

Southern New Hampshire University

"In it for the Long Haul: The Nashville Sit-Ins, Pioneering Non-Violence Training and National Leadership."

A Capstone Project Submitted to the College of Online and Continuing Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Master of Arts in History

By

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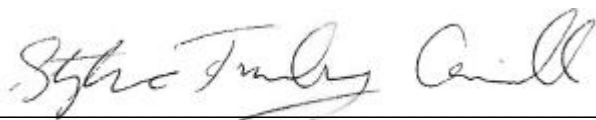
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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the Nashville Sit-Ins, which were the first to desegregate lunch counters in the south during the sit-in movement that occurred in the south in the early 1960s. Despite the outcome of the results of the sit-ins, it has been largely overlooked by scholars and historians on its importance not only to the Sit-In Movement, but Civil Rights Movement. The Nashville Sit-Ins were the first to desegregate lunch counters in the south two months before Greensboro Sit-ins desegregated their lunch counters. The main importance that came out of the Nashville Sit-Ins was the preparation and training that the student participants of the sit-ins received by the Nashville Christian Leadership Council non-violent workshops led by James Lawson and Reverend Kelly Miller Smith. Another important aspect of the Nashville Sit-Ins was the student involvement from Nashville, four historically black colleges and universities that included Fisk University, Tennessee State A&I, Meharry Medical College, and American Baptist Theological Seminary. Some of the students from those four universities included Diane Nash, Marion Berry, John Lewis, Bernard Lafayette, and James Bevel who would go on to be involved in the most important civil rights events during that time like the Freedom Riders and Selma-to-Montgomery Marches. The sources that will be used in the thesis include primary and secondary sources. These primary sources include archives, photographs, interviews, and letters while the secondary sources include books and journal articles. This thesis explore how the Nashville Christian Leadership Council pioneered non-violent workshops during the civil rights movement and how the Nashville Sit-Ins created civil rights leaders.

## **Dedication**

This is dedicated to my late mother Janet Karnley Momodu

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### **Preface**

“Traveling in the segregated south for black people was humiliating. The very fact that there were separate facilities was to say to black people and white people that blacks were so subhuman and so inferior that we could not even use public facilities that white people used.”

-Diane Nash



### **Acknowledgments**

First, I would like to thank all my history professors at Southern New Hampshire University that helped guide me through the Master of Arts degree in history in getting prepared for my capstone project. Second, I want to especially thank my professor Dr. Stephanie McConnell for helping me prepare for my capstone project. I also want to thank Dr. Stephanie Averill for also guiding me through the capstone project along with giving me advice on my thesis. I want to thank my classmates during the time I have been attending Southern New Hampshire University during the courses I took. It was a pleasure in talking about specific topics on the discussion board about history. The experience of meeting other students in the class was enjoyable. Thirdly, I want to thank my academic advisor Nicole Kelly who guided me through my program.

## Introduction

The Nashville Sit-Ins occurred in Nashville, Tennessee from February 13, 1960, to May 10, 1960. Students from Fisk University, Tennessee A&I College (now Tennessee State University) Meharry Medical College, and American Baptist Theological Seminary (now American Baptist College) participated in this direct-action campaign to desegregate lunch counters in Nashville.<sup>1</sup> The sit-in protests took place at the Kress, McClellan, and Woolworth stores in downtown Nashville around 12:30pm. Students made their regular purchases at the stores in which they went to the lunch counters asking for service. As the students sat at the lunch counters, the store owners refused to give them service. Despite the store owners' refusal to provide them with service, the students stayed at the lunch counters until it closed later that night.

First, the sit-ins were not violent, but on February 27, 1960, the sit-in movement and students involved saw their first encounter with a violent response. The day became known as Big Saturday since that day was brutal for the students at the lunch counters. The protestors were attacked that day by white segregationists at the lunch counters who later got arrested and sent to jail for disorderly conduct. Sit-in protests at the lunch counters would continue until May 10, 1960 when desegregation started to occur at Nashville downtown stores. Once the desegregation began to happen downtown, Nashville became the first city of the south during the sit-in movement to successfully desegregate lunch counters.<sup>2</sup> Despite the desegregation, other public

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<sup>1</sup> Bobby L. Lovett and Linda T. Wynn, eds., *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee* (Nashville, Tennessee: The Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History, 1996), 96

<sup>2</sup> Bobby L. Lovett and Linda T. Wynn, 97

accommodations across Nashville would continue to stay segregated until the 1964 civil rights bill passed.

