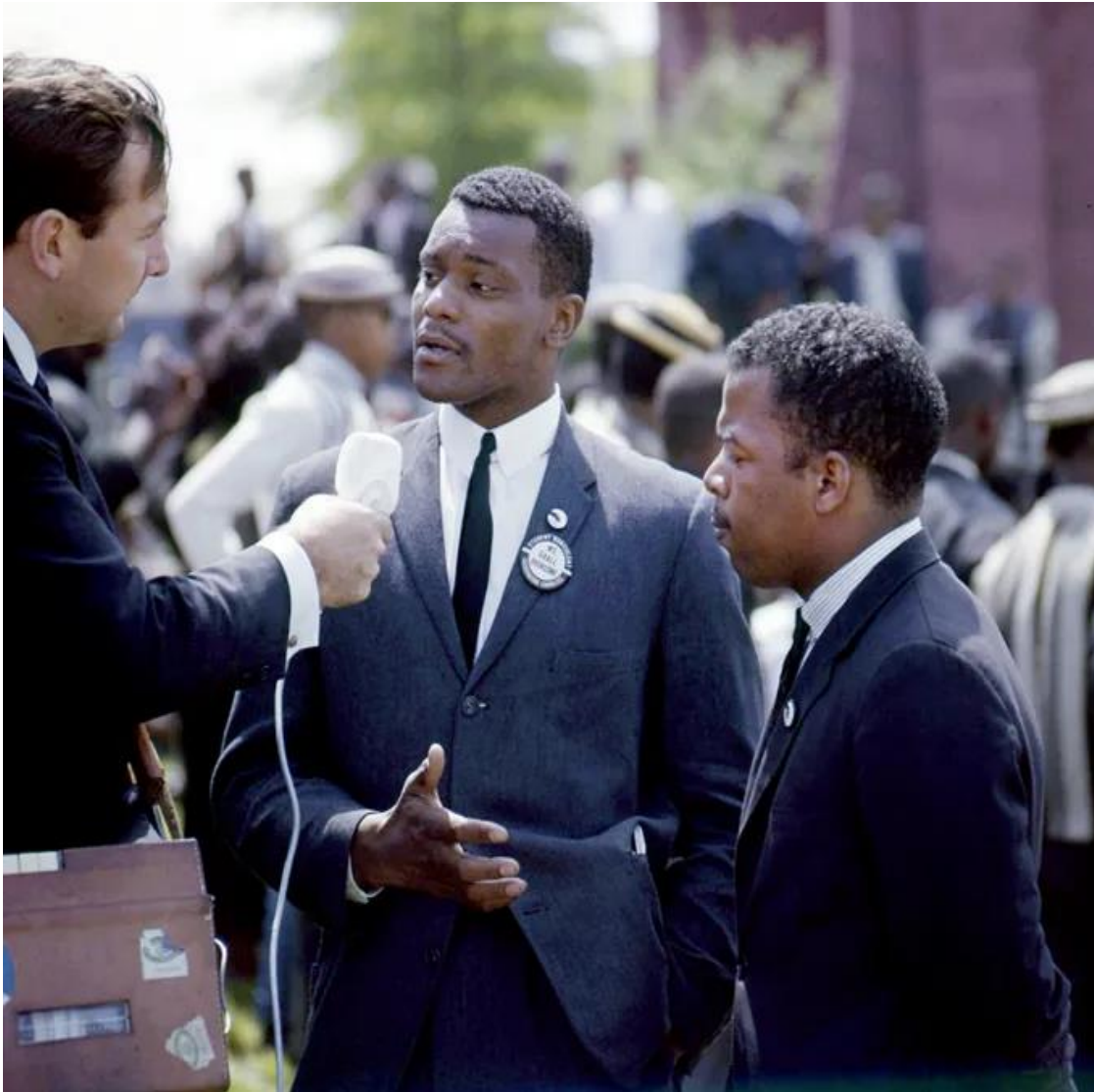


Figure 6.15 Paul Good, left, ABC News' Southern bureau chief, interviews Lester McKinnie and John Lewis at the sit-in demonstrators base of the First Baptist Church on 8th Ave. N., April 30, 1964. The group is getting ready march downtown to stop briefly at five restaurants on their way to the trials of demonstrators arrested earlier in the week.

⁵⁰² “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” The Tennessean, August 02, 2020, , <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.



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Figure 6.16 One of the sit-in demonstrator leaders, Lester McKinnie, top center, stands on top of a car to rally the troops at the First Baptist Church on 8th Ave. N., April 30, 1964. The group is getting ready march downtown to stop briefly at five restaurants on their way to the trials of demonstrators arrested earlier in the week.

⁵⁰³ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Tennessean*, August 02, 2020, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

On May 01, 1964, demonstrations occurred at the Tic Toc and Krystal Restaurants. The marchers broke into five groups of about 25 each and paraded in front of six segregated restaurants for two hours. Two of the marchers were injured, including Lewis and Lewis Miller in a scuffle after they were pushed by restaurant employees as they attempt to enter the Tic Toc restaurant. Demonstrations would continue at the Krystal restaurant. Two days later, more than 200 Whites sat in Morrison's Cafeteria to stage a sip-in where they protested the restaurant's segregationist policies. The 200 Whites were students and professional people from Vanderbilt University, Peabody College, and Scaritt College who participated in the protest. The plan was to enter Morrison's Cafeteria and purchase coffee and tea and then sip it for up to an hour or more. Doing this would deny many of the tables to regular dinner-hour patrons and was done to protest Morrison's policy of segregation at their restaurant. Before the sip-in began, around 70 protestors, most of them Blacks, conducted an orderly demonstration outside of Morrison's Cafeteria.⁵⁰⁴

After the demonstrations ended, King made an appearance at Fisk University where he spoke to around 2,000 people. King was introduced by the Reverend D.L. Williams Jr. of Gordon Memorial Methodist Church. King said, "Now is the time to make Nashville an open city."⁵⁰⁵ King advised the audience to "Keep moving in Nashville." He also attacked attempts by Southern members of the United States Senate to block the civil rights bill now pending before the Senate. King said, "There are 19 men committed to talking, talking, talking until the bill is so watered down it has no meaning." King compared the stall-in at the World's Fair in New York

⁵⁰⁴ Gerald Henry, "200 Whites Stage Sip-in At Morrison's," *The Tennessean*, May 04, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111858365/?terms=200%20Whites%20Stage%20Sip-in%20At%20Morrison%27s&match=1>

⁵⁰⁵ Henry, "200 Whites Stage Sip-in At Morrison's."

City to the stall-in now in the United States Senate. King added, “The New York stall-in would have simply blocked the traffic in one city, but the Senate stall-in is blocking the traffic of history and endangering the lives of 20 million Negroes in America. “King took aim at the Black Muslim organizations in the United States where he said, “The doctrine of black supremacy is as dangerous as the doctrine of white supremacy.” King referred to the history of civil rights efforts in Nashville as “An epic known all over the nation.” King said, “You have moved in a uniquely moving orbit of creative protest. Nashville, the Athens of the South, must make a stride into freedom.”⁵⁰⁶ After his speech at Fisk, King left Nashville and flew back to Atlanta.

On May 05, 1964, a group of 130 Nashville religious leaders from all faiths, marched to the Metropolitan Courthouse in response to President Johnson’s urgent call for moral leadership by the clergy. The march of the religious leaders was organized after an appeal the previous week by four Nashville ministers that said, “Churches become more active in working toward an equitable solution of the racial difficulties in Nashville.”⁵⁰⁷ Led by Rabbi Randall Falk of The Temple and the Reverend Sam Dodson, pastor of Calvary Methodist Church, group lined up in twos and threes and left 20th and West End avenues at 11:10 p.m. The ministers walked the 25 block with the temperatures in the upper 70s. The ministers carried several signs reading, “The Nashville Pattern is Brotherhood-Nashville Clergy Oppose Discrimination.” Shortly after noon, religious leaders gathered at the courthouse steps and held a prayer service.

⁵⁰⁶ Henry, “200 Whites Stage Sip-in At Morrison’s.”

⁵⁰⁷ Paul Carden, “130 Church Leaders March in Race Plea,” *The Tennessean*, May 06, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111859032/?terms=130%20Church%20Leaders%20March%20in%20Race%20Plea&match=1>.

After the ministers' prayer service on the courthouse steps, the religious leaders were invited to the offices of Briley where they presented the mayor with a four-point program. The program submitted by the ministers included:

1. Complete the integration of all grades in the public schools without further delay.
2. Take all feasible steps toward the passage of a public accommodations' ordinance, insuring access to all public accommodations throughout the metropolitan area for every citizen.
3. Provide adequate public recreation facilities on a desegregation basis, replacing or renovating existing swimming pools where necessary.
4. Desegregate the offices and staffs of all Metropolitan governmental agencies including the staff of General Hospital, at the earliest possible moment.

Briley told the religious leaders he would uphold the law, as set forth by state laws and the Metro Charter and ordinances. Briley said, "The community conscience is yours. I cannot speak for the community conscience." Briley told the ministers that request concerning the schools should be addressed to the school board. Briley said, "The people voted for and want an independent school board."⁵⁰⁸ Then Briley told the ministers that they should contact their councilmen in regard to the public accommodations' ordinance. He told them, "You all know the councilmen of your districts." Despite the minister's appeal for the swimming pool to be desegregated, Briley mentioned that the Park and Recreation Board had already integrated all facilities and several pools were in the process of being repaired. Briley also mentioned that Blacks in Nashville were employed in all phases of Metropolitan government. Both Falk and Dodson said they were pleased with Briley's response. Dodson said, "I think it is fundamental for our community to accept the responsibility. It is as the mayor said, up to us to reach the community conscience in our respective churches." The next day, demonstrations occurred at the Tic-Toc and Morrison's Cafeteria restaurants. Around 36 demonstrators were arrested outside

⁵⁰⁸ Carden, "130 Church Leaders March in Race Plea."

Morrison's. The arrests occurred at Morrison's shortly after 65 students begin picketing the restaurant just before 6 p.m. Some scuffling occurred at the Tic Toc Restaurant as demonstrators attempted to enter the restaurant where they were pushed out by White employees and customers.⁵⁰⁹

On May 07, 1964, demonstrations continued at Morrison's Cafeteria where four White sip-inners were arrested. The four-White sip-inners included Frank Channing Noble, a teacher at Peabody College; Adel Noble, Anthony Haschall Eton, a teacher at Fisk University; and Nancy Joy Eton, a secretary at Peabody College. All four would later make bond that day. Around 22 or 24 Black demonstrators were arrested outside Morrison's Cafeteria. Around 300 demonstrators participated in the sip-in at Morrison's, but most were turned away either at the door or at the end of the serving line. Demonstrators would also picket at Tic Toc, Krystal, and Moon-McGrath Drug Stores on that day.⁵¹⁰ The next day, demonstrations continued where around 100-200 high school students marched through the downtown area to the Metro Jail to protest against the arrest of college students earlier in the week. From the Metro Jail, the marchers split into two groups. One group marched in front of the Tic Toc and Krystal restaurants. The other group went to Morrison's Cafeteria.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁹ Paul Carden, "36 Arrested At Cafeteria," *The Tennessean*, May 07, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111859297/?terms=36%20Arrested%20At%20Cafeteria&match=1>.

⁵¹⁰ Paul Carden, "4 Whites Seized During Sip-In," *The Tennessean*, May 08, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111860083/?terms=4%20Whites%20Seized%20During%20Sip-In&match=1>.

⁵¹¹ "Right Heads, Briley Hopeful After Talks," *The Tennessean*, May 09, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111860633/?terms=Right%20Heads%20Briley%20Hopeful%20After%20Talks&match=1>.

During that same day, talks between Briley and the ministers occurred for an hour. Both expressed hope for continued progress in Nashville race relations. Briley said, "We are in communication with the responsible Negro leadership, and it is our judgement the community can continue its progress of the last year."⁵¹² Dr. Lawrence N. Jones, minister of Fisk Memorial Chapel, and spokesmen of the group said, "It was a very good exchange of ideas and we are hopeful there will be more meetings in the future." Smith said, "He is still very hopeful for Nashville." Smith added, "He thought the demonstrations will continue in Nashville until there is complete justice and freedom. White and Harrelson also attended the meeting as well. Two days later, protests would occur at the Metropolitan Courthouse. About 40 demonstrators, almost all adults, staged a silent civil right protest outside the courthouse. The protest lasted for two hours from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The protest was sponsored by the NCLC, NAACP, and Student Central Committee as a "Stand for freedom in an absolute silent protest at the courthouse." During the same day, several property owners helped bail 43 students who were arrested the past week in civil rights marches out of jail. Demonstrations would occur at Nashville restaurants over the next couple of days. Two months later, on July 02, 1964, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law which prohibited racial segregation in the United States and public accommodations like the restaurants in Nashville.

A description of Nashville Black Churches' role in Operation Open City from 1961-1964 is presented in this chapter. The chapter shows how ministers and Black churches participated in Operation Open City as early as 1961, when plans for the civil rights campaign were developed. It was First Colored Baptist Church that continued to play a significant role in the campaign. As evidence of this, the church sponsored a fund-raising drive for the NCLC desegregation

⁵¹² "Right Heads, Briley Hopeful After Talks."

movement on March 4, 1962. There were many civil rights events that took place from 1962 to 1964 that were linked to the First Colored Baptist Church. Before and after demonstrations at the downtown area, the church served as a gathering place and place of refuge. Demonstrators gathered at the church before marching to downtown stores and restaurants, such as Wilson-Quick Pharmacy, Tic-Toc Restaurant, Morrison Cafeteria's, and others, which were still segregated at the time.

Although First Colored Baptist church played a major role in Operation Open City, other Nashville Black churches also participated. The NCLC Operation Open City campaign was funded through donations from ministers of different Black churches across Nashville in January 1962. Around 500 people attended a mass meeting at Mount Zion Baptist Church on March 19, 1963, discussing what steps to take next on the Nashville civil rights campaign. A few days later, the Freedom March was organized because of this meeting. Over 400 Nashville Blacks attended the NCLC-organized meeting on March 27, 1963, at Gay-Lea Christian Church in Nashville. The NCLC decided at that meeting the best way to protest segregation is for "a complete economic withdrawal" until the situation in Nashville improved, as well as boycotting all department stores and shopping malls in the Nashville area. In addition, the mass meeting led to the second Freedom March on March 30, 1963.

Nashville's two Freedom Marches were sparked by mass meetings at Mount Zion Baptist Church and Gay-Lea Christian Church. In 1963, Nashville was undergoing Operation Open City, civil rights events including the Birmingham Campaign and March on Washington were taking place. Nashville would be connected to these two events, with Bevel organizing the Birmingham Children's Crusade and Lewis participating in the March on Washington. Bevel was a member of the NSM and SCLC and was well known for participating in the Nashville Sit-Ins. At the time,

Lewis was also a member of NSM and chairman of the SNCC. He also participated in the August 1963 March on Washington, which he helped organize. Civil rights protests occurred in Birmingham in May 1963, and protests in Nashville supported them. Finally, the movement was most heavily influenced by ministers. The letters Smith wrote to fellow Nashville ministers in 1961, in which he emphasized the importance of their participation in the Nashville civil rights campaign, are examples of this. Various ministers, including Rollins and others, participated in most marches in the campaign. Nashville Ministers, both Black and White, met with Mayor Briley numerous times, seeking ways to ease racial tensions in Nashville along with desegregating downtown restaurants. This continued to speak about the Black churches' involvement in other civil rights activities in Nashville after the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Chapter 7: Been to the Mountain Top! Nashville Black Churches continue civil rights activism in Nashville after passing the 1964 Civil Rights Act 1964-1972.