The Nashville Sit-Ins were being planned as far back as 1959 following James Lawson's nonviolent workshop. Sit-Ins designed and organized by the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC). The students who were trained by this organization would form the Nashville Student Movement (NSM). NSM would be involved in the sit-in protests downtown as the Nashville Sit-Ins were occurring. The sit-ins also had the legal backing and support of Z. Alexander Looby who was a lawyer in Nashville. Despite the Nashville Sit-Ins being the first lunch counters to desegregate in the south, the sit-ins have been a very overlooked topic by historians and scholars. The reason the Nashville Sit-Ins are ignored is that it occurred right after the Greensboro Sit-Ins in Greensboro, North Carolina. The sit-in that occurred in Greensboro occurred on February 1, 1960, after four college students decided to start a protest at the Woolworth store lunch counter to protest segregation.<sup>3</sup> Greensboro would become the catalyst for the sit-movement to spread across the south in the early 1960s. Sit-ins spread to other towns in which included Charlotte, North Carolina, Raleigh, North Carolina and Hampton, Virginia.

The Nashville Sit-In began after James Lawson talked to a Greensboro Sit-Ins supporter named Reverend Douglas Moore. Moore asked Lawson if Nashville would get involved in the sit-in movement in support for Greensboro which Lawson agreed.<sup>4</sup> Greensboro Sit-Ins occurred right before Nashville and the Nashville Sit-Ins only occurred in support for Greensboro is the reason the Nashville Sit-Ins have been overlooked. The sit-in movement which was sweeping the

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<sup>3</sup> David Halberstam, *The Children* (New York City, New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 1998), 92.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Houston, *The Nashville Way: Racial Etiquette and the Struggle for Social Justice in a Southern City* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2012), 91.

south at the time after Greensboro is probably why the Nashville Sit-Ins have been ignored as well.

The NCLC was founded by Reverend Kelly Miller Smith in 1958 in Nashville, Tennessee. NCLC was already conducting non-violent workshops at the Bethel A.M. E Church.<sup>5</sup> Smith recruited Jim Lawson to join the organization, and Lawson agreed to participate. Lawson, who was from Ohio, was influenced by the teachings of non-violence which came from Mohandas Gandhi.<sup>6</sup> He was famously known to practice non-violent protest for which he coined the term Satyagraha. The peaceful practice used in demonstration against British rule in India during the 1930s and 1940s. Gandhi's non-violent teaching influenced people like Jim Lawson learn more about Gandhi while he traveled to India. Lawson brought his non-violent teachings with him when he arrived in Nashville.

Lawson would use these same nonviolent teachings at the nonviolent workshops as he was training students in preparing for the sit-in protests. When the NCLC started their desegregation campaign in 1959, they began to recruit students to join in the nonviolent workshops. These students came from Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HCBU) across Nashville. These HCBU's, which were founded after the Civil War, had a strong community presence in training African-Americans in higher education. The five students who attended these colleges and universities would attend these nonviolent workshops. These five students who would participate in these nonviolent workshops were Diane Nash who was from Chicago, Marian Barry who was from Memphis, Tennessee, John Lewis who was from

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<sup>5</sup> Bobby L. Lovett and Linda T. Wynn, eds., *Profiles of African Americans In Tennessee* (Nashville, Tennessee: The Annual Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History, 1996), 96.

<sup>6</sup> *The Children*, 12.

Alabama, Bernard Lafayette who came from Tampa, Florida, and James Bevel who came from Itta Bena, Mississippi.

Despite different backgrounds, these students came to Nashville where these individuals would experience some form of racism and segregation in the city. Nashville, like any other city in south, experienced Jim Crow Segregation in its public accommodations. The public accommodations included restaurants, hotels, hospitals, and lunch counters which segregated — the reason NCLC in 1959 start to focus on downtown lunch counters in hopes of desegregation.<sup>7</sup> The nonviolent workshops were introduced by Lawson who inspired in creating these workshops after being confronted by a woman who complained to him the experience in what people like her and other black Nashvillians face racism and segregation shopping at the stores and going to segregate restaurants downtown.<sup>8</sup> Lawson and the NCLC nonviolent workshops can be argued pioneering nonviolent workshops during the sit-in movement. The reason Lawson and the NCLC should get credit introducing the nonviolent workshops, is that nonviolent workshops didn't exist before NCLC nonviolent workshops inventing them in preparation for Nashville downtown lunch counter sit-ins.