On July 02, 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed President Lyndon Johnson into law which prohibited racial segregation in the United States and public accommodations. Nashville public accommodations were desegregated under the law. The passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had a profound impact in Nashville for blacks after years of civil rights protests of public accommodations that included lunch counters, restaurants, and drug stores that were segregated at the time. Despite public accommodations in Nashville being desegregated after the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, racial issues still occurred in the city in regards housing, urban riots, school busing, and other issues in the city of Nashville. This chapter discusses continues to speak about the black's church's involvement in other civil rights activities in Nashville after passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

After the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on July 02, 1964, the civil rights protests in Nashville among activists and churches slowed down. However, a couple of months later, on December 30, 1964, news of Alabama Governor George Wallace coming to Nashville to be a keynote speaker at an educational conference at the Municipal Auditorium the following month sparked concern and outrage among Nashville educators and civil rights leaders. Wallace was a politician from Alabama and known segregationist. In 1962, Wallace was elected 45th governor of Alabama, where he delivered his inaugural address on January 14, 1963, at the Alabama State Capitol. During his speech, he gave the phrase “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever”.⁵¹³ A Few months later, on June 11, 1963, was the event would be

⁵¹³ Radio Daries, “Segregation Forever: A Fiery Pledge Forgiven, But Not Forgotten. Npr.org Last Modified January 13, 2013. <https://www.npr.org/2013/01/14/169080969/segregation-forever-a-fiery-pledge-forgiven-but-not-forgotten>.

known as *Stand in the Schoolhouse Door*. Wallace stood at the door at the Foster Auditorium at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, to block two students named James Hood and Vivian Malone from entering the University. In response, President Kennedy issued Executive Order 11111, which federalized the Alabama National Guard, and Guard General Henry V. Graham told Wallace to step aside which he eventually moved. Hood and Malone were then able to complete their registration at the University.

C.R. Dorrier, chairman of the Metro Board of Education said, “I was not aware that Governor Wallace was particularly qualified as educator.” Dorrier continued, “He was surprised to read yesterday that Wallace had been invited to deliver the Keynote address next Thursday at the annual convention of the Tennessee School Boards Association.” Nashville branch of the NAACP called Wallace invitation an “Insult to the community.” Smith wired a protest to Governor Clement. Reverend Frank P. Grisham, Vice President of the Metro Board of Education said, “We’re not aware until we read the morning paper that he was to participate in the program. With all the qualified educators in this country. I am concerned that he has been chosen to deliver the keynote address. His outstanding accomplishments in education are not known to me.”⁵¹⁴

A statement that was issued by the NCLC and Reverend Andrew White, President of the NCLC in regards of Wallace speaking in Nashville said:

It said that it is impossible to see what he (Wallace) can tell us that will enable us to increase our momentum if we were to follow his advice and his pattern, our state would go backward and not forward We sincerely hope that those who hear Governor Wallace would not take him as seriously as Mr. Cotton who invited him. We are happy to hear that Governor Frank Clement had no part in extending the invitation to Governor Wallace. We think, however, that it would have been in the interest of progress if he had advised against it. A bit of advice from Mr. Clement would certainly have helped Mr. Cotton.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ Eugene Dietz, “Wallace Bid Stirs Protests,” *The Tennessean*, December 31, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112941279/?terms=>.

⁵¹⁵ Dietz, “Wallace Bid Stirs Protests.”

Smith said in a telegram to Clement: “The appearance of Governor George Wallace on the program of the Tennessee School Boards Association is shocking and is a gigantic step backward. We urge you to make it clear that the state of Tennessee is unwilling to retrogress to the dismal and unenlightened position represented by Governor Wallace. He is a symbol of defiance of that which is decent and progressive, and many citizens are grossly insulted at this appearance.” A week later, on January 07, 1965, Wallace spoke at the Municipal Auditorium in Nashville as he was scheduled to. During his speech, Wallace urged the audience to ask the Tennessee Legislature, now in session, to pass a resolution urging Congress call a constitutional convention to prohibit the federal government, including the federal courts, from involvement in public school, and affairs within the various states. Wallace said, “Alabama actually is leading the South in industrial development.”⁵¹⁶ Wallace continued, “He brought the statements to the attention of the audience because of distortions and lies which they have read about is state in left-wing publications such as the newspaper.” Wallace mentioned in his speech that he labeled Nashville Tennessean newspaper as a “left wing” publication and denounced the United Nations. A few people outside the Municipal Auditorium picketed and protested Wallace speaking there on that day.

On January 11, 1965, Smith wrote a letter to Nashville Tennessean editor in regard to Wallace’s speech at the Municipal Auditorium:

Dear John:

Your editorial of January 9th regarding Governor Wallace’s appearance was significant and I am among the many Nashvillians glad to see it. I hope this experience taught the Tennessee School Board Association a much needed lesson. When a group of us talked

⁵¹⁶ Eugene Dietz, “Wallace Bid Stirs Protests,” *The Tennessean*, January 08, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111969626/?terms=>.

with Mr. Cotton and two other representatives of the Association (one from Fayette County and one from Madison County) they seemed content almost to the point of arrogance regarding their choice of a keynote speaker. They seemed totally oblivious to the reason for our great concern.

One thing concerned me a great deal in both your paper's reporting of the affair and your editorial. There was a tendency to look disparagingly upon those who were picketing and to make that aspect of it appear inconsequential. I differ with this view as strongly as possible. In the first place, the number of persons was not as small as the news media picture them. Even more important than that, however, was the excellent cross section of citizens represented in the picket line. They were not "civil rights" pickets in the sense in which I think your paper meant it. They were outraged citizens who wanted it known where they stood on the matter. They were not all connected with any particular civil rights groups.

In addition to being interracial, the picket line contained representatives of the three major faiths of our nation- Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish. In the lines were educators from state and private schools, retired public school teachers, physicians, lawyers, pharmacist, clergymen, a city councilmen, students, housewives, social workers, and laboring men. Perhaps the most significant thing about this cross section is that there was no deliberate attempt on anybody's part to make it so, these were simply the persons who want to express themselves in this manner and welcome this opportunity to do so.

It was very disappointing to some of us that no reporter went to the trouble to find out who comprised the picket line; they were content to follow the old line which suggests that such pickets are fanatical, peripheral groups who really don't matter one way or the other. Please be assured that the matter of publicity was not the motivating factor, but since it was publicized we would certainly have wanted the facts to be presented in a balanced fashion.⁵¹⁷

Yours sincerely,
Kelly Miller Smith

Two months later, on March 07, 1965, the Selma to Montgomery marches would begin.

The background of the Selma to Montgomery marches goes back to January and February 1965 where King and the SCLC led demonstrations to the Dallas County Courthouse in Selma, Alabama. On February 18, 1965, protestor Jimmy Lee Jackson was shot by an Alabama State Trooper where he died eight days later. In response, around 600 marchers, led by Lewis, Hosea Williams, Bob Mants, and Albert Turner, crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge. They were

⁵¹⁷ Kelly Miller Smith Papers, "Nashville Christian Leadership Council" Box 1. January 11, 1965.

confronted by the Alabama State Troopers and local police who ordered them to turn around. When they refused to, the officers shot tear gas along with beating the protestors with Billy clubs. The attack caused around 50 people to be hospitalized. This day would be called “Blood Sunday” as result of what occurred that day.⁵¹⁸

Two days later, on March 09, 1965, a second march occurred that was organized by King, Bevel, Nash, and others. On that day, what became known as “Turnaround Tuesday”, King led around 2,500 marchers out on the Edmund Pettus Bridge and held a short prayer session before turning the marchers around. Later on that evening, three White Unitarian Universalist ministers, including James Joseph Reeb, who participated in the march, were beaten by four KKK members. Reeb died from his injuries two days later. A few days later, on March 14, 1965, more than 150 Nashvillians gathered at First Colored Baptist Church before 2 p.m. to head to the United States Federal Courthouse for memorial services for Reeb. The marchers left the church and marched peacefully to the Courthouse. Reverend Robert Palmer, pastor of the First Unitarian Church in Nashville, told the marchers that he was in Selma on the day when Reeb was beaten.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁸ “Selma to Montgomery March,” History.com , October 17, 2023, <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/selma-montgomery-march>.

⁵¹⁹ Jim Squites, “150 at Services For Reeb Here,” *The Tennessean*, March 15, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111939025/?terms=150%20at%20Services%20For%20Reeb%20Here&match=1>.



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Figure 7.1 More than 150 Nashvillians leave First Baptist Church to head to the U.S. Federal Courthouse March 14, 1965 for a memorial services for the Rev. James Reeb of Boston, a victim of racial violence in Selma, Ala. Following them is UPI photographer Sam Parrish, right.

The Reverend James Woodruff, Episcopal chaplain to students at Fisk University, Tennessee A&I University, and Meharry Medical College, told the assembly of some of the happenings at Selma during the previous week. Woodruff also called on the federal government to face what he called, “Its responsibility to stop the Alabama violence and assure all citizens of

⁵²⁰ “Lost Nashville: First Baptist Church Had Major Role in the Civil Rights Movement.” The Tennessean. August 02, 2020, , <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/05/lost-nashville-first-baptist-churchs-major-role-civil-rights-movement/3054935001/>.

their right to vote.”⁵²¹ Woodruff continued, “Those of us who were there know for what a great cause the Rev. Reeb died. Despite the grief a tinge of joy touched my heart when he died because someone had to die for this cause.” Reverend Bob McKinney, national director of SNCC, warned “We’ll have sit-ins until Selma becomes a perfect place to live.” Later on that day, McKinney announced that another mass meeting would be held Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. at Bethel AME Church. McKinney also said plans for a mass demonstration that may be complete with lay-ins or pickets would be discussed at the meeting. Among the others present at the meeting included Smith and Mrs. C.E. McGruder, head of the Nashville chapter of the NAACP. The meeting was sponsored by NCLC, NAACP, and SNCC.

On March 21, 1965, a final march would occur in Selma where close to 8,000 people would gather at Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church to march to Montgomery. A couple of days later, on March 25, 1965, around 25,000 people marched to the Alabama State Capitol to hear King give his speech “How Long, Not Long”. Later, that night, Viola Fauver Lizzo, civil rights activist and White mother of five children from Detroit, Michigan, who came to Selma to support voting rights for Blacks, was murdered by KKK members while she was driving marchers back from Selma to Montgomery.⁵²² Despite the violence that occurred in Selma to Montgomery Marches as it was occurring, the civil rights campaign would be a success leading up to the passing of the Voting Rights Act on August 06, 1965.

A few months later, on October 04, 1965, a fellowship banquet commemorating the 100th anniversary of First Colored Baptist Church took place at the Andrew Jackson Hotel. More than 300 church members, clergymen, educational and government leaders attended the banquet. Dr.

⁵²¹ Squites, “150 at Services For Reeb Here.”

⁵²² “Selma to Montgomery March.”

Herbert Gezork, one-time president of the American Baptist Convention said, “The social revolution of today has established a potential economy of abundance, sweeping away the economy of scarcity men lived under in the past.”⁵²³ Gezork continued, “This social revolution has proceeded orderly and rapidly through social legislation in the democratic way of life. But in a nondemocratic way of life it is a blood revolution. Violent upheaval is inevitable where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” Attorney Robert Lillard, who represented the Metropolitan Council said, “The greatness of the community is measured by the greatness of its institutions as well as of its inhabitants. The First Baptist Church is the symbol of hope to the poor and downtrodden.”⁵²⁴

Fifth District United States Representative Richard Fulton and President Johnson sent a congratulatory telegram to the church. Johnson expressed his heartfelt thanks to the church and Smith for their contributions to Nashville. Others commending the church included Charles O. Frazier, representing the Metro Board of Education; Mrs. Emma Wood of the American Association of University Women; J.B. Stiles, of the Nashville Community Relations Conference; and Vice Mayor George Gate, representing Metropolitan government. Among those attending the banquet were Ross Bass, wife of the Tennessee senator; Rilla Moran, executive secretary of the Easter Seal Society; Dr. W.S. Davis, president of Tennessee A&I University; Councilmen Tom McGrath, Dan May, Mansfield Douglas, John Driver, Harold Love, State Representative Charles Galbreath and Nashville attorney John J. Hooker Jr.⁵²⁵ A few weeks later,

⁵²³ “Theologian Cites Social Change,” *The Tennessean*, October 05, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111993240/?terms=Theologian%20Cites%20Social%20Change&match=1>.

⁵²⁴ “Theologian Cites Social Change.”

⁵²⁵ “Theologian Cites Social Change.”

October 29, 1965, it was voted to amend its 1895 charter and dropped the word “colored” from the church and become known as First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill.

Three months later, on January 04, 1966, The Nashville Housing Authority’s (NHA) board of commissioner voted to pay a local firm \$622,000 to engineer and survey the Edgehill Urban Renewal Project. NHA board voted to award the contract to Barge, Waggoner, and Sumner Co, subject to approval by the federal Urban Renewal Administration. The Edgehill Urban Renewal Project did not just displace family homes. Business owners in the neighborhood also were at risk of displacement. In response, the NHA would partner with the Small Business Administration to discuss issues that were arising from the displacement of Edgehill’s small businesses. A series of meetings that the NHA hosted with affected business owners at the Rose Park Community Center were able to provide information on how the NHA and the Small Business Administration would help business owners and provide information on relocation. Despite NHA heading public meetings with residents, NHA still pushed to keep the project moving and made no promise to replace lost housing.⁵²⁶

In response, groups in Edgehill organized their own public meetings and hearings instead of waiting for the NHA.⁵²⁷ On January 13, 1966, The Carter-Lawrence Community Council hosted John Van Ness, the planning supervisor, to talk about the Edgehill Urban Renewal Project at the New Hope Baptist Church, located on 1303 Hawkins Street. Ness spoke at the meeting on the reason why property is being acquired for Edgehill Urban Renewal and Housing. The meeting was moderated by Dr. Eugenia McGinnis, chairman of the Carter-Lawrence Community

⁵²⁶ “Builder Hits FHA Stand,” *The Tennessean*, January 05, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111651511/?terms=Builder%20Hits%20FHA%20Stand&match=1>.

⁵²⁷ “Builder Hits FHA Stand.”

visitors. The Nashville Educational Improvement Project, an organization founded by the Ford Foundation, co-sponsored the talk with the Carter-Lawrence Community Council. On January 21, 1966, a group of South Nashville citizens organized the Edgehill Citizens Organization at the New Hope Baptist Church. Smith and McKinley Rucker, temporary cochairmen of the group, listed three objectives:

1. Betterment of the Edgehill Area.
2. Communication of property owners and renters with the Nashville Housing Authority.
3. Assisting the NHA in planning and rezoning acquired land.

Two months later, on March 01, 1966, at a council meeting, Metro Councilman Mansfield Douglas III charged on the council floor, arguing about certain real estate speculators attempting to trade property owners in Edgehill Urban Renewal area out of their property at less than fair market prices. Douglas said, “They were using progress reports of the project to create an atmosphere of frustration.”⁵²⁸ He urged residents of the area to report the activity of any person trying to coerce persons into selling their land to the Edgehill Citizens organization or to their local pastor. He said, “I would remind you the residents of the urban renewal area that there is nothing to the sales talk that urges you to trade your property before the supply of housing is exhausted.” Douglas continued, “No site occupant can be forced to move until they have first been offered an opportunity to move into a standard dwelling suitable for their needs and at a price for rent within their means.”⁵²⁹

⁵²⁸ Wayne Whitt, “Councilman Raps Land Speculators,” *The Tennessean*. March 03, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112018653/?terms=Councilman%20Raps%20Land%20Speculators&match=1>.

⁵²⁹ Whitt, “Councilman Raps Land Speculators.”