Nonviolent workshops were one of the main factors on how Nashville Sit-Ins became the most organized and disciplined sit-ins during the Sit-In movement. Greensboro Sit-Ins despite being the catalyst of the southern sit-in movement didn't include workshops which the students involved plan on their lunch counter sit-ins a few days before they decided to do it. As the students were getting trained in the nonviolent workshops, attempts of lunch counter protests

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<sup>7</sup> Houston, 84.

<sup>8</sup> The Children, 49.

occurred in late 1959 where students went to two department stores downtown called Harvey and Cain Sloan, but they were unsuccessful.<sup>9</sup> NCLC was planning to resume the workshops in after the Christmas holiday was over heading to 1960, but the Greensboro Sit-Ins beat Nashville starting their lunch counter first in February. If Nashville had time start their sit-ins before Greensboro, it most likely the Nashville Sit-ins could have been the catalyst for the Sit-In movement that occurred in the south instead of Greensboro.

Sit-In had occurred in the past prior to 1960 in other cities. A sit-in occurred back in 1939 in Alexandria, Virginia, a sit-in protest took place at the library.<sup>10</sup> The 1940s' and 1950s' saw sit-ins occurring in Chicago, Illinois, other sit-ins occurred in cities like Baltimore, Maryland, Durham, North Carolina, Wichita, Kansas, Oklahoma, City, Oklahoma, and Miami, Florida. The sit-in campaigns weren't a new thing during the civil rights movement, but the sit-in movement would start to get national attention during the early 1960s' once the Greensboro Sit-Ins occurred.

What makes the Nashville Sit-Ins unique was for one the students from four HCBU'S played a role in the sit-in campaign. The Nashville Sit-Ins were better organized and planned more than the Greensboro Sit-Ins which many journalists focused on the Nashville Sit-Ins. One of them journalists was David Halberstam who would later write on the Nashville Sit-Ins in his book called "The Children." Halberstam wrote more about the sit-ins than any other reporter which he was able to meet with the student leaders. Some of the student's even called

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<sup>9</sup> Houston, 91

<sup>10</sup> J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), pp.259-270.

Halberstam for tips and advice about the sit-ins. Thirdly, the sit-in had good leaders which included Jim Lawson, John Kelly Smith, Diane Nash, and John Lewis.

In comparison to the Greensboro Sit-Ins, the Nashville Sit-Ins had an impact on boycotting of downtown business meaning the Nashville Sit-Ins not only focused on the Woolworth, Kress, and Walgreens lunch counters downtown like Greensboro did, but expanded the protests to other lunch counters that included Harveys, Cain-Sloan, McLellan, and Greyhound lunch counters. The student protestors are attacking more business than Greensboro did another reason in its importance in the sit-in movement and civil rights campaign. The main argument about the significance of the Nashville Sit-Ins was it tapped into the local scene much more effectively and building on a tradition of black involvement and activism in Nashville. They had a much more thorough preparation and training, which not only made them more effective, but also pioneered best practices for Civil Rights activism, and left its imprint on the participants in Nash, Barry, Lewis, Lafayette, and Bevel who would have critical active roles in the Civil Rights Movement.

#### Literature Review

Scholarly works on the Nashville Sit-Ins have evolved over the years. Many books, articles, and graduate school thesis papers have written about the sit-ins. The state of the field of history on the sit-ins in Nashville focused on events that occur on the sit-ins. While most historians' arguments explained how the sit-ins were the first lunch counter to desegregate in the south. Most historians don't focus on how the nonviolent workshops help on organizing and planning on the sit-ins. Many historians who wrote on the sit-ins don't concentrate on how the sit-ins created national leaders. David Halberstam who wrote "*The Children*" was the first to

make an argument about how the sit-ins created national leaders. Other people who wrote on the sit-ins before Halberstam didn't mention how the sit-ins created national leaders. The general argument on the Nashville Sit-Ins is somewhat like Halberstam since part of my argument address about how the sit-ins created national leaders.

Clayborne Carson In *Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* was the first book which the Nashville Sit-Ins was mentioned and written which was published back in 1981. The sit-ins mentioned in chapter one the sit-ins which Carson said on how Nash and Barry saw the sit-ins as the growth of black political development for their involvement. Even though Carson main argument in the book was Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) involvement during the civil rights movement, Carson mentioned about Nash, Barry, Lewis, Lafayette, and Bevel participation in other civil rights campaigns which SNCC was involved.

Taylor Branch Parting *the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63* published in 1988. Branch book briefly mentioned about the Nashville Sit-Ins in chapter 7 "*The Quickening*." In that chapter, Branch briefly mentioned about the student involvement in the sit-ins. Branch mentioned about Nash and Lewis involvement during the sit-ins briefly. His book mostly focuses on King involvement during his participation from the Montgomery Bus Boycott to March on Washington.

David E. Sumner Ph.D. dissertation *The Local Press and the Nashville Student Movement 1960*. Sumner main argument in his thesis was Nashville local press who was covering the Nashville Sit-Ins as it was occurring. The two daily newspapers that Sumner talked about are *the Nashville Banner* and *the Tennessean*. Nashville Sit-Ins had a lot of media coverage as it was happening during that time which these newspapers were involved.



*The Eyes on the Prize: The Civil Rights Reader* had primary sources of documents and speeches with the people involved in the Civil Rights Movement. The editors in this book included Clayborne Carson and David J. Garrow. Chapter three “*We Ain’t scare of your jails*” mentioned about the Greensboro Sit-ins help spread other sit-ins across the south including Nashville. Despite the brief specified about the Nashville Sit-Ins, this book is a good source of to access primary sources about the sit-ins.

Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* is about the Civil Rights Movement. This book is like *Eyes on the Prize* since it includes documents and speech of people involved in the Civil Rights movement. Chapter 3 “Student Sit-Ins in Nashville 1960” have interview speeches from the people who were involved in the sit-ins. These interview speeches included in the book were by Nash, Lawson, Lewis, and C.T. Vivian in which they talk about their experiences being in involved in the sit-in.<sup>11</sup> The book primary sources are beneficial in hearing different civil right activists’ involvement during the civil rights movement.

Bobby L. Lovett and Linda T. Wynn book *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee* explains people, places, and events of African-American history in Tennessee. Lovett and Wynn have a section speaking on the Nashville Sit-ins general history of the sit-ins. The Nashville Sit-Ins began on February 13, 1960 and went on three months until it ended on May 10, 1960. Lovett and Wynn did mention about how the students got the nonviolent training by Lawson workshops.

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<sup>11</sup> Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, eds. *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York City, New York: Bantam Books, 1991).

David Halberstam *The Children* book mentioned about how the Nashville Sit-Ins created leaders in Nash, Barry, Lewis, Lafayette, and Bevel. Halberstam book gives the most information on the Nashville Sit-Ins than any other scholar and historian who wrote about the sit-ins. Halberstam book provides insight into the students' involvement in the sit-ins as it was occurring in Nashville. Not only on the sit-ins but what the student participation other civil rights events which included the Freedom Rides and March to Selma. Halberstam was also a journalist covering the sit-ins when it occurs which he had the opportunity to talk to leaders and students of the movement. Halberstam working as a journalist during the sit-ins was his inspiration for writing the book.

Benjamin Houston *The Nashville Way: Racial Etiquette and Struggle for Social Justice in a Southern City* book explained about the history of civil rights activism in Nashville. Houston's approached in his book is to explain civil rights events that occurred in Nashville before the Nashville Sit-Ins like the Kelly V. Board of Education case, which seen Nashville public schools started to desegregate public schools in 1957. Houston book gives good information about the history of civil right activism in Nashville. Aaron Owens *The Price of a Woolworth's Burger: The Importance and Overshadowing of the Nashville Sit-Ins* thesis, make his argument on how Wichita and Greensboro Sit-Ins overlooked the Nashville Sit-Ins. Owens argued in his thesis that the Nashville Sit-Ins ignored because the sit-ins occurred after Greensboro Sit-Ins. Owens thesis does make its case on how historians and scholars overlooked the sit-ins.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Owens, Aaron M., "The Price of a Woolworth's Burger." *The Importance and Overshadowing of the Nashville Sit-Ins* (2013): Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 1210. <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/1210>

Bobby L. Lovett The *African-American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930* book doesn't mention about the Nashville Sit-Ins but said Nashville early civil rights activism that took place in the city going back after the end of the civil war. Lovett suggested about after the civil rights' bill of 1875 was passed several blacks Nashvillians attempts to attend segregated white lunch counters downtown in testing the new law. Lovett also mentioned the 1905 Nashville Streetcar Boycott which lasted from 1905-1907. His book is very well informed about early Nashville history.