A couple of months later, in July 1966, the Chicago Freedom Movement was occurring in Chicago, Illinois. The Chicago Freedom Movement was led by King, Bevel, and Albert Raby, a civil rights activist and leader of the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCCO). NSM member Lafayette participated in the campaign as well. The Chicago campaign started back in July 1965, when local civil rights groups invited King to lead demonstrations against segregation in education, housing, and employment discrimination. Raby also asked King and SCLC to join the nonviolent campaign in Chicago. On January 07, 1966, King and the SCLC announced plans for the Chicago Freedom Movement. At the end of January, King and his family moved to a Chicago slum on purpose to bring attention to housing conditions of tens of thousands of Black Chicago residents, while CCCO organized mass nonviolent protests in the city.⁵³⁰

The SCLC launched Operation Breadbasket which would be under the leadership of Reverend Jesse Jackson. The purpose of Operation Breadbasket was to target racial discrimination in housing and employment. Operation Breadbasket also targeted companies and corporations working in Black neighborhoods that refused to hire Black employees. In July 1966, the campaign occurred through boycotts, demonstrations, marches, and the race riots that erupted on Chicago's predominately Black West Side. A month later, on August 05, 1966, during a march at Marquette Park, an all-White Chicago neighborhood, to promote open housing, Black and White demonstrators were met with racially fueled hostility and violence. Bottles and bricks were thrown at them. King, leader of the march, was struck by a rock. King admitted in a post-march

⁵³⁰ Samuel Momodu, "Chicago Freedom Movement (1965-1967)," Blackpast.org, Last Modified August 31, 2016. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/chicago-freedom-movement-1965-1967/>.

interview that he had seen many anti-civil rights demonstrations in the South but none that was as hostile and violent as the one he experienced in Marquette Park. A few weeks later, on August 26, 1966, an agreement was announced by Mayor Richard Daley, King, and various housing boards, in which the Chicago Housing Authority promised to build public housing in predominately White areas, and the Mortgage Bankers Association agreed to make mortgages available, regardless of race or neighborhood. Some SCLC staff stayed behind to assist with the housing programs and voter registration after the agreement was reached. Dr. King stayed in Chicago until January 1967, leading up writing his last book *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* Jackson settled permanently in the city to lead the Chicago branch of Operation Breadbasket. The Chicago Freedom Movement was one of the factors that lead up to the passing of the Fair Housing Act in April 1968.⁵³¹

On August 31, the Tennessee Commission on Human Relations joined four organizations including NCLC, Nashville Branch of the NAACP, the Tennessee Council of Human Relations, and the Edgehill Citizens Organization in protesting the method of relocating families displaced by the Edgehill Urban Renewal Project. The five groups signed a joined resolution that called for the NHA to “cease and desist” from acquiring property within the area without providing adequate relocation dwellings at reasonable prices. The resolution also said, “These is not, in fact, an adequate supply of housing available for the purpose of relocating families within the area. The appraisals of properties within the boundaries of the project substantially lower than comparable properties outside the project site area.”⁵³² Gearld Gimre, NHA executive director

⁵³¹ Momodu, “Chicago Freedom Movement (1965-1967).”

⁵³² “5 Units Protest Relocation of Displaced,” *The Tennessean*, September 01, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112942137/?terms=5%20Units%20Protest%20Relocation%20of%20Displaced&match=1>.

said, “The housing authority received a copy of the resolution but would have no official comment on the charges until after the broad meeting next Tuesday.”⁵³³ Gimre continued, “The NHA may be contacted by other persons to whom copies of the resolution were sent.” The joint resolution also asked that:

1. A committee be formed of representatives from the five organizations signing the resolution and such other persons as the committee may select to make studies and taken action of its own initiative to obtain the desired goals of fair housing for all citizens.
2. Letters be sent to the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission stating that “the urgency of the situation demands an immediate investigation of the Edgehill project.
3. Copies of the resolution be sent to Mayor Beverly Briley, the NHA board of commissioners, Bruce Wedge, regional director of Housing and Home Finance Agency, Robert Weaver HUD director, and to Senators Robert Kennedy (D-N.Y.) Abraham Ribicoff (D-Conn), members of the U.S. Senate government operations subcommittee.

The resolution also complained that, “The available supply of housing for relocation purposes is geared to middle- and upper-class income. By reason of price, the housing is inadequate of achieve the standards and goals of urban renewal. It further stated that “55 percent of persons in the project area are homeowners that due to the low level of income, 80 percent of all project residents are eligible for public housing.”⁵³⁴ A week later, the NHA agreed with the groups who filed the joint resolution. Councilmember Douglas stated that he did not know the value to meet with members of NHA. Douglas said, “So far, we have received little cooperation from those people. The authority is moving people out of their homes without first providing a place for them to move. The authority isn’t supposed to do this until they demonstrate adequate

⁵³³ “5 Units Protest Relocation of Displaced.”

⁵³⁴ “5 Units Protest Relocation of Displaced.”

housing accommodations have been made for those people who are uprooted.” Douglas further explained that homeowners in his district did in fact own their homes but could not afford to buy in other neighborhoods in Nashville. The homeowners were confined to the Edgehill neighborhood and did not have the means to purchase houses in more affluent communities. The two public housing projects that NHA promise to build had not been built yet.

Two months later, on November 15, 1966, the Edgehill Committee made complaints to federal authorities that the proposed location of public housing units within the Edgehill Urban Renewal project would result in racially segregated housing. The complaint asked, “Alternate locations be selected because racially segregated housing is contrary to the intent of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and federal housing legislation.”⁵³⁵ The Tennessee Commission of Human Rights statement said that the complaint was mailed the previous weeks to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, the United States Civil Rights Commission and the White House staff. Copies were also sent to Mayor Briley and the Nashville Housing Authority.

The Edgehill Committee was protesting on two sites on Edgehill Avenue for low-rent public housing. The first site was located on 517, that was located directly adjacent to Edgehill Homes and I.W. Gernert Homes. The second site, located on 518, was in the same area, separated from Edgehill and I.W. Gernert by Carter-Lawrence School property. Gimre said, “The housing authority received its copy of the complaint several days ago and is now making a study of the charges. We have taken no official position at this time. I expect the staff to meet later this

⁵³⁵ “Edgehill Unit Raps Housing,” *The Tennessean*, November 16, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113216500/?terms=>.

week to consider what effect a change of sites would have on the entire project.”⁵³⁶ Gimre continued, “The recommendations of the staff will be presented to the NHA Board of Commissioners at the next meeting.” Members of the committee signing the complaint were Mark S. Isreal, executive director of the Tennessee Commission of Human Relations; Baxton Byrant, executive director of the Tennessee Council on Human Relations; Douglas, president of the Nashville branch of the NAACP; Reverend Bill Barnes, pastor of the Edgehill Methodist Church; White, president of the NCLC; Smith, who was the president of Edgehill Citizens Organization; and Henry Tomes, chairman of the board the South Street Community Center.

On December 05, 1966, a meeting occurred that was called by a commission subcommittee to consider the five-point protest of the housing project. The commission subcommittee consisted of James Barbour, Dr. James Lawson, Max DeHaven, James F. Neal, and Reverend J.F. Grimett. Plans regarding the location of public housing units in the Edgehill Urban Renewal were put on hold pending the recommendations of the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission. Girme said, “Present plans will not be finalized until after the commission investigates complaints about the proposal locations and presents its findings to Mayor Beverly Briley.”⁵³⁷ Representatives of the Edgehill group outlined their complaint before the subcommittee and urged that alternative plans to be adopted. Douglas said, “That the present plan disregards human problems and community interest and that the NHA has been circulating

⁵³⁶ “Edgehill Unit Raps Housing.”

⁵³⁷ “Edgehill Housing Delayed By Complaints on Location,” *The Tennessean*, December 06, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113229525/?terms=Edgehill%20Housing%20Delayed%20By%20Complaints%20on%20Location&match=1>.

petitions for community support of its proposals.”⁵³⁸ Barnes told the commission “That the NHA’s insistence to concentrate public housing in large complexes represents the worst kind of social planning.” Other members of the citizens committee who met with the commission included Isreal, Bryant, White, and Smith.

The next day, another meeting occurred where Douglas said, “Rights groups are attempting to solve the problems which have accompanied urban renewal not to kill the project.” Douglas added, “That opponents of his have implied in public statements that the NAACP and other groups are urging abandonment of the urban renewal effort in Edgehill. Specially, the motives of Mark Isreal, director of the Tennessee Commission of Human Relations, have been attacked. I want to make it clear that these men are in Edgehill at the invitation of myself and the president of the Edgehill Citizens Organization, the Reverend Kelly Miller Smith. The reason they are here is because of the serious problems the people in Edgehill.”⁵³⁹ On December 07, 1966, the meetings continued where Douglas charged that the Nashville Housing Authority employees circulated a petition which supported NHA’s plan for the Edgehill Urban Renewal Project.

Douglas said, “I hope that the Tennessee Advisory Council of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission will obtain a copy of the petition, check it to see if the allegations I’m making are true, and refer it to the Senate Government Operations Committee.” Douglas continued, “This would show the nation how Nashville is using its government to exert political pressure against

⁵³⁸ “Edgehill Housing Delayed by Complaints on Location.”

⁵³⁹ Rob Elder, “Douglas Lays Housing Bias To NHA Aides,” *The Tennessean*, December 08, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113231473/?terms=Douglas%20Lays%20Housing%20Bias%20To%20NHA%20Aides&match=1>.

the best interests of the people in the community.” Eva Lowery Bowman, president of the Southwest Nashville Civic League, presented the petition to the housing authority. She was asked to comment on the councilman’s charge that the authority’s own people circulated the petition. She responded, “They did not, I circulated it and gave it to them.”⁵⁴⁰

The Nashville Community Relations Council made an announcement that it would support the Edgehill Committee’s protest that NHA’s plans would continue to racially and economically segregate housing. Dr. Lou Silberman, Nashville Community Relations Council president said, “The Housing Authority would do better to re-think the whole program in terms of the constructive criticism being offered.”⁵⁴¹ Silberman continued, “The council particularity supports the Edgehill Committee’s objection to plans for high rise, high density public housing prospects in plots 517 and 518 of the Urban renewal area.” Silberman would also say, “The council’s board of directors also voted to ask the Edgehill Committee to let the council, as an organization, join the committee.”⁵⁴² Bowman mentioned that the Southwest Nashville Civic League was responsible for the petition in regards for the housing. The petition was signed by 850 people. It asked the NHA to “Proceed with the construction of the new low-rent housing projects in the Edgehill area and to proceed with the urban renewal program for this area as originally planned and approved.” She also said, “The people who signed the petition want to move and get situated. They’re calling me and asking me what is the holdup.” Despite Bowman’s claim, Douglas said the signatures on the petition were “obtained on fraudulent

⁵⁴⁰ “State Unit To Study Open Housing at Meet,” *The Tennessean*, December 09, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113234048/?terms=State%20Unit%20To%20Study%20Open%20Housing%20at%20Meet&match=1>.

⁵⁴¹ “State Unit to Study Open Housing at Meet.”

⁵⁴² “State Unit to Study Open Housing at Meet.”

pretenses” under the impression that the petition simply supported public housing. The Edgehill area battle about housing issues would go on the next couple of years between NHA and Edgehill Housing Committee.

A month later, on January 22, 1967, a meeting was held at First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill at 3 p.m. The meeting of 200 people was sponsored by the NCLC, Nashville Branch of the NAACP, the Tennessee Council on Human Relations, and the Nashville Community Relations Council. The speakers at the meeting included Bryant, Douglas, Barnes, and Smith. The main topic in the meeting was the “War on Poverty.” Barnes said at the meeting that he thought Nashville’s poverty program needed “major surgery,” and expressed hope that a non-profit organization could be formed. Bryant charged that politics had eliminated the federal official Leo Fishman who was most knowledgeable about Nashville’s problems. B.J. Stiles, past president of the Nashville Community Relations Council, laid much of the blame for Nashville’s problems with the poverty war on Mayor Briley and others “who indicate by their actions, and occasionally by their words that they just don’t like the poor.”⁵⁴³ Stiles said, “Nashville’s war on poverty has become sidetracked and that today we have an almost brutal war on the poor themselves.” He added: “White public officials and private citizens have argued over questions of representation, methods of election and priority of programs, thousands of unfortunate people within earshot of City Hall have grown even more cynical about their destiny in life.”⁵⁴⁴

Stiles said it was unlikely that a program administrated “primarily from within bureaucratic walls” will really help the poor. He added “Here in the city, we have a poverty

⁵⁴³ Frank Ritter, “MAC Standby Unit Organized,” *The Tennessean*, January 23, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113226031/?terms=MAC%20Standby%20Unit%20Organized&match=1>.

⁵⁴⁴ Ritter, “MAC Standby Unit Organized.”

program which is not even administered basically from within the so-called bureaucratic walls. It stems directly from the plush-carpeted domain of the mayor himself. But we delude ourselves if we try any exclusive finger pointing. The mayor is but one member of the coalition of banking, newspaper, social, and educational elite who indicate by their actions, and occasionally by their words, that they just don't like the poor."⁵⁴⁵

Three months later, on April 06, 1967, Stokely Carmichael spoke at Fisk University urging them to become involved in the growing Black Power Movement. Carmichael who was chairman of SNCC at the time, participated in the March Against Fear in Mississippi the previous year where he famously proclaimed, "Black Power." Carmichael was introduced by Fisk senior coed Phillipa Thompson who referred to him as "Brother Carmichael a black man." Thompson also urged students to be "proud you are black" and to get involved "in the struggle of black people in your community." During his speech, Carmichael accused his predominantly Black audience of yielding to "white lies" by trying to be White and urged them to work for "black people." Carmichael said, "You've been brainwashed to believe this country is white. You don't have the guts to stand up and say we are black, our noses are broad, our lips are thick, our hair is matty and we are beautiful." In response, the audience cheered with one yelling "black power."⁵⁴⁶

Carmichael continued, "Your responsibility and obligation to black people in this country is to tell them who they are and where they are from, but you can't do that, because you don't

⁵⁴⁵ Ritter, "MAC Standby Unit Organized."

⁵⁴⁶ Tom Ingram, "Carmichael Accuses Negroes Of Yielding to White Lies," *The Tennessean*, April 07, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113335060/?terms=Carmichael%20Accuses%20Negroes%20Of%20Yielding%20to%20White%20Lies&match=1>.

even know you're black. What do you know except how to party and be white?"⁵⁴⁷ Carmichael then ask the audience "Do you know what the legislature did today?" He was referring to the state Senate's resolution that was passed the previous day about the SNCC leader's invitation to Vanderbilt University. Carmichael would tell the audience "Had to quit burning your hair out every Friday night and fighting and cutting each other every Saturday night because of the psychology that's been rooted to us by white people." A female in the audience would tell him "I've got straight hair." Carmichael responded, "If you can't hear the truth then don't come hear me. Because I'm going to tell it." He continued, "You have to find out what is good for black people. You should stop worrying about what is good for the United States because that is not always good." Carmichael began to denounce the war in Vietnam where he said, "It's okay to fight in Vietnam, but don't you touch no honky who calls you nigger on the streets of Nashville." Carmichael called George Washington Carver an Uncle Tom since White people allowed Black people to learn about him since because, if not for his work with peanuts "white people would been eating jelly sandwiches all of their lives."⁵⁴⁸

The next day, Carmichael spoke to the Tennessee A&I University students at Kean Hall. Carmichael spoke to an audience of around 4,000 at the university. In his speech, Carmichael said, "You ought to organize and take over this city. But you don't do it because you don't want power. You want love. You want morality."⁵⁴⁹ Carmichael described Nashville as a city with a 40% black minority and continued: "You ought to have a black police commissioner. You ought

⁵⁴⁷ Ingram, "Carmichael Accuses Negroes of Yielding to White Lies."

⁵⁴⁸ Ingram, "Carmichael Accuses Negroes of Yielding to White Lies."

⁵⁴⁹ Tom Ingram, "Carmichael Take Over," *The Tennessean*, April 07, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113335165/?terms=Carmichael%20Take%20Over&match=1>.

to even have a black mayor.” Like he did at Fisk University the previous day, Carmichael spoke about the war in Vietnam, where he said: “If you think the only way to be successful is to bomb the world, let them bomb it, but we are going to stay right here and watch them. When President Johnson says troops are being sent to help Vietnam, you know he is lying. He won’t even lift a finger in his own home state to help the colored people.”⁵⁵⁰ Despite the greeting Carmichael received from the crowd, Tennessee A&I University president W.S. Davis commented on Carmichael appearance at the university were he said, “The executive committee denied the request of student council to present Mr. Stokely Carmichael this afternoon under the sponsorship of the university. The executive committee took the position that while it would not endorse or sanction Mr. Carmichael’s appearing on the campus in an orderly manner under the sponsorship of the student council.”

On April 08, 1967, Carmichael gave a similar speech at Vanderbilt University. Carmichael said “The only way the Negro will gain structure against white society is through black power in an organized Negro community. Some black leaders want to abolish the black community but to abolish the colonial dependency on the white community.” Carmichael continued, “That black power is the only alternative Negroes have to domination by white society.” Carmichael also responded to a question he was asked: “I am nonviolent right now. If the white man tries to put his arm on me, I am going to break his arm. I am not now and never have been a pacist. I will not bow down my head and let someone beat me until he becomes civilized.”⁵⁵¹

⁵⁵⁰ Ingram, “Carmichael Take Over.”

⁵⁵¹ Jerry Thompson, “Riot Flares in Fisk Area,” *The Tennessean*, April 08, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113335163/?terms=>.

Later that evening, a riot erupted around North Nashville where Fisk University, Tennessee A&I University, and Meharry Medical College were located. The riot started around 9 p.m., after a group of students began rocking cars outside a Jefferson Street restaurant. The riot started when a Black manager of the University Inn Dinner Club, a Jefferson Street restaurant, called the police to remove a drunken, disruptive solidier from the establishment. Once the police arrived and removed the solidier, Fisk University and Tennessee A&I students started an impromptu picket line around the University Inn. More police were called to the scene, and this time they were met by students throwing rocks at them and at passing cars along Jefferson Street. A Fisk University student named Oscar Graham was shot in the leg as he ran in front of the Fisk library. Graham would be treated at Hubbard Hospital where doctors said he was not injured seriously, and he did not know who shot him.⁵⁵²

The next day, around 1:30 A.M., Assistant Police Chief Donald Barton, who was directing police on the scene of the riot, said, “Six or seven persons had been arrested and from six to ten policemen had been injured none seriously.”⁵⁵³ Several injuries included six Whites and one Black who were treated for minor injuries at other Nashville hospitals. Barton estimated the number of rioters as being several hundred and said around 400 police officers, many of them who were firing weapons into the air, were on the scene. Tom Mayhew, Metro director of public relations, was struck on the leg by a Molotov cocktail early in the riot. Mayhew was treated at Nashville General Hospital and was released. Also around 1:30 a.m., one police officer fired a shotgun at a level parallel to a ground toward a group of students who threw rocks and bricks at

⁵⁵² Thompson, “Riot Flares in Fisk Area.”

⁵⁵³ Jerry Thompson, “Rock Throwers Battle Police,” *The Tennessean*, April 08, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113335163/?terms=>.

the police for more than an hour. At 2:30 a.m., more violence occurred with police surrounded but unable to control the rioters that included students from Fisk University who took cover in Fisk dormitories and at the intersection of 18th Avenue and Jefferson Street and 16th and 17th avenues and Jackson Street.⁵⁵⁴

About 75 rioters gathered in a service station across the street from the Fisk campus and pelted police and newsmen with soft drink bottles and other objects. The Revered James Woodruff, chaplain at St. Anselm's Episcopal Chapel at Fisk University, and several faculty members attempted to stop the riot. Dr. Edward Mitchell, a teacher at Meharry Medical College, was struck on the shoulder by a rock as he attempted to reason with the students but was not seriously hurt. Woodruff said, "He and the faculty members tried to convince the students that what they were doing was not the wisest course." Woodruff was asked what reaction the students had to what he was saying to them, and he replied "What we had to say didn't speak to what they saw as the issue."⁵⁵⁵

Attorney Avon N. Williams blamed Carmichael for the riot occurring in North Nashville the previous day. Williams said, "Stokely Carmichael did not have to be present in town when this started His bully boys were here and they knew what he wanted."⁵⁵⁶ Williams said he attended a meeting Friday night at which Carmichael was present, and he claimed that Carmichael wanted the riot to happen. Williams also said, "It is my conviction Stokely Carmichael should stay out of here and our people and our community will be better off." He

⁵⁵⁴ Thompson, "Rock Throwers Battle Police."

⁵⁵⁵ Thompson, "Rock Throwers Battle Police."

⁵⁵⁶ "Williams Blames Stokely, Whites," *The Tennessean*, April 09, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113335219/?terms=Williams%20Blames%20Stokely%2C%20Whites&match=1>.

also made a statement about the riots by saying: “Until the white people of this community open their eyes and begin to recognize what justice really means and as long as they keep their eyes shut they are going to make it possible for people like Carmichael to create disturbances among decent young boys and girls. The white power structure, when it tries to create Negro puppets, plays into the hands of black power. And until Negro leadership is accepted on an equal basis your are going to encourage difficulties of the type that occurred tonight.”⁵⁵⁷

The riots would continue later on the day at Tennessee A&I University, where crowds of around 300 Blacks exchanged gunshots with police twice during the evening. The shooting occurred around 9:15 p.m. and again at midnight. Police started the shooting at Tennessee A&I University, firing over the heads of the rioters to disperse them. The into a rock wall behind which the officers took cover, and into the street behind them. The gunfire would cease after 20 minutes. Around 40 people were arrested as policemen picked up the small groups of Blacks and Whites with some of them armed throughout the area. Eight people who were injured in the riot would be treated at hospitals. One injured included a Tennessee A&I student named Calvin Connors, who was admitted to Hubbard Hospital with a bullet wound in his neck. Connors said he was shot as he stood on Centennial Boulevard between 28th and 29th avenues. Despite being shot in the neck, Connors’ injury was not life threatening, and he was in stable condition.⁵⁵⁸

Six who were arrested were White youths taken into custody at 53rd Avenue and Centennial. Four of the whites were juveniles and one had a pistol. Officers said that the six were arrested after rocks were thrown at cars and a bullet struck a police paddy wagon. The Blacks who were taken into police custody included George Washington Ware, who according to some

⁵⁵⁷ “Williams Blames Stokely, Whites.”

⁵⁵⁸ “Williams Blames Stokely, Whites.”

sources was second in command under Stokely Carmichael and SNCC. Two others who were with Ware were arrested including Ernest Stephens and Tennessee A&I University student named Eugene Andrews. The three were stopped by the police in a station wagon loaded with boxes with SNCC literature, a 16-by-20 inch picture of Carmichael and checks made out to SNCC. Ware and Stephens were both charged with inciting a riot and carrying a pistol. Each was held on \$2,500 bond.⁵⁵⁹

Aside from the incident that occurred at Tennessee A&I University, several other incidents occurred around Jefferson Street between 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. on that day. Several shots were fired from a dormitory at Fisk University. Police officers obtained permission from university officials to enter the dorm and search for weapons. Molotov cocktails were thrown through the windows of several businesses including Cheek Oil Co, located at 1720 28th Avenue, North and Gleaves Package Store, located 1434 12th Ave., South. Green's Bi-Rite Store, located at 2600 Heiman, was looted by several Blacks who broke through a plate glass window and fled when police arrived. A bullet was fired through a car window at 18th Avenue and Clarksville Highway, and five bullets smashed a window of Ernie's Cash Market, 1504 Jo Johnston Avenue. A fire damaged Hibdon's Market at 1500 22nd Ave., North which according to Fire Chief Leo McBride was started by Molotov cocktails. Another fire which occurred at Victor Business Forms, located 600 21st Avenue North was also started by Molotov cocktails but was quickly extinguished. Another store owned by Inman Otey located at 1801B Jefferson Street was looted around 7 p.m. An estimated 40 people were arrested and dozen injured during the second day of the riot.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁹ "Williams Blames Stokely, Whites."

⁵⁶⁰ "Williams Blames Stokely, Whites."

On April 10, 1967, Mayor Briley called for an end to the violence and an increased police presence in the area. Mayor Briley also blamed Carmichael for causing the riot even as he and other Nashville civic and political leaders ignored both the poor condition of the Black neighborhoods in North Nashville and the longstanding resentment against the Nashville police by black residents. He also issued a statement in which he said: “Law and order must prevail in a civilized community. It will prevail here. This is not rebellion of the ghetto, in fact the people of the ghetto are the victims of this insurrection. A few people attempting to incite and lead a mob is no answer. I want all to know that communications are open to all legitimate membership who wishes to settle problems.”⁵⁶¹ The Nashville Branch of the NAACP also issued a statement that said: “We say to our children and young people, your message has been heard loud and clear. Now it is time to translate your message into positive actions which will bring permanent solution.”⁵⁶² The NAACP statement also offered legal assistance to “individuals who believe that they have been arrested illegally or are victims of police brutality.” They also said, “A national official of the organization had been assigned to work in Nashville during this period of unrest.”

During that same day the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, an organization of Negro clergymen, issued a statement that called for an meeting of area leaders on the racial unrest and rioting. The statement was released by White that said:

We, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Nashville and vicinity, view the recent expressions of unrest in our community as a threat to our safety at large, and as evidence of distrust of its leaders. The responsibility for this rests on everyone, including religious and secular leaders alike. The solution to the current unrest lies only in an immediate confrontation with both the symptoms and causes. We do not condone

⁵⁶¹ “Not Rebellion of Ghetto, In Fact, They’re Victims,” *The Tennessean*, April 11, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113335753/?terms=>.

⁵⁶² “Violence Diminishes on A&I Campus,” *The Tennessean*, April 11, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113335766/?terms=Violence%20Diminishes%20on%20A%26I%20Campus&match=1>.

violence of any kind. We are aware of and deeply hurt over reported incidents of police brutality. We do not condone people looting, but neither do we condone the lack of protection when requested. To the students of Nashville: We reaffirm our confidence in you. We stand ready to work with and for you to bring about a solution to the unrest created by a long history of injustice in our community.

We refute the statement of Mayor Beverly Briley who pointed out that Stokely Carmichael as the sole cause of this unrest, for the real causes of the recent turmoil were in existence long before Carmichael was born. The time is upon us for all citizens of Nashville to admit our guilt of omission as well as commission. The time is come for us to reason together and hear what God would have us do in our crises. In order to do this, we, a body of Negro clergy of our city, request the mayor, the white clergy, the chief of police, student leaders of all colleges and universities, the presidents and deans of the same, editors and other representatives of the news media to meet at St. John A.M.E. Church, 21st and Formosa streets, Nashville, Tuesday, April 11, 1967 at 1 p.m.⁵⁶³

The statement was signed by the following ministers: A.H.L. Randolph, John Wesley Methodist Church; E.W. Criglar, Hickory Grove Baptist Church; W.J. Curry, Fairfield Baptist Church; J.L. Campbell, Pilgrim Emanuel Baptist Church; N. Samuel Jones, Ebenezer Baptist Church; N. E. Douglas, Ebenezer Baptist Church; J.L. Moon, Seay Hubbard Baptist Church; J.J. Brown, Dickerson Court Methodist Church; Felton Price, 14th Avenue Missionary Church; J.J. Smith, St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church; W. Watkins, Westwood Baptist Church; W. Maurice King, staff member Methodist General Board of Evangelism; Peter G. Crawford, St. John A.M.E. Church; L.H. Woolfolk, Spruce Street Baptist Church; H. A. Beline Jr., Payne Chapel A.M.E. Church; William T. Brooks, Vine Glenn Baptist Church; Enoch Jones, 15th Avenue Baptist Church and Smith, First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, and about 50 other ministers who left the meeting before signing the above.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶³ “Negro Clergy Asks Meeting,” *The Tennessean*, April 11, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113335753/?terms=Negro%20Clergy%20Asks%20Meeting&match=1>.

⁵⁶⁴ “Negro Clergy Asks Meeting.”

The next day, a meeting sponsored by the Ministerial Alliance at St. John AME Church occurred, and Black students attended. During the meeting, the students aired out their grievances concerning the riots and racial problems in the city. They complained bitterly about “The white racist press.” They continued to say, “Nazi-Likem storm trooper tactics by police who hit women and shoot into our dorms. The whites have all the white-collar jobs. Lily white banks, insurance companies and department stores who won’t hire Negroes as anything but porters.”⁵⁶⁵ Tennessee A&I University president Davis arrived at the church meeting late. Davis told the group “Several emergency remarks” concerning Tennessee A&I University students who participated in the riot. The remark that students would be suspended was no longer in effect. Davis also said, “The joint student faculty council had decided to permit outsiders on campus, unless they are engaged in subversive activities.” Briley and the other invited city officials did not appear at the meeting. White would read a telegram from Metro Police Chief Hubert O. Kemp in which he stated: “He could not be present because he didn’t feel he should leave the office right now but would meet with representatives at his office.” Dr. J.F. Grimmett asked the students, “tell us why the police came to the campus the first place,” but his question was ruled out by White. White said, “Let us get on with our major purposes.” Revered E.W. Criglar of Hickory Grove Baptist Church, cited “The two largest religious groups in Nashville as furthering the cause of Jim Crow.” Criglar continued, “The Church of Christ and the Southern Baptists have not hired a white-collar Negro publicity.” Criglar also said, “the students should take counsel from the aged and combine our wisdom with your fight.”⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁵ “Racial Strife Balm Soothes Campuses,” *The Tennessean*, April 12, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113335837/?terms=Racial%20Strife%20Balm%20Soothes%20Campuses&match=1>.

⁵⁶⁶ “Racial Strife Balm Soothes Campuses.”

Two days later, on April 13, 1967, a court hearing occurred for Ware and Stephens on charges of inciting a riot. Ware and Stephens faced General Sessions Judge Joe Loser Jr, both were released on \$1,000 bond provided by a Tennessee A&I University teacher Larry Rabinowitz.⁵⁶⁷ During that same day, a meeting was held at St. John AME Church by the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss racial problems that were brought up during the Tuesday meeting. The purpose of the meeting was also to discuss communication between students and ministers. White said, “trying to form a partnership with students and younger generation.”⁵⁶⁸ The result of the meeting ended with no action after they bickered over what position the alliance should take.

The next day, more than 200 demonstrators carrying protest signs marched peacefully from Fisk University to the Metro Courthouse where speakers would lead the crowd in cheers for “black power” and condemn police actions in the rioting. The demonstrators would gather on the steps on the courthouse to voice grievances about the White power structure, the police, and the press. The demonstrators carried signs with slogans including “Peaceful picketers don’t start riots,” “Students come together to protest police brutality,” and “Police brutality and slums cause riots.” The group, mostly composed of well-dressed students and 10 Whites, stayed on the courthouse steps for about 30 minutes. Revered Hycel Taylor, pastor of Howard Congregation

⁵⁶⁷ Craven Crowell, “SNCC Leader Decries Arrest,” *The Tennessean*, April 14, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113336091/?terms=SNCC%20Leader%20Decries%20Arrest&match=1>.

⁵⁶⁸ Crowell, “*SNCC Leader Decries Arrest.*”

Church, led the crowd in the song “We Shall Overcome” and a prayer “that we shall be set free.”⁵⁶⁹

Acting spokesman of the group was Fred Brooks, Tennessee A&I University student from Detroit who headed the Nashville chapter of the SNCC. Brooks said, “Four years ago, demonstrators stood in front of the same courthouse after being beaten up and put in jail.” Brooks was referring to the demonstrations that occurred at the courthouse back in 1963. He continued, “Our presence here today is evidence that cry four years ago was made in vain. Today we make the same cry in a different vein. The white power structure cannot beat up and bully the Negro population. If our black people cannot have peace and harmony in Nashville, nobody can have peace and harmony in Nashville.” Brooks added, “That so long as police brutality, slums, lack of jobs, and ghettos exist in our city, black people are angry and black people are going to raise hell.”⁵⁷⁰

Brooks also mentioned, “Student groups all over the country are moving in sympathy with the black students in Nashville.” Brooks named other places including Atlanta, Cincinnati, Tugaloo, Miss., New York, Boston, Oakland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and Detroit. Brooks mentioned about Briley where he said, “Briley must straighten up or he has got to get the hell out. We are going to have some say so as to how this city is run.”⁵⁷¹ Brooks accused Briley of “racism of the worst sort” for sending police to the Fisk Campus Saturday night. Brooks continued, “We want Mayor Briley to get his white people out of our university.” The march

⁵⁶⁹ Frank Sutherland, “200 March in Peace Here,” *The Tennessean*, April 14, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113336077/?terms=>.

⁵⁷⁰ Sutherland, “200 March in Peace Here.”