Chapter 1: Examined the events that occurred before the sit-ins include explaining race relations between blacks and whites in Nashville going back when the city was founded back in 1779 by John Donelson which free blacks both slave and free made up twenty percent of the settlers. The chapter also explained black and white relations during the nineteenth century going into the civil war and reconstruction. The Plessy v. Ferguson case will be talking about, which rule separate but equal, which public accommodations in the south segregated between African-Americans history of civil rights activist history in the city of Nashville focusing on the 1905 Nashville Street Car Boycott and Nashville desegregated schools after the 1954 Brown verses Broad of education will also concentrate in this chapter. Chapter two titled "Extent of preparations and training for the Nashville Sit-Ins" explained the organizing and planning of the Nashville Sit-Ins. They were explaining the founding of the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference in 1958. This chapter explained the non-violent workshops that occurred in church basements led by Jim Lawson. The major figures in the sit-ins like James Lawson, Kelly Miller Smith, John Lewis, Diane Nash, James Bevel, and Marion Berry are mentioned in this chapter. This chapter also mentioned that in November and December 1959, students begin to

desegregate lunch counters by testing the institutions' policy of segregation at Harvey and Cain-Sloan's department stores. Chapter Three title "February 13th: The Nashville Sit-Ins begin" which came after the Greensboro Sit-Ins on February 1, 1960. This chapter will examine the whole Nashville Sit-Ins campaign occurring from February 13, 1960- May 10, 1960, when lunch counters started to desegregate which made Nashville the first city to desegregate lunch counters. Chapter four-title "Organizations and practices of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council, Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee" explained there two organization involvement in the Nashville Sit-In movement along with how some people involved in the Nashville Sit-Ins like Diane Nash and Bernard Lafayette would go to become founders of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. Chapter Five called "The Individuals" which explained the main people who were involved in the movement which include Diane Nash, future congressman John Lewis, next black mayor Marion Berry, Jim Lawson, and James Bevel about their background, participation in the Nashville Sit-Ins, and what did in their careers after the training. The conclusion will wrap the argument on the Nashville Sit-Ins.

The Nashville Sit-Ins are an interesting and very overlooked component of the Civil Rights Movement. Few explained the general outcome of the impact that the sit-ins had on the Civil Rights Movement. The outcome of the sit-ins involved creating civil rights leaders in Nash, Barry, Lewis, Lafayette, and Bevel. These five students would have an important impact in the movement. All would be involved in every major civil rights' event which occurred during that time. They would also have leadership involvement with Nash being one of the founders of SNCC. Lewis became SNCC president during Civil Rights Movement. This thesis is not just

explaining the Nashville Sit-Ins since many scholars and historians already focused on that. This thesis is focuses on how Lawson nonviolence training influence the students during the sit-ins along with the sit-ins creating civil rights leaders.

## **Chapter 1: African-Americans and Civil Rights in Nashville**

The city of Nashville has a fascinating history of civil rights efforts before the Nashville Sit-Ins. Civil rights activism did exist in Nashville before the Nashville Sit-Ins, which goes back to when John Donaldson established the city in 1779. Some of the early civil rights activism in Nashville among African-Americans mostly dealt with political rights and the issues of slavery. Other public civil right efforts mainly came after the Civil War, during that time of reconstruction. Blacks in the city of Nashville started to established historically black colleges and universities that included Fisk University (1866), Roger Williams University (1866), Walden University (1868), and Meharry Medical College (1876). Many African-Americans in Nashville fought for their right to vote, be involved in politics to be in offices, and fought for civil rights legislation. When the 20<sup>th</sup> Century came along, civil rights issues turn to boycotts which dealt with streetcars and public schools being desegregated in the 1950s' after landmark 1954 Brown v Board of Education case occur. Black Nashvillians participation in civil rights activism in the city of Nashville plays an essential role during this time. They fought for their political, social, and economic rights in the city either at streetcars or the public school. The evidence of civil rights activism did indeed exist in Nashville before the Nashville Sit-Ins.