⁵⁷¹ Sutherland, “200 March in Peace Here.”

lasted until 2 p.m., when the students picked up their books and returned to their classes. Taylor would issued his statement after the march that said:

I do not speak for the students but as a sympathizer, I have participated in their struggle to interpret their plight since its inception Saturday night. It has become increasingly apparent to me that their frustrations and expressions of tension are indeed justified in light of the provoking incidents of police force to disrupt supposed violence and rioting in the Fisk and A&I area. I am aware as a result of my personal presence at the scene of the rioting that the apparent anxiety of the entire community over the presence of Stokely Carmichael has led to the quick and seemingly unwarranted action of bringing to the scene of the Fisk and A&I campuses riot police at the mere suggestion of disorderliness. It is these incidents of unnecessary police intervention that have sparked the need for protest among the students. The anxieties of the students have been further intensified due to the lack of sincere concern and responsibility on the part of government officials, local leaders and the Nashville news media. The demonstrations today was an expression of students continued unrest which has brought about sympathy from other student groups around the country. It is my judgement that we must now take seriously the frustrations of these students. It is time that we hear what they have to say and try to interpret the depth of meaning behind the way in which they articulate their frustration.⁵⁷²

On April 19, 1967, White, Douglas, and Dr. Edwin Mitchell, chairman of the Metro Human Relation Commission led a joint meeting of the boards of the NCLC, Nashville Branch of the NAACP, and the Davidson County Independent Political Council and demanded that the Metro administration act to end “raw brutality” against Negroes. During the meeting, the three intended to launch a joint concentrated effort to press the demands of the Black community forcefully but nonviolently. Mitchell said, “We hope this is the beginning of a coordinated attack on some of the problems that face our community.”⁵⁷³ Other people who attended the meeting included Williams, Grimett, Woodruff, P.C. Onwuachi, professor of anthropology at Fisk University, and Iman Otey, who was arrested by police officers when he refused to leave his car

⁵⁷² Sutherland, “200 March in Peace Here. ”

⁵⁷³ Rob Elder, “Negroes Urge Brutality End,” *The Tennessean*, April 20, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/113334272/?terms=Negroes%20Urge%20Brutality%20End&match=1>.

during the riot. Otey told the group: “Don’t get concerned because it was me but because it happens every day.” Grimett said in the meeting, “It is unfortunate that we had this kind of thing to drive us together but perhaps it’s a blessing in disguise.” Williams said, “It is fairly obvious that this community continues to be afflicted with racism. If violence takes the lead a vacuum is created. We need to fill that vacuum.” Williams continued, “These organizations have been active, and I think we need to make it known that they denounce continuation of racism as a way of life.”⁵⁷⁴

A statement by the committee was issued during the meeting that said:

The Metropolitan police has been praised for its conduct in connection with the recent disturbances in North Nashville. No doubt some of the police force deserve such praise. Many persons directly involved testify however that others deserve no such praise at all. Police brutality is no new thing in Nashville. The happy fact is that despite all improvements in recruitment, training, and leadership, the situation remains grave and indeed desperate. The duty of police to protect should not be used as a cloak for raw brutality. The time has come for members of the community most seriously affected by power on the part of our policemen to make their voices heard. In a meeting tonight called by the presidents of DCIPC, NAACP and NCLC, decision was made to launch an immediate, affirmative program to insure that actions by our police force serve the cause of justice and human dignity.

It is too much to expect that this community will tolerate any longer the brutal and unequal treatment which many citizens continue to suffer at the hands of the police. We urge the citizens of Metropolitan Nashville to join us in the effort to see that unfit persons are removed from our police force and that police brutality does not go unpunished. We feel sure that the community is ready to bear the cost of a first-rate police force well trained and properly oriented in human relations. The administration has failed to fulfill its duty in the foregoing regards. It is our hope and demand that it now give its full support and attention to this urgent matter. We stand ready to provide documentation and to do all that we can to positively assist.”⁵⁷⁵

A month later, on May 23, 1967, Carmichael, Ware, and Hubert Gerold “H. Rap” Brown, a civil rights activist and member of SNCC made appearance in court where they attended a trial

⁵⁷⁴ Elder, “Negroes Urge Brutality End.”

⁵⁷⁵ Elder, “Negroes Urge Brutality End.”

contesting anti-riot laws following the riots in North Nashville the previous month. Carmichael would admit that he was at the riot scene that occurred in North Nashville on April 8, 1967, despite the lawsuit filed by him and other plaintiffs that said Carmichael had left Nashville before the riots started. Carmichael also admitted under cross-examination by defense attorney James F. Neal, a former U.S. attorney, that his philosophy was, “One I had since I was 5 years old is to shoot those white cops if they start shooting, before they shoot you.”⁵⁷⁶ Carmichael said, “curiosity got the best of me” and that he walked over to 18th Avenue, North and Jefferson Street on the night of April 08 to see what was going on. Carmichael also testified that he was staying at the home of Onwauchi at the time of the riots. Carmichael said, “He went over and stood on the Fisk campus to see what was happening.”⁵⁷⁷

Carmichael would be questioned by William M. Kunstler, chief attorney for the plaintiffs. Carmichael stated he spoke to several persons he knew and asked them what was going on. He said, “I wasn’t there over about three minutes. I saw a lot of people milling around.” But he assured the court that he did not see anybody throwing rocks during the riots. Neal then asked Carmichael if he was a member of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) which he denied. Carmichael was also asked if he was a member of any communist group which he also denied and he said “Communism is stale.” Carmichael then said he was leaving Nashville the same day following the testimony to speak at the University of California, Los Angeles. Father John Lane Denson rector of Christ Episcopal Church, who preceded Carmichael on the witness stand was also questioned by Kunstler and told about a April 05 meeting that occurred

⁵⁷⁶ Nellie Kenyon, “Carmichael At Riot Scene,” *The Tennessean*, May 24, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112139663/?terms=Carmichael%20At%20Riot%20Scene&match=1>.

⁵⁷⁷ Kenyon, “Carmichael at Riot Scene.”

with Briley. Denson said that the meeting was attended by Bishop John Vander Horst of the Episcopal Church, Woodruff, and others. He testified that Briley said at the meeting that Woodruff was constantly involved “with many people coming into Nashville from the outside for meetings.”⁵⁷⁸

Woodruff also would testify, and he said, he was “forebidden to have SNCC meetings” in his chapel. Woodruff would be questioned by attorney I.T. Creswell Jr. Woodruff would also say, “The crowd was noisy and was milling around; that he saw a window crash in a bus; heard a black police officer shout, you niggers get back. We are not going to have these crowds.” Woodruff also said he saw 100 or more police officers with riot helmets, guns, and long sticks. He attempt to get the police removed from the scene. He said, “But in a few second rocks started flying and I started walking.”⁵⁷⁹ He testified that he heard “bullets flying around everywhere.” Woodruff also said he and a couple of others were taken to police headquarters about 1 a.m. when they were trying to buy soda from a service station machine. He said he and the others would be freed after the police could not charge them with anything. SNCC lawsuit against Briley would go on for a couple of weeks, and the lawsuit failed in June 1967. Also in that same month, Brown would succeed Carmichael as chairman of SNCC.

A year later, on April 04, 1968, King was assassinated at the Loraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee by James Earl Ray. King was in Memphis to support Memphis sanitation strike workers. The sanitation workers were protesting racial discrimination that they were experiencing at the time and the death of two Black sanitation workers Echol Cole and Robert Walker on February 01, 1968. Both Cole and Walker died by being crushed by the garbage

⁵⁷⁸ Kenyon, “Carmichael at Riot Scene.”

⁵⁷⁹ Kenyon, “Carmichael at Riot Scene.”

compactor. Lawson came to Memphis in 1962 to become pastor at Centenary United Methodist Church, the largest Methodist church in Memphis. When the sanitation workers went on strike on February 1968, Lawson himself got involved in the campaign. On February 24, 1968, he made a speech where he said, “For at the heart of racism is the idea that a man is not a man, that a person. You are human beings, You are men, You deserve dignity.”⁵⁸⁰ Concurrent with this speech, the slogan “I Am A Man” started to appear on marchers’ placards.

In March, Lawson invited King to come to Memphis to speak to sanitation workers. King at the time was working on the civil rights campaign called the Poor People Campaign. Other civil rights leaders including Wilkins and Rustin came to Memphis to support the sanitation workers. On March 18, 1968, King arrived in Memphis to speak to 10,000-25,000 people at the Mason Temple. During his speech, King said, “You are demonstrating that we can stick together. You are demonstrating that we are all tied in a single garment of destiny, and that if one Black person suffers, if one black person is down, we are all down.”⁵⁸¹ King would also encouraged the group to support the sanitation strike by enacting a citywide work stoppage. King promised that he would return to Memphis on March 22 to lead a protest through the city. The following day, King left Memphis but SCLC members Bevel and Abernathy remained in the city to help organize the protest and work stoppage. On March 22, 1968, a massive snowstorm hit Memphis which cause King to cancel his trip to the city and organizers to reschedule the march on March 28.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸⁰ Samuel Momodu, “Memphis Sanitation Strike (1968),” Blackpast.org, February 5, 2024, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/memphis-sanitation-strike-1968/>.

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⁵⁸¹ Momodu, “Memphis Sanitation Strike.”

⁵⁸² Momodu, “Memphis Sanitation Strike.”

On March 28, 1968, King and Lawson led the sanitation strikers and marchers in downtown Memphis. City officials estimated that 22,000 students skipped school to participate in the march. King arrived late and found the crowd on the brink of chaos. King and Lawson quickly called off the demonstration as violence began to erupt. King was taken to a nearby hotel. Rioting and looting started to occur with Black armed men with iron pipes and bricks who began to smash windows and loot stores. Police who immediately reacted to the riot, moved into the crowd with tear gas, nightsticks, mace, and gunfire. Police arrested around 280 people and 60 who were mostly Black were reported injured during the riots. Lawson told the demonstrators to return to Clayborn Temple, a church located in Memphis. Police officers followed demonstrators back to the Clayborn Temple, entered the church, released tear gas inside the sanctuary, and clubbed people as they lay on the floor to get fresh air. During the riot, police officer Leslie Dean Jones shot and killed 16 year-old Larry Payne. Witnesses would said that Payne had his hands raised as Jones pressed the shotgun to Payne's stomach and fired it. That same day, Memphis mayor Henry Loeb called for martial law and brought in 4,000 National Guard troops to calm down the violence.⁵⁸³

The following day, over 200 striking workers continued the march, carrying signs that read, "I Am a Man." King spoke at a news conference before going back to Atlanta, where he said, "He had been unaware of the divisions within the community, particularly of the presence of a black youth committed to Black Power called the invaders, who were accused of starting the violence." On March 30, 1968, a meeting would occur with the SCLC where it was decided to support King's return to Memphis. King originally considered not to return to Memphis but decided to return to continue to support the sanitation workers protest campaign down there. On

⁵⁸³ Momodu, "Memphis Sanitation Strike."

April 02, 1968, around 600 people attended Payne’s funeral at Clayborn Temple. People who were in attendance included striking sanitation workers, clergy members who supported the strike, national television representatives, and high school students and faculty from Mitchell Road High School where Payne was enrolled prior to his death. Revered B.T. Dumas, pastor of New Philadelphia Baptist Church gave the eulogy entitled, “Man is Like Grass And Is Cut Down in Various Stages of Life.” Payne’s mother, Lizzie Mason Payne, who was full of grief over her son’s death, had to be led from the church. Following the funeral, the sanitation workers had a peaceful march downtown.⁵⁸⁴

The next day, King returned to Memphis and was originally also planning to visit Payne’s mother. On that day, King would give in his final speech at the Mason Temple called “I’ve Been to the Mountain Top.” In the speech, King mentioned many things including the time of his near fatal stabbing by Curry during the signing of his book *Stride Toward Freedom* back in 1958. He said, if he sneezed that would have caused him to die, and he would have not been around to see the Sit-Ins, Freedom Rides, the Albany Movement, the Birmingham Campaign, the March on Washington, and Selma to Montgomery March. King also mentioned Lawson by name during the speech where he called him a “noble man” and said, “He’s been going to jail for struggling; he’s been kicked out of Vanderbilt University for this struggling; but he’s still going on, fighting for the rights of his people.”⁵⁸⁵ King also spoke about the possibility of his untimely death when he said:

Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live – a long life; longevity has its place. But I'm not

⁵⁸⁴ Momodu, “Memphis Sanitation Strike.”

⁵⁸⁵ “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” Kinginstitute.stanford.edu, Last Modified August 03, 2023. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/ive-been-mountaintop>

concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.⁵⁸⁶

On April 04, 1968, King stepped out of the Lorraine Motel room 306 where he was staying at the time to speak to his SCLC colleagues and smoke a cigarette. On that day, he was prepared to leave Lorraine Motel for dinner at the home of a Memphis minister name Samuel “Billy” Kyles. According to Jesse Jackson, King’s last words before he was shot were to jazz musician Ben Branch where he told him, “Ben, make sure you play ‘Take My Hand, Precious Lord’ in the meeting tonight. Play it real pretty.” King was then shot by Ray at 6:01 p.m. King would die at Saint Joseph’s Hospital at 7:05 pm at the age of 39. After hearing about his death, Lawson said: “Momentum for transforming the country was lost to what he described as ‘the politics of assassination.’”⁵⁸⁷

In many parts of the country, King’s death brought shock and grief among many people in Nashville. White said about King’s death, “Is a desperate blow to the domestic peace and tranquility for which he worked so hard, for which he died.” Douglas called King’s killing “A national tragedy and a personal loss to every individual who longs for the achievement of justice, equality and the transformation of poverty and despair into prosperity and friendliness”⁵⁸⁸ Smith

⁵⁸⁶ “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop.”

⁵⁸⁷ Mildred Europa Taylor, “This Black Clergyman Invited MLK to Join the Historic 1968 Memphis Strike that Led to His Murder,” Face 2 Face Africa, June 09, 2019. <https://face2faceafrica.com/article/this-black-clergyman-invited-mlk-to-join-the-historic-1968-memphis-strike-that-led-to-his-murder>

⁵⁸⁸ “Services Set Here for King,” *The Tennessean*, April 05, 1968, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111771593/?terms=Services%20Set%20Here%20for%20King&match=1>.

called the shooting, “An example of the extremes to which racism can carry some people.” Smith continued, “Fortunately, Dr. King has given himself to a cause which will not die with his death. We must now work toward the fulfillment of the great American dream he talked about and worked for so much of his life.”⁵⁸⁹

During that same day, riots would erupt in North Nashville following King’s Assassination. The riot would start around 8 p.m. after two Nashville policemen were involved in a shooting at 22nd Avenue and Osage Street. More than a dozen patrol cars rushed to the scene, sirens screaming, and residents in the area poured into the street. A crowd of about 200 people gathered at 18th Avenue, North and Jefferson Street. At first, protestors were throwing rocks at cars moving through the intersection. Within two hours, gunfire occurred. Assistant Police Chief John Sorace was struck in the back of the head by a rock as his unmarked police car passed near Tennessee A&I University. Sorace was then admitted to St. Thomas Hospital where he was treated for a scalp laceration. Two people were wounded during a police gun battle including a 13-year-old named Anthony Webster and 50-year-old named Elvis Fleming.⁵⁹⁰

Other incidents that day included rocks being thrown at cars at two newsmen including Robert Johnson, photographer for the Nashville Tennessean and Buddy Morgan, photographer for WSM-TV, Channel 4. Riots also spread to other areas in North Nashville outside of Tennessee A&I University and Fisk University. Six people were taken into custody by police at 14th and Himes Street after officers said they confiscated Molotov cocktails and weapons. Eight

⁵⁸⁹ “Services Set Here for King.”

⁵⁹⁰ Jerry Thompson, “Guard Seals, Patrols North Nashville Area,” *The Tennessean*, April 05, 1968, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111771593/?terms=Guard%20Seals%2C%20Patrols%20North%20Nashville%20Area&match=1>.

youths attempted to brake and loot Ballow's Birate Market located 626 40th Ave North. The youths fled once the police arrived. More windows were broken in three stores around the intersection of Jefferson and 14th Avenue, North. Windows were also broken at Fuqua's Auction Co., 1105 Buchanan. Four Black men robbed a liquor store located at 12th Avenue, North and Jo Johnston Avenue. Fires broke out on the 14th and Jackson and 17th and Jefferson but were quickly extinguished. The Big T Drive-In located at 17th and Jefferson were vandalized and looted. The Tennessee National Guard which was called by Briley to sealed off North Nashville and stop the violence.⁵⁹¹

The next day, in the afternoon, an interfaith service occurred at Saint Mary's Catholic Church downtown. Hundreds of Vanderbilt University students led by 40 Black student members of the Afro-American Club at the university overflowed the church as more than 300 stood out front on Fifth Avenue North. Bishop Joseph A. Durick of the Nashville Catholic Diocese eulogized King's career where he called King, "a modern Moses leading his people to the promised land."⁵⁹² Durick continued, "There was a man named Martin Luther King who will be long remembered in history. King was indeed the prophet of cause and renewal for he cried for his people and was their marching feet. He was their mind, forging for them weapons of nonviolence a builder of bridges and lines of communication."⁵⁹³ He quoted Dr. King: "The Negro needs the white to be freed from fears and the white needs the Negro to free him from guilt."

⁵⁹¹ Thompson, "Guard Seals, Patrols North Nashville Area."

⁵⁹² Jerry Thompson, "Troops Leave A&I Campus; 2 Youths Shot," *The Tennessean*, April 06, 1968, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111772753/?terms=>.

⁵⁹³ Thompson, "Troops Leave A&I Campus; 2 Youths Shot."

Rabbi Randall Falk said, “For each of us there is a personal sense of loss. I thought of the scriptures of our heritage. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle.” Falk declared: “May we somehow find with God and each other faith to carry on.” The Rev. D.P. McGeachy II, pastor of the Westminster Presbyterian Church read, in the silent hush of the church, verses from the book of Hebrews beginning with: “Let brotherly love continue. The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid ; what can man do to me? The Revered John Lane Denson of Christ Episcopal Church, read a litany which beseeched: “That you will teach us really to see on another, not in racial categories or as strangers wearing colored masks but as living and human persons created by you in your very image.” The people answered: “We ask you to hear us, Lord.” Briley issued a statement where he described King as “a great spiritual leader of moderation of the civil rights movement.” Briley continued, “All citizens to work together with the same nonviolence that Dr. King advocated so well.” Briley also said, “He was declaring a state of emergency for up to 15 days, because of violence which erupted in North Nashville Thursday night, hours after King’s assassination and almost exactly a year after last April’s riots here. Briley said he acted under a state statute passed by this year’s session of the legislature and 1967 Metro ordinance. White said in regards to King, “Black and white people of the nation should be thankful the creative life of Dr. Martin Luther King. White continued, “For he gave all he had peace, tranquility, and progress. His unusual courage, his unnatural ability and his enthusiastic determination combined to make him the chief spokesman for

dignity and the uplift of man.” White was giving a in final memorial tribute to King in Nashville churches that day. Smith who spoke at the same memorial service as White said: “Twelve years ago he spoke from this same pulpit and tonight he dead murdered by hatred and madness while he as a Christian crusader fought so hard for righteousness and peace.” Smith said the service was “one of thankfulness that such a man walked among us.”⁵⁹⁴

A crowd of approximately 1,000, many who had attended the memorial services for King, marched to the Metro Courthouse. The crowd was demanding Briley to come out but he refused to address the crowd. Despite not addressing the crowd outside, Briley would meet with the leaders, ministers, and students. People who attended the meeting included Smith, White, Reverend Dogan Williams of Gordon Memorial Methodist Church, Revered Hycel Taylor, a Vanderbilt divinity student; Reverend Robert Bennet of Metropolitan Baptist Church, Reverend S.J Holley Sr of Saint Luke’s CME Church, Reverend Anthony Williams of Lilly Hill Baptist Church, William R. Smith of the Methodist Tennessee-Kentucky Conference, and C.E. McGruder, advisor to NAACP youth group. During the meeting, they would asked Briley that the National Guard should be pulled out. Briley responded where he said, “I will removed troops from the area of confrontation but not from the community.” Briley added “That he would act on the condition that they take responsibility for law and order.”⁵⁹⁵

As the discussion occurred, Brooks entered the mayor’s office where he was ordered out after Briley said:

⁵⁹⁴ W.A. Reed Jr, “He Gave All, Mourners Told,” *The Tennessean*, April 06, 1968, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111772753/?terms=He%20Gave%20All%2C%20Mourners%20Told&match=1>.

⁵⁹⁵ Thompson, “Troops Leave A&I Campus; 2 Youths Shot.”

“Get out, Fred Brooks. Take him out.” Brooks left the office without saying a word. Bob Farmer, a Fisk University student, told the mayor: “It would be a very good thing for you to say a few words to those people outside.” Briley asked him, “What would I accomplish?” Farmer responded, “You would accomplish a presence.” Briley said, “I will not be subject to mob violence. I don’t like the idea of confrontation with irresponsible people I don’t confront large groups.” Around 2:45 p.m., Williams came out and told the crowd: “The mayor refused to talk to responsible citizens. He refused to come out. Let’s disperse. Let’s disperse. The crowd would break up and most would returned to North Nashville without incident.” After the meeting, Briley spoke at a press conference where he said: “I’ve had the group which has appeared at the courthouse today send in eight or 10 leaders to discuss their problems with me. They declined to discuss them and asked that I confront some sincere people and some people who constitute the Black Power Movement. I find instead that people who entered my office were unwilling to speak as responsible leadership.”⁵⁹⁶

Later on the day, the National Guardsmen and police spent three hours in a sniper hunt at Tennessee A&I University campus. The armored personnel carriers were called up after policemen on Centennial Boulevard and were pinned down behind a wall by sniper fire from the campus. The police officer had arrived to investigate a report that a truck on Centennial Boulevard was shot at from the campus at 10:23 p.m. Two Tennessee A&I students named Edgar Lawson and William Miles were wounded by gunfire during the search. The police and guardsmen, accompanied by four armored personnel carriers, entered the campus midnight. The guardsmen and police searched three men’s dormitories including Clement Hall, Watson Hall 1,

⁵⁹⁶ Thompson, “Troops Leave A&I Campus; 2 Youths Shot.”

and Watson Hall 2. Despite a few small arms were seized, an automatic weapon continued to fire from Watson No.1 after the search teams left that dorm to enter another. There were no firing, as the police and troops left the campus. Around 100 Guardsmen and about 50 to 75 went to the campus. As they moved onto the campus, the Guardsmen had orders to hold their fire. The police would fired a few shots, but not directly at the dormitories. By midnight, around 150 people had been arrested for violating a 10 p.m. curfew that were declared by Briley.⁵⁹⁷

The next day, mourners gathered at Gordon Memorial Church for a memorial service for King. Around 1,500 people attended the memorial service. White spoke at the memorial where he said, “Nashvillians and Americans must do more than pay tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. They must continue his fight.”⁵⁹⁸ White continues, “He died for the basic social, political, and attitudinal changes which would eliminate fear, misery, and oppression. And time is running out and business as usual will get us nowhere in our fight against these conditions.” Smith also spoke where he said, “We can memorize Martin Luther King by our tears, and our words of mouth, but we must remember to memorialize him by our deeds. Smith continued, “Singularly appropriate that King be memorized on the day when we commemorate the first Christian protest march on Palm Sunday of the words of Jesus. Weep not for me, rather weep for yourselves.” A church singer named Sam Henderson begin to sing the spiritual that King requested before his death: Take my hand and lead me on and here and there in the crowded church some, some wiped away tears.”⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁷ Thompson, “Troops Leave A&I Campus; 2 Youths Shot.”

⁵⁹⁸ W.A. Reed Jr, “Memorial Not Enough Says Pastor,” *The Tennessean*, April 08, 1968, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111776839/?terms=>.

⁵⁹⁹ Reed Jr, “Memorial Not Enough Says Pastor.”



Figure 7.2 Speakers at a mass memorial service at Gordon Memorial Church for the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. April 7, 1968, confer before the morning service. They are the Rev. Peter Crawford, left, secretary of Interdenominational Minister's Fellowship; Bishop E.L. Hickman of Atlanta; the Rev. Andrew White, president of Nashville SCLC; the Rev. W.R. Smith, program chairman; and Dr. A.A. Knight, Methodist Broad of Education.

⁶⁰⁰ “Nashville Then: 1968 Civil Rights Movement in Nashville,” *The Tennessean*, March 17, 2017, <https://www.tennessean.com/picture-gallery/news/2014/02/24/nashville-then-1968-civil-rights-movement-in-nashville/5775413/>.



Figure 7.3 A pack house of 1,500 people pray during an interracial, interdenominational memorial service for the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., at the Gordon Memorial Church in Nashville April 7, 1968.

Revered Peter Crawford, secretary of the Interdenominational Ministers Fellowship which sponsored the memorial said: “No race or nation could claim King, he belongs to the ages and, like him we must try to love our enemies.”⁶⁰² Revered Charles Carter, associate rector of Christ Episcopal Church, declared, “Something is wrong with the fabric of all our lives.” Speaking for the white middle class Carter said: “We may not riot, but many of us are raging inside at his death.” Carter also called the weekend a tragedy “a judgement of God.” Dr. Foy Valentine, secretary of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, told the audience: “All of us must resolve that the dream he dreamed must not perish or evaporate in

⁶⁰¹ “Nashville Then: 1968 Civil Rights Movement in Nashville,” *The Tennessean*. March 17, 2017, <https://www.tennessean.com/picture-gallery/news/2014/02/24/nashville-then-1968-civil-rights-movement-in-nashville/5775413/>.

⁶⁰² Reed Jr, “*Memorial Not Enough Says Pastor,*”

tears here in Nashville. His death proves that death can be purposeful. He leaves us an enduring dream.” Dr. A.A. Knight of the Methodist Board of Education said, “Dr. King’s life belongs to all of us. We all need heroes. The young people of the nation need persons they can accept for their humility and honesty. Martin Luther King was a hero.” Methodist Bishop, E.D. Hickman of Atlanta, prayed for public officials said, “You cannot be a mayor of part of a city and for the people of the church. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” From outside and inside the church, audience sang together in tribute to King that said, “Deep in my heart I do believe we shall overcome.”

Other ministers across Nashville spoke of King. Dr. Roy C. Clark at West End Methodist Church said, “We will either have to decide in this crisis that we believe the gospel or don’t. At least Martin Luther King can speak to us here. He believed in nonviolence as a method that expressed the mind of Christ. He defined the issue by his life.” Clark declared, “That some persons in his congregation and the community are sincerely struggling to rise above their anxieties, hostilities and fears to see what they can do in a constructive manner. Every such effort should have our support. Clark told the West End congregation that “Constructiveness means entering into dialogue, thinking and allowing others to think. There is a new game in the land today and the name of the game there must be justice.” Clark concluded, “This I not a time for pointing fingers of condemnation or to asses blame. It is the time to say to men who profess to take Christ seriously, that he calls them to put their hands and hearts and their pocketbooks to work with fellow citizens of all segments of society to provide an order which has less restricted privileges for some and more open opportunity for all.”⁶⁰³

⁶⁰³ Reed Jr, “*Memorial Not Enough Says Pastor.*”

Revered Beverly Asbury at Vanderbilt University Chapel in Benton Hall said, “The faith that Martin Luther King lived for could not be assassinated. The good news did not die in Memphis for we have to live it here in Nashville”. Ashbury continued, “He knew that we have to have a cause, and he attracted us to him because he was a man for others. Somehow, he, more than most of our contemporaries, communicated to us that Jesus reveals our purpose as human beings. Dr. King held up Jesus Christ to us a way beyond race, prejudice and hatred.” In our grief we may see only evil, but Dr. King and Jesus Christ would have us see more that deep down in our soul we, too, know what it is to fear death, war, riots and to hate death that destroys the lives of those we love and fear.”⁶⁰⁴

At the Edgehill Methodist Church, a resolution acknowledge, “As a congregation, we regret that corporately we have been silent up to now.” The resolution from the Interracial Methodist Church pastored by the Revered Bill Barnes, concerning the Memphis striking garbage workers was released that read:

In the aftermath of the brutal assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, who was in Memphis to lead the workers’ struggle for dignity and negotiating power, the mayor’s refusal to grant the very minimal demand of the workers subjects the city’s profile to unnecessary tension and danger. We urge the mayor to change his stand and comply with the workers demand. We believe that the demand of the workers for a union dues checkoff is appropriate and justified.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁴ Reed Jr, “*Memorial Not Enough Says Pastor.*”

⁶⁰⁵ Reed Jr, “*Memorial Not Enough Says Pastor.*”

The Edgehill congregation then voted to send four members to the mass march that was occurring in Memphis the next day. This included Barnes, James Davis, Davis Linge, and Quincy Scott. At Christ Episcopal Church downtown, rector John Lane Denson remarked in his morning sermon, “Men exalt their priests, tolerate their teachers and murder their prohibits.” Denson continued, “Martin Luther King has spoken to the hear our situation in patience and love he has told us the way thing are deliberately and quietly but also openly and frankly. Christ mourned over the city of Jerusalem before his death, not only as a place where prophets were murdered, but over the vile climate that allowed murder. This is our situation today. We must only mourn over tragic event that took Dr. King’s life, but the climate of our nation that allowed the event.”⁶⁰⁶ Revered Bill Sherman, pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church said:

We who are Christians have remained silent too long concerning man’s inhumanity to man. It is high time time that we declare that the Christian church is God’s church, high time that we declare that the church should minister unto all men, that we say it is God’s church, God’s door and God’s altar and welcome every man who desire to enter. It is time we acted responsively to send men to legislatures in the land who will pass laws that are equitable in economic, social, and housing conditions.⁶⁰⁷

During that same day, Briley reported that some Tennessee National Guardsmen were withdrawing from the city, but indicated the ban on liquor and firearms sales will remain in effect for another day. Later on the day, around 5:00 p.m. when a crowd of about 200 persons gathered at the intersection of 12th Avenue South and Edgehill Avenue, near the Edgehill Housing Project. Police said they were called to the scene to investigate reports about motorists

⁶⁰⁶ Reed Jr, “*Memorial Not Enough Says Pastor.*”

⁶⁰⁷ Reed Jr, “*Memorial Not Enough Says Pastor.*”

being pelted with rocks. Ministers in the area complained that police presence in the Edgehill section tended to increase tensions and create disturbances. Several Black leaders complained to Police Major Joe Casey about alleged police brutality, after police dispersed the group by chasing bystanders from the street and into the housing project. Revered W.M. King told Casey: “I think the very presence of all these guns tends to incite these people. I resent it, and I think they resent it.”⁶⁰⁸

As King was talking to Casey, Ernest Terrell and the Reverend Robert A. Bennett came up to complain that police were being abusive to Edgehill residents. King, Terrell, and Bennett said, “They would try to persuade a crowd of about 50 persons which had gathered while the Negro leaders conferred with police to disperse if police would leave.”⁶⁰⁹ Casey assured to the group that the police would not return to the Edgehill area as long as people did not congregate and remained orderly. Numerous residents around the Edgehill area complained that Metro Patrolman and state troopers roamed through the area, abusing both young and old. Police would denied the charges. Clara Smith, 34-year old housewife from the Edgehill Housing Project, complained that state troopers pushed a rifle into her stomach and forced her to go inside her home. Martah Jane Henderson, of 1216 14th Avenue South, said, “She refused to go inside her home when a state trooper told her to get off that porch and get inside and stay there.”⁶¹⁰ She would also said that the trooper cursed at her and that she cursed him back Josephine Daniels of

⁶⁰⁸ Jerry Thompson, “One of 25 Fire Calls In 7 Hours,” *The Tennessean*, April 08, 1968, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111776839/?terms=One%20of%2025%20Fire%20Calls%20In%207%20Hours&match=1>.

⁶⁰⁹ Thompson, “One of 25 Fire Calls In 7 Hours.”

⁶¹⁰ Thompson, “One of 25 Fire Calls In 7 Hours.”

1314th Avenue South said police chased her 13-year old son, Charles for no reason and attempted to strike him with billy clubs. She said he escaped without injury.

The Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) building at Tennessee A&I University campus caught fire. Police said the fire was caused by arsonists. Other incidents occurred including a vacant house burned to the ground at 11th Avenue, South, and Horton Street. No one was injured but fire caused minor damage to a neighbor Peter Tate next door. The Pay and Take Market at 1034 Monroe Street was slightly damaged when someone threw a firebomb into the rear of the business. Police squad cars were bombarded by rocks as they drove near 33rd Avenue, North and Charlotte Avenue. The front windows of Central Salvage Co., 151 Lafayette Street were smashed. It was also reported that day where Firemen reported answering 21 fire calls from 5 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Along with the looting and bombings that occurred that day, police reported drawing sniper fire about 9:15 p.m. at Rose Park. A sniper control group attempted to locate the gunman but no success. The riots in Nashville would end after this day.⁶¹¹

Going into the 1970's, the main civil rights issues occurring in Nashville was in regards the continue school desegregation battle in Nashville public schools and busing. In 1970, Attorney Williams would file a suit to prohibit the Metropolitan County Board of Education of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee, from maintaining racially segregated schools and from employing school personnel based on race. On July 16, 1970, Federal District Judge William E. Miller said, that the local school board had not met its affirmative duty to abolish the dual school system in three categories: pupil integration, faculty integration, and site selection

⁶¹¹ Thompson, "One of 25 Fire Calls In 7 Hours."

for school construction.”⁶¹² The school board was ordered to draw up a plan for a fully integrated, non-racial school system for the 1970-71 school year. The plan would not be implemented until the following year.