Civil rights activism in Nashville for African-Americans goes back to the mid-19th century after the civil war ended and reconstruction occurred. Negro conventions created in Nashville discussed race relations and civil rights issues for blacks in the city. In 1865, when the civil war ended, and the passing of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments passed. The thirteen changes which gave abolish slavery, the fourteen amendment which gave citizenship, and fifteen amendments which gave voting rights was a benefit for African-

Americans. As these amendments passed, black Nashvillians were fighting for their social, political, and economic reasons in the city. During the time of reconstruction, blacks in the town of Nashville started to prosper socially, politically, and economically with the established of historically black colleges and universities that included Fisk University, Roger Williams University, Walden University, and Meharry Medical College. Many African-Americans in Nashville fought for their right to vote, be involved in politics to be in offices, and fought for civil rights legislation. As African-Americans in Nashville was establishing themselves, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) were also establishing themselves to terrorized and disrupt the new reconstruction opportunities they were benefitting.

Despite African-American politicians in Nashville getting elected into office, racial discrimination still occurred in the city during that time. The main civil rights issues in the city were the public accommodations that segregated among blacks and whites. A new civil rights bill proposed by congressional Republicans in 1874, allowed blacks to get equal access to public accommodations and go to public schools with whites. The bill was opposed by senator William Brownlow which he fought it because it allowed blacks and whites to attend schools together. Despite the opposition of the civil rights' bill, the bill passed into law on March 1, 1875. The passing of this civil rights' bill which allowed black and whites to attend school together was unique for its time because this same type of issue of black and whites attending school together would of be seen decades later in the Brown vs. Board of Education case in 1954.

On March 8 and 9, 1875, several Nashville black leaders decided to test the new law that passed by organizing sit-in demonstrators at Nashville downtown restaurants. The plan was for them to go to the downtown restaurants where they would go to the restaurant and ask for service

by the white waiters. Despite some hesitation from the white managers to give blacks service, blacks were still getting served at the restaurant. Nashville black leaders' sit-in demonstrations were unique for its time because the sit-in demonstrations would be foreshadowing the sit-in demonstrations that would see with the Nashville Sit-Ins in 1960. Following the presidential election of 1876 between Rutherford Hayes and Samuel Tilden became one of the closest presidential elections in United States history. The poll was also a controversial presidential election as a base on the outcome. The vote came down to three states that included South Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida. A special commission was created to decide who would win the presidential election. Republicans agreed that they would withdraw troops from the south if Hayes was able to win the election. The commission favored Hayes which caused him to win the election against Tilden. In keeping a promise, Hayes withdrew troops from the south which left blacks in the south to fend for themselves which put them at the mercy of white racists. Following the Compromise of 1877, black votes dropped in which the introduction of Jim Crow Segregation in public accommodations between blacks and whites in the following decades.

Jim Crow Segregation gained national attention with *the Plessy versus Ferguson case of 1896*. On June 7, 1892, Homer Plessy a mixed-race black man was a passenger on a train which was going to Covington, Louisiana. Plessy took his seat in the segregated white section of the train which blacks wasn't allowed to sit. He was later arrested for sitting at the white section of the train which he refused to sit at the colored section. The Plessy versus Ferguson case took its name from John H. Ferguson which Plessy jailed under the jurisdiction. The Plessy case brought to the Supreme Court which ruled separate but equal in public accommodations. African-Americans did indeed suffer under the Jim Crow laws which denied them access to colleges,



voting booths, parks, and libraries. Nashville would feel this Jim Crow Segregation in its public accommodations which included its streetcars.