On September 13, 1970, First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill broke ground for a new \$400,000 downtown building. The plan of the church was to face James Robertson Parkway. Additional entrances would face James Robertson and Pearl Street. The architects of the new building was called L. Quincy Jackson and Associates. Smith said, “Historic First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, stands at the threshold of a new church edifice to be built and rededicated to pursuit of expanded program of contributing more to education and of working harder to alleviate our difficult social problems.” Smith also said that construction of the new building was expected to be finished in the fall of 1971. Coyness L. Ennix Sr. said, “That this churchouse is being built to do those things best of our fellowmen.” Clinton E. Jones, building committee and trustee board chairman, offered a prayer that the church realize its dream and dedicate this sanctuary to thee and thee along.”⁶¹³

Ben E. Harris, building fund chairman, said, “Church members gave \$7,914 yesterday in a special building fund collection and cash on hand at present is \$345,000 for construction.” Harris called the groundbreaking service “an act of investment for the future.” Harris also said, “The church of the living God is not made of blocks or bricks, nor metal and mortar, but is to be

⁶¹² Pat Welch, “Unitary School Plan Ordered,” *The Tennessean*, July 17, 1970, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112696960/?terms=Unitary%20School%20Plan%20Ordered&match=1>.

⁶¹³ Frank Sutherland, “Pickets Up At Schools; Rolls Down,” *The Tennessean*, September 14, 1971, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112056539/?terms=Pickets%20Up%20At%20Schools%3B%20Rolls%20Down&match=1>.

found in the minds and hearts of man.” Three choirs of the church sang Messiter’s “Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart” and a John Work spiritual: “I’m A-Going to Do All I Can.” Smith led the congregation in a “Litany of Dedication.” Smith said, “We break this ground and the people of the church answered, in one part for the promotion of social justice and righteousness and the extension of God’s Kingdom.”⁶¹⁴

A few months later, on January 25, 1971, building committee members of First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill were awarded a low-bid \$499,919 building contract to the CTC Construction Company of Madison for construction of a new downtown sanctuary. Clinton Jones, building committee chairman, stated a recommendation of the building committee that read:

“We recommend that the lowest bidder, the CTC Construction Co., be awarded the contract to build our church, after the owner and the architect shall have further negotiated with the contractor relative to the maximum reduction of costs and the maximum use of black skilled and unskilled labor.”⁶¹⁵

Construction began on that day, and completion of the new church was now set for January 1972. Smith commenting on the construction said: “We can justify this expenditure and the tremendous effort over the years that has into this project and will go into on the basis of our commitment to render benevolent and aggressive service to mankind.”⁶¹⁶ Smith also noted: “For obvious reasons we are concerned over the oppression of all men and these facilities will

⁶¹⁴ Sutherland, “Pickets Up at Schools; Rolls Down.”

⁶¹⁵ W.A. Reed, “Madison Firm Gets Church Job,” *The Tennessean*, January 26, 1971, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112138196/?terms=Madison%20Firm%20Gets%20Church%20Job&match=1>.

⁶¹⁶ Reed, “Madison Firm Gets Church Job.”

enable us to work more effectively and vigorously towards the ending of oppression.” Three months later, on April 04, 1971, the Nashville Branch of the NAACP hosted a memorial to observe the third anniversary of the death of King at Lee Chapel AME Church. Smith delivered the memorial address at the church.

Other tributes came from individuals from their respective organizations including White, Interdenominational Ministerial Fellowship; Reverend Fred Cloud, Metro Human Relations Council; Dr. Edwin Mitchell, Black Community Conference; Dr. Wilson W. Welch, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; Bonnie Peacock, the MLK Commemoration Committee; and Larry Carr, NAACP Youth Council. Reverend Charles Jones was pastor at Lee Chapel.⁶¹⁷ Around this same time, Reverend Amos Jones Jr. of Westwood Baptist Church and a civil rights organization named Black Community Conference (BCC) organized a series of marches to protest the continued racism in the city and established economic withdrawal from White-owned business who practiced racial discrimination along with the issues of school busing in the city. Meetings would be held at Nashville Black churches including Pilgrim Emmanuel Baptist Church, Gordon Methodist Memorial Church, and others during this period. These series of marches would occur between April and June 1971.

On June 28, 1971, Judge L. Clure Morton approved a plan drawn up by the United States Department of Health Education and Welfare that abolished neighborhood schools and ordered widespread busing for Metro schools. In the Fall of 1971, the Nashville busing went into effect. Several Nashville schools both public and private would be established including McGavock Comprehensive High School, Donelson Christian Academy, Franklin Road Academy, Nashville

⁶¹⁷ George Watson Jr, “King’s Dream Lives, Service Told,” *The Tennessean*, April 05, 1971, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112047599/?terms=King%27s%20Dream%20Lives%2C%20Service%20Told&match=1>.

Christian School, and St. Paul Christian Academy. A few months later, on March 05, 1972, First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill 600 congregation marched from the old location on 319 Eighth Avenue North to its location at 900 James Robertson Parkway. Before the march began, church members filed into the old building for a prayer, the reading of scripture, and final benediction. Charles E. Boddie, president of the American Baptist Theological Seminary, prayed: “From this terrace, O God, where through the years we have witnessed, worked, and worshiped, we now go back again into the valley to continue effectively and better equipped to meet man’s need. We go now from this place to heal the broken, find the lost, feed the hungry, release the prisoner, bring peace among brothers, and make music in the heart.”⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁸ W.A. Reed Jr, “New Church Opened,” *The Tennessean*, March 05, 1972, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/111889164/?terms=>.



Figure 7.4 Dr. Leonard C. Archer, marshal for the day, leads the 600-member congregation of the First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill on a block long march from their old historical church at 319 Eighth Avenue North, background, to their new \$500,000 sanctuary at 900 James Robertson Parkway March 5, 1972.

The march was led by Smith and Reverend Otto West, associate pastor, and the congregation marched to the words of an ancient hymn: “Forward through the ages, in unbroken line, move the faithful at the call divine.”⁶²⁰ Following Smith and West in the procession were Boddie and Walter J. Harrleson, dean of the Vanderbilt Divinity School, both church members. Heading the march was Dr. Leonard C. Archer, marshal for the day. As they marched to the new church entrance, they continued to sing, and the music was from two trombones and two

⁶¹⁹ Ricky Rogers, “Nashville, Tennessee 50 Years Ago in March 1972,”. March 02,2022, <https://www.tennessean.com/picture-gallery/news/local/2022/03/03/march-1972-photos-nashville-tennessee-50-years-ago/6921695001/>.

⁶²⁰ Reed JR, “*New Church Opened.*”

trumpets from Tennessee State University Band. Back in 1968, Tennessee A&I University officially changed their name to Tennessee State University. Smith cut the ribbon, and L. Quincy Jackson, architect, presented Smith with the keys to the church. Smith gave a sermon at the church that said: “The tower of this church says to the Nashville community ‘Jesus Saves’ and that’s what this day is all about. This is God’s house. And it must offer opportunity for service to this community and to humanity at large. There are problems on the other side of that multicolored tall window that must be solved, and if we fail to serve the community we ought to turn this place over to someone who will serve it. We are keeping faith today with those who were once with us and are not now; those who dreamed, hoped, and worked but were stopped and passed silently into the glimmer of the sunset.”⁶²¹

In the rest of the 1970s, the school busing battle would continue in the city of Nashville. In 1978 and 1979, the board petitioned the court to allow them to expand and construct schools while the plaintiffs objected to new schools being built in predominantly White areas. In 1981, Judge Thomas L. Wiseman approved a desegregation plan submitted by the board and ordered the school board to implement it in the fall. The Wiseman Plan had neighborhood schools for early grades and an emphasis on quality education with special remedial programs for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In August 1981, two days before schools were to open, the plan was prevented from implementation by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati, which felt the plaintiff had a reasonable chance of success. A month later, schools would open late in mid-September.⁶²²

⁶²¹ Reed Jr, “New Church Opened.”

⁶²² Sandra Ivey, “No Wiseman Action Puts Magnet School Back in Board’s Lap,” *The Tennessean*, October 04, 1981,

A year later, the Wiseman Plan was overturned by the United States 6th Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati. School board members appealed to the United States Supreme Court. The Supreme Court refused to review the case. In 1983, the School Board drew up a new plan, providing desegregation in the entire country, including remote areas previously excluded. According to the plan, every school was to have nearly 33 percent Black enrollment and limits of one hour on bus rides. The educational components also included magnet schools and transition classes for 6-year-olds not ready for the first grade. The board then negotiated with plaintiffs and reached agreement on the plan. The plan was implemented at the beginning of the 1983-1984 school year. Nashville's federally mandated school desegregation plan combined Pearl High School and West Nashville's predominately White Cohn High School into the new Pearl-Cohn Comprehensive High School.⁶²³

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/111749344/?terms=No%20Wiseman%20Action%20Puts%20Magnet%20School%20Back%20in%20Board%27s%20Lap&match=1>.

⁶²³ Samuel Momodu, "Pearl High School (1897-1983)," Blackpast.org, November 14, 2016, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/pearl-high-school-1897-1983/>.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

On June 03, 1984, Kelly Miller Smith Sr, pastor of First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, since 1951 and one of the significant leaders of the Nashville Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s, died from cancer at the age of 63. Greenwood Cemetery is where Smith rests. Smith leaves behind his wife, Alice Clark Smith, and four children, Joy Ardelia, Adena Modesta, Valerie Lin, and Kelly Miller Smith Jr. In the following years, many public accommodations in Nashville would bear his name, including the Kelly Miller Smith Towers, the Kelly Miller Smith Memorial Bridge, and the Kelly Miller Smith Institute, which Vanderbilt University named after his memory, where he served at the institution as assistant dean of Vanderbilt Divinity School from 1968 to 1984. Also, Vanderbilt named the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies at the Divinity School in honor of his memory. The Kelly Miller Smith papers are also in the Vanderbilt special collections, including his sermons and other documents. Following his death, Assistant Pastor Ottie L. West became pastor of First Baptist Church Capitol Hill from 1984-1985. Other pastors who would provide pastoral leadership of the church in the following years included Wallace Charles Smith (1985-1991), Sherman R. Tribble (1992-1998), Victor M. Singletary (2000-2008), and Assistant Pastor Arrol N. Martin (2008-2010). In 2010, Smith's son Kelly Miller Smith Jr took over pastoral leadership of the church where he is currently the pastor.⁶²⁴

Following Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, James Lawson remained in Memphis until 1974, when he accepted a position as pastor of Holman Methodist Church in Los Angeles,

⁶²⁴ Samuel Momodu, "Kelly Miller Smith Sr (1920-1984)," *Blackpast.org*, January 17, 2016. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/kelly-miller-smith-sr-1920-1984/>.

California⁶²⁵. Lawson and his wife Dorothy Lawson raised their three sons there. Lawson would get into contact with King's convicted murderer, James Earl Ray, whom he visited numerous times in prison. While in Los Angeles, Lawson would continue to be involved in civil rights activities.

Lawson hosted a weekly radio call-in program called "Lawson Live" that features discussions on social and human rights issues affecting minority communities. He also became a board member of the SCLC and served as President of the Los Angeles chapter of the SCLC from 1979 to 1993. Lawson also became an advocate of United States Cold War policies with their military involvement in Cuba, Angola, and Central America. He was also active in the labor movement, including the American Civil Liberties Union. He also advocated Palestinian and immigrants and gay and lesbian issues as well. Lawson would remain pastor at Holman Methodist Church until his retirement in 1999. In 2004, Lawson received the Community of Christ International Peace Award. In 2006, Lawson was appointed a distinguished professor and visiting fellow at Vanderbilt's Center for the Study of Religion and Culture. The same university expelled him for involvement in the Nashville Sit-Ins in March 1960.

A year later, Lawson participated in the three-day Freedom Ride commemorative program sponsored by Vanderbilt University's Office of Active Citizenship in January 2007. The Freedom Ride commemorative program included an educational bus tour to Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama. Participants included some who participated in the movement, including Lawson, Diane Nash, Bernard Lafayette, C.T. Vivian, Jim Zwerg, and John Seigenthaler. People who joined them included journalists and approximately 180 students, faculty, and administrators

⁶²⁵ Hasan Tesfa, "James Lawson (1928-)," Blackpast.org, January 10, 2009. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/lawson-james-1928/>.

from Fisk University, Tennessee State University, American Baptist College, and Vanderbilt University. On December 21, 2021, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) announced that they would rename the UCLA Labor Center building next to MacArthur Park as the UCLA James M. Lawson Jr Labor Center in honor of his long-term commitment to the advancement of worker rights and labor well-being. On July 28, 2023, James Lawson High School opened in Nashville, Tennessee, formally known as Hillwood High School.

C.T. Vivian, who was one of the major participants of the Nashville Civil Rights Movement, a founder of the NCLC, and pastor of First Community Church in Nashville from 1956 to 1961, continue to be apart of the civil rights movement. Vivian would remain apart of the SCLC where he was the national director of affiliates until 1966. During that same year, Vivian moved to Chicago where he became director of the Urban Training Center for Christian Missions. With the organization, he was able to trained clergy, community leaders, and others to organize. In 1968, Vivian organized the Coalition for United Community Action, a group that composed of 61black organizations which goal aim to end racism in building trade unions and helped street gangs in Chicago mediate a truce. In 1970, a book called *Black Power and the American Myth* was released by Vivian. The book analyzed Civil Rights Movement on what occurred during that period. The book was the first book on the Civil Rights Movement by a member of King staff.

During the 1970s, Vivian moved to Atlanta, where he founded the Black Action Strategies and Information Center (BASIC), a consultancy on multiculturalism and race relations in the workplace and other contexts, in 1977. In 1979, Vivian co-founded with civil rights activist Anne Braden the Center for Democratic Renewal, an organization where blacks and whites worked together in response to white supremacist activity. In 1984, Vivian served in

Jesse's Jackson Presidential as the national deputy director for clergy. He was also interviewed for the PBS documentary *Eyes on the Prize*, discussing his involvement in the Nashville Sit-Ins in 1960. In 1994, Vivian helped establish Capitol City Bank and Trust Co, a black-owned Atlanta bank where he served on the board. He was also on the board of Every Church, a Peace Church. Vivian also appeared on TV talk shows, including Oprah, the Montel Williams Show, and Donahue. 2008 Vivian founded the C.T. Vivian Leadership Institute, Inc (CTVLI). The CTVLI's purpose is to create a model leadership culture in Atlanta. In 2013, Vivian would receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which President Barack Obama named him. On July 20, 2020, Vivian died from natural causes at the age of 95, the thirteenth day before his 96th birthday in Atlanta, Georgia.⁶²⁶ Vivian became the first Black non-elected man to lie in the state at the Georgia State Capitol. He lies in rest at Westview Cemetery in Atlanta. A year later, his memoir called *It's in the Action: Memories of a Nonviolent Warrior* published.

Other Nashville church ministers would have post-movement lives and still be involved in other civil rights activities. Joseph Metz Rollins, who once served as vice president of the NCLC, would still be involved in the Civil Rights Movement. In 1964, Rollins moved to New York, where he worked as a staff member for the United Presbyterian Church. In 1967, Rollins became the first Executive Director of the National Committee of Black Churchmen, an organization dedicated to advocating racial awareness within churches. Rollins lost a race for the White Plains, New York School Board the following year. While being a part of the National Committee of Black Churchmen, Rollins would become involved in numerous controversies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, including the debate over James Forman's "Black Manifesto," it

⁶²⁶ Peter Cole, "Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian (1924-2020)," Blackpast.org, January 10, 2009. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/vivian-cordy-tindell-c-t-1924/>.

demanded reparations from white churches and the National Committee of Black Churchmen coordinated “Black Referendum on the Vietnam War. Rollins relocated to the Bronx, New York, to become pastor of St. Augustine Presbyterian Church until he retired from the church in 2005 and became Pastor Emeritus.⁶²⁷

Joseph A. Johnson Jr, pastor of Capers Memorial CME Church and a member of NCLC, became the 34th bishop of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1971, Johnson became the first African American to serve as a full Vanderbilt University Board of Trust member. He also served as Presiding Bishop of the Fourth Episcopal District (Louisiana and Mississippi), Chairman of the College of Bishops, and Chairman of the Board of Christian Education. He also travels as a lecturer representing the CME Church at numerous conferences, including the Eight Ecumenical Methodist Conference in Oxford, England, the Third World Conference on Faith and Order in Sweden, and the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi, Kenya. Johnson also authored numerous books, including *The Soul of the Black Preacher* (1971), *The Local Church and Lay Evangelism* (1974), *Our Faith, Heritage, and Church* (1975), *Proclamation Theology* (1977), and *Basic Christian Methodist Beliefs* (1978). Johnson died on September 29, 1979, in Shreveport, Louisiana, at 65. In 1984, the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center at Vanderbilt University opened in his honor.⁶²⁸

Many student activists who were part of the church's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville continued to be involved in civil rights activism in their careers. In 1966,

⁶²⁷ “Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins,” Biography, The History Makers, last modified September 14, 2007, <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/reverend-joseph-metz-rollins>.

⁶²⁸ “Joseph A. Johnson, Jr,” About, Bishop Joseph Johnson History Project, last modified March 18, 2024. <https://bishopjosephjohnson.org/about/about-bishop-johnson/>.

John Lewis left SNCC, and Stokely Carmichael replaced him. During that same year, Lewis moved to New York City, where he worked as the Field Foundation's associate director. Lewis moved to Atlanta, Georgia, a year later to direct the Southern Regional Council's Community Organization Project (SRC). Also, that year, he would receive an additional Bachelor of Arts degree at Fisk University. In 1970, Lewis became the director of the Voter Education Project (VEP). Under Lewis's leadership, the VEP added four million minority voters to the voter rolls. He was able to hold this position until 1977. 1977 Lewis entered politics after incumbent Democratic United States Congressman Andrew Young of Georgia's congressional district resigned to become the United States Ambassador to the United Nations under President Jimmy Carter. Lewis would lose the election to Atlanta City Councilman Wyche Fowler.

After losing the election, Lewis would accept a position with the Carter administration as associate director of ACTION. He was also responsible for running the VISTA, Retired Senior Volunteer, and Foster Grandparent programs. He resigned from their position in 1980. In 1981, Lewis successfully ran for the Atlanta City Council seat. In 1986, Lewis defeated fellow civil rights leader Julian Bond and was elected to represent Georgia's fifth Congressional District. Lewis became the second African American to represent Georgia in Congress since Reconstruction. During his career, Lewis would rise to power in the Democratic Party. He was also a member of the Congressional Black Caucus. In 1998, Lewis would release his autobiography called *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*. 2011 Lewis received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama. In 2013, he released a graphic novel called *The March* about the Civil Rights Movement. Lewis co-authored the book alongside Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell. He became the first sitting congressman to appear among authors at the annual Comic-Con convention in San Diego, California, showcasing the book.

Lewis would release two more books in the trilogy, *March: Book Two* in 2015 and *March: Book Three* in 2016. Lewis would remain in Congress until his death from pancreatic cancer on July 17, 2020, at the age of 80. Ironically, he died on the same day as fellow Nashville civil rights activist participant Vivian. On November 05, 2020, the Metropolitan Council of Nashville and Davidson County voted to rename an extensive part of 5th Avenue called John Lewis Way in Nashville, Tennessee, in honor of his memory.⁶²⁹

Diane Nash would continue her civil rights activism when, in 1966, she joined the Anti-Vietnam Movement. In 1968, Nash divorced James Bevel, and the couple had two children. She would become a single mother raising two children, working odd jobs that include community service organizations, public speaking, and real estate, which she made a career out of. Nash would be featured on documentaries about the Civil Rights Movement, including *Eyes on the Prize* and *A Force More Powerful*. In 1998, David Halberstam released a book called *The Children* that discusses Nash and others' involvement in the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville and the Freedom Rides. In 2005, Lisa Mullins released a book about Nash called *Diane Nash: The Fire of the Civil Rights Movement*. She received numerous awards, including the Distinguished American Award from the John F. Kennedy Library and Foundation in 2003 and the LBJ Award for Leadership in Civil Rights from the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum in 2004. In December 2021, the Metropolitan Council of Nashville and Davidson County voted to name

⁶²⁹ Cassandra Waggoner, "John Lewis (1940-2020)," Blackpast.org, February 19, 2008. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/lewis-john-r-1940/>.

Metro Courthouse Plaza to carry her name, calling it the Diane Nash Plaza. On July 1, 2022, Nash received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Joseph Biden.⁶³⁰

James Bevel would continue to be involved in civil rights activities like the Anti-Vietnam Movement. As a result, Bevel was asked by North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh to take over the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, renaming it the Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. He was influential in gaining King's support for the anti-Vietnam War Movement. On April 15, 1967, Bevel organized the march from Central Park to the United Nations Building in New York City. Bevel made a speech on that day where he called for a larger march in Washington D.C., A plan that evolved into the October 1967 March on the Pentagon attended by tens of thousands of peace activists protesting against the Vietnam War. A year later, on April 04, 1968, Bevel was present at the Lorraine Motel and witnessed King's assassination. After King's assassination, Bevel began to make conspiracy theories about his assassination where he would, claiming that James Earl Ray was not King's killer and that he had evidence that Ray was innocent.

During that same year, Bevel and Nash divorced. Two years later, Bevel would leave SCLC. In the 1980s and 1990s, Bevel got involved in politics, running as a Republican candidate for a Chicago congressional seat in 1984. He would also support President Ronald Regan, who lost his credibility in the civil rights community. He ran as Lyndon LaRouche's running mate during the 1992 presidential election, where he ran for President of the United States. Also, during the 1990s, Bevel met with Louis Farrakhan, who suggested the idea of a march to occur in Washington, D.C. This idea would lead to the organizing of the Million Man March that took

⁶³⁰ Samantha Kealoha, "Diane Nash (1938-)," Blackpast.org, April 18, 2007. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/people-african-american-history/nash-diane-judith-1938/>.

place in October 1995. In May 2007, Bevel stood trial in Alabama on a charge of incest, where he faced charges of molesting his daughter when they were teenagers while living in Leesburg, Virginia, in the early 1990s. On April 10, 2008, after a three-hour deliberation, the jury convicted him of incest. The court revoked his bond and sent him into custody. On October 15, 2008, Bevel was sentenced to 15 years and fined \$50,000. On November 04, 2008, he received an appeal bond and was released three days later. On December 19, 2008, Bevel died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 72 in Springfield, Virginia. He lies in Eutaw, Alabama.⁶³¹

Barry would later join the SNCC, becoming the organization's first chairman. He would then move to Washington, D.C., and become the founder of Pride Inc. The organization's goal was to help unemployed men. Barry would go on to get involved in politics when he was elected to the Washington D.C. Independent School Board in 1971, where he served as president until 1971. He would run for Mayor in the 1978 Washington D.C. election as a Democratic, defeating Republican candidate Arthur Fletcher. Barry would go on to serve three terms as Mayor until stepping down in 1990 after being convicted of drug charges, for which Barry served three months in prison. He would later return to politics, where he was elected Mayor in 1994, and Barry served until 1998, when he didn't seek a fifth term. Barry died on November 23, 2014, from cardiac arrest at the age of 78.⁶³²

Bernard Lafayette remained affiliated with civil rights organizations for the rest of the 1960s and after the decade. He has affiliated with civil rights organizations like the American

⁶³¹ Grant Kagawa, "James Bevel (1936-2008)," Blackpast.org, March 31, 2011.
<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/bevel-james-1936-2008/>.

⁶³² Lacinda Mennenga, "Marion Barry Jr (1936-2014)," Blackpast.org, June 29, 2008.
<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/people-african-american-history/barry-marion-jr-1936/>.

Friends Services Committee, SCLC, and Poor People Campaign. Lafayette also earned a Doctor of Education and became a professor. In 1973, Lafayette was named the first director of the Peace Educational Program at Gustavus Adolphus College, Saint Peter, Minnesota. He also became dean of the graduate school at Alabama State University. He was a senior fellow at the University of Rhode Island, where he helped to found the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies. Lafayette is a Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. I also served as a scholar in residence at the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts and Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University.⁶³³ In May 2012, Lafayette was honored as a Doctor of Humane Letters from Mount Holyoke College. In May 2014, the University of Rhode Island honored Lafayette with an honorary doctorate, recognizing his lifetime nonviolent leadership for civil and human rights. In 2019, he was awarded the Coretta Scott King Legacy Award by Antioch College's Coretta Scott King Center for Cultural and Intellectual Freedom/ Bernard wrote several books about his experiences in the civil rights movement and thoughts on nonviolence. These books include *The Leaders Manual: A Structured Guide and Introduction to Kingian Nonviolence* (1995), *The Briefing Booklet: An Orientation to the Kingian Nonviolence Conflict Reconciliation Program* (1995), and *In Peace and Freedom: My Journey in Selma* (2016).

The primary historical significance of Nashville Black Churches's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville can be looked at by five major factors on how it shaped civil rights activism in the city along with a national level:

Mass meetings take place at the churches.

⁶³³ Bernard Lafayette,” Stanford University, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, last modified March 18, 2024, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/lafayette-bernard>.

Being meeting points for rallies and marches.

Place of refuge.

Church ministers and participants who attended the church.

The church's central significance in the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville.

The first factor is the mass meetings that the churches hosted. There were numerous times when the churches held essential meetings on civil rights issues in the city. It is evident in this work at a mass meeting held at Saint John A.M.E. Church, where an estimated three thousand black community members attended the meeting on February 09, 1925. Negro Board of Trade members held this meeting on the issue of the Fisk University Protest that was occurring at the time regarding Fayette Avery McKenzie, who was Fisk University president at the time. This meeting at the church and Negro Board of Trade members passing five resolutions were one the contributing factors to McKenzie's resignation on April 15, 1925.

In 1958, Smith gathered other black Nashville ministers to form the NCLC at Capers Memorial CME Church. It again was seen how churches like First Baptist Church Capitol Hill and Clark Methodist Memorial Church held nonviolent workshops called movement schools organized by Lawson. These nonviolent workshops gave participants the tools for nonviolent training on conducting themselves at public accommodations, like lunch counters, during civil rights protests in the city. A day before the Nashville Sit-Ins began, six hundred students and adults gathered at First Baptist Church Capitol Hill for a mass meeting on November 12, 1960. Students object to the NCLC delaying the sit-ins. Ministers met with Mayor Raphael Benjamin West on February 29, 1960, to discuss the sit-in protests on February 27, 1960. As a result of that meeting, West established the Biracial Committee to resolve the city's racial strife and defuse the tension created by the sit-ins. The churches also met in various places numerous times until the

desegregation of lunch counters, including Woolworths and others, in May 1960. In February 1961, Nashville Movie Theaters demonstrated before and after the desegregation of their downtown theaters during the Nashville Open Theater Movie. In light of the attacks in Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama, Nashville decided to continue the Freedom Ride. Nash gave a phone call to Farmer, where she told him that the NSM agreed to continue the Freedom Rides rather than seek his permission to do so. The Freedom Rides campaign would continue until December 1961 with Farmer's approval. King and the SCLC would host their annual convention at Clark Methodist Memorial Church in September 1961. During the Operation Open City Campaign between 1961 and 1964, numerous meetings would occur at churches, including First Baptist Church Capitol Hill, Mount Zion Baptist Church, and Gay-Lea Christian Church. The meeting happened at Mount Zion Baptist Church on March 19, 1963, where around five hundred people attended, and the NCLC laid the plans for a full-scale assault on segregation in Nashville. This church meeting would lead to the Freedom March a couple of days later, where large-scale demonstrations would occur at downtown Nashville restaurants, including B&W Cafeteria, Cross Keys Restaurant, and others. As a result, Nashville's public accommodations degenerated in July 1964 following the passage of the Civil Rights Bill of 1964.

The second factor was the church meeting points for rallies and marches during protest demonstrations in Nashville. Throughout this work, this was evident numerous times. On February 13, 1960, the same day as the sit-ins began, a meeting was held at First Baptist Church Capitol Hill, where 124 student activists gathered before heading out to the lunch counters downtown. During this civil rights campaign, participants would gather at First Baptist Church Capitol Hill before heading out for demonstrations at lunch counters downtown. Throughout 1960 and 1961, participants gathered at First Baptist Church Capitol Hill before demonstrations

at restaurants and movie theaters. As the Operation Open City campaign was occurring in Nashville, the church was gathering places for meetings and rallies as demonstrations went to protest segregated public accommodations.

The third factor is that the churches were a refuge for participants in the movement in Nashville. Participants in the civil rights movement in Nashville gathered frequently at churches after demonstrations ended, even when white segregationists were attacking them during the civil rights movement. The fourth factor was church ministers and participants who attended the churches. During the 1865 state convention was Peter Lowery and Samuel Lowery in the 1860s, ministers had to choose delegates for state conventions involved in the State Colored Men's Convention. Preston Taylor, Sutton Griggs, and Richard Henry Boyd took leadership roles in the Nashville Streetcar Boycott. As a result, they formed the Union Transportation Company, which provided Nashville Black residents with an alternative streetcar transportation service from 1905 to 1907.

Smith gathered many ministers at Capers Memorial Methodist Church to establish the NCLC on January 18, 1958. Lawson would establish nonviolent workshop at Clark Memorial Methodist Church, training participants on conducting nonviolence at segregated public accommodations settings in Nashville. Ministers like Smith, Lawson, and others would have leadership roles in the movement in the city even though many ministers participated in the Nashville Sit-Ins and the Open Theater Movement. Nashville ministers would be most involved in the movement during the Open City Campaign. Organizing meetings and writing letters against segregated restaurants and grocery stores, Smith encouraged Nashville ministers to take part in the movement. The ministers got into protests during this period. In 1966, ministers were

involved in Edgehill housing issues, and 1967 and 1968, ministers gathered to discuss Nashville's riots.

On a national level, many Nashville participants would go on to be involved in major civil rights events of the period. Lewis, one of the participants of civil rights campaigns in Nashville, would go on to be one of the Freedom Riders. He became chairman of SNCC in 1966. In August 1963, Lewis would be one of the speakers at the March on Washington. He would take part in the Selma to Montgomery Marches in March 1965. Nash wanted to be one of the founders of SNCC as they had the gathering during the easter weekend in April 1960 at Shaw University at Raliegh, North Carolina. Nash, being one of the key contributors to the Freedom Rides, continued after the meeting of First Baptist Church Capitol Hill. She gave Farmer notice about Nashville participants continuing Freedom Rides down in Alabama. Nash is also part of the Selma to Montgomery Marchers. Bevel was the key strategist of the Children Crusade during the Birmingham Campaign in May 1963. Eugene Bull Connor ordered fire hoses and dogs for the children's participants. Bevel would work with King in other civil rights campaigns like the Chicago Freedom Movement from 1965 to 1967.

The fifth and final factor was the church's central significance in the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville. Many of Nashville's Black Churches participated in the civil rights movement in the city through nonviolence training, meetings, rally points, and places of refuse after demonstrations occurred for the day. The one church that played the most significant role in the civil rights campaign was First Baptist Church Capitol Hill, especially between 1958 and 1964. This church was involved in every aspect of the events of the civil rights campaigns in Nashville, including some nonviolence training. Church members and participants would gather

here to discuss what the next step should be for the movement. It was used as a place of refuge numerous times after demonstrations.

A mass meeting was held at First Baptist Church Capitol Hill the day before the Nashville Sit-Ins to debate whether the next day's campaign would occur. Students gather at the church the next day before heading to the downtown lunch counters. The church had one of the most critical meetings in the campaign, with ministers meeting with West, leading up to him establishing the biracial campaign a few days later. Following his expulsion from Vanderbilt for involvement in the Nashville Sit-Ins, Lawson would spend time in jail after being arrested at the church for violating the state's trade and commerce law. CBS would even film a documentary at the church about the sit-ins. In February 1961, the church served as a refuge for demonstrators at Nashville movie theaters. During their attack on Anniston and Birmingham, the Freedom Riders met in this church for an emergency meeting. The church was the gathering place before and after protests during the Nashville Open City Campaign.

Overall, Nashville Black Churches impacted the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement both locally and nationally. On the local level, the black churches contribute to the success of the civil rights campaigns in Nashville with the desegregation of lunch counters and movie theaters downtown, along with continuing the civil rights protests of other public accommodations, including restaurants, grocery stores, and other accommodations. On the national level, the participants who attended these churches went on to take leadership roles in the well-known civil rights campaigns that occurred during the Civil Rights Movement. The movement's history could have been very different without Nashville Black Churches' involvement. While much attention in the Civil Rights Movement history has focused on places and cities like Alabama and Mississippi, the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville needs to be more noticed. Hopefully, this

study and work will give more notice to the importance of Black churches and the Nashville Civil Rights Movement in the Civil Rights Movement.

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