African-Americans would experience their first major civil rights 'event in 1905 when African-Americans started protests in boycott the Nashville Street Cars. The background of the Nashville Street Boycott goes back in 1899. During that year, Tennessee General Assembly wanted to take advantage on what occurs during the Plessy V. Ferguson case, which they tried to extend the law that would segregate public transportation in the city of Nashville which included streetcars. The proposal couldn't get past the Tennessee General Assembly where the plan died. In 1901, another attempt was made to give the suggestion, but it failed again.<sup>13</sup> Two years later, on January 13, 1903, Tennessee passed a segregated act which was introduced by A. K Hancock. Despite some cities in Tennessee organized by the bill, the city of Memphis had the final say so if the law would pass. Many of Memphis' streetcar owners refused to enforce the law. On June 7, 1903, it ruled unconstitutional for 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 which the law was supposed segregated Nashville Street Cars between blacks and whites. A vote of 81-4 successfully passed the bill by the lower house of the legislature and adopted by a 28-1 vote by the upper chamber.

On March 30, 1905, the law passed which was supposed to go in effect on July 5, 1905. On July 5, 1905, the streetcar laws went into effect where streetcars were segregated between blacks and whites.<sup>14</sup> As the law went into effect that day, African-Americans in Nashville would

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<sup>13</sup> 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

<sup>14</sup> Briggs, 122.

start to boycott the Nashville Transit Company. On August 1, 1905, Preston Taylor, Sutton Griggs, and R.H. Boyd, who were negro business man members in Nashville, took leadership roles in the boycott.<sup>15</sup> As African-Americans were boycotting Nashville Transit Company, the Union Transportation Company was created on August 1905 which started to operate on October 1905. The Union Transportation Company supposed to be as an alternative for African-Americans in the city of Nashville to ride in street cars from in different places across the city.<sup>16</sup> Some of the founders of the company included Preston Taylor, James C. Napier, and J.W. Grant. The Union Transportation Company would exist until 1907 when many African-Americans in the city decided to start riding the Nashville Transit Company Streetcars again.



Figure 1: Union

Transportation Company, Union Transportation Company Vehicle, ca. 1906.

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<sup>15</sup> Briggs, 124.

<sup>16</sup> Briggs, 125.

The Nashville Streetcar Boycott despite in being unsuccessful was an example of African-Americans organizing in protesting against Jim Crow segregation on public accommodation. It can also be argued that the boycott style of protest was a foreshadowing to other boycotts like the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the 1950s'. After the Nashville Street Boycott, they would be no major civil rights protest in Nashville until 1950s' with the Brown vs Board of Education ruled in the Supreme Court separate but unequal which public schools across the south started to desegregate. Nashville decided to follow the Brown V. Board of Education ruling where they decided to desegregate public schools as well.

The Kelly v. of Broad of Education case which was filed in 1955 by Nashville lawyers Z. Alexander Looby and Avon N. Williams Jr. They were also supported by Thurgood Marshall and the National Advancement for Color People (NAACP). The case happens because a Nashville barber name Alfred Z. Kelly son Robert Kelly attempted to attend East High School. Kelly won his case which Judge William E. Millier rule in favor of him.<sup>17</sup> The Nashville School Board had to start desegregated Nashville public schools following the case. On September 9, 1957, there were nineteen elementary school children who was the age of six were sent to six of Nashville elementary schools which included Hattie Cotton, Emma Clemons, Glenn, Bailey, Fehr, Jones, and Buena Vista. Three of the students out of nineteen couldn't attend the schools that day. The remaining sixteen attended the all-white elementary school which they had to be escorted by their parents. The students were harassed by angry whites as rocks and bottles were thrown at them.

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<sup>17</sup>“Kelly v. Board of Education of City of Nashville, 159 F. Supp. 272 (M.D. Tenn. 1958) February 18, 1958. <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/159/272/2343902/> (accessed May 5, 2009)

On September 10, 1957, a bomb exploded at Hattie Elementary School. John Kasper, a white supremacist, was responsible for the bombing.<sup>18</sup> 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 was necessary if Nashville decided to desegregate their public schools. The bomb destroyed the half of the school, but nobody was wounded or killed. Kasper was later arrested for his involvement in the bombing which he was arrested for disorderly conduct and loitering. On 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 didn't go through which it was dismissed but the plan was returned on April 1958 which was approved two months later June 18, 1958 which allowed black students to attend other white schools.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The Nashville Tennessean September 15, 1957 (Page 12 of 1)

<sup>19</sup> Ramsey, 36.



give rooms to blacks to stay for the night. Stores were also segregated between blacks and whites as well.<sup>20</sup>

The early civil rights activism in Nashville was important to setting the stage for the sit-ins in the city. Black Nashvillians were fighting for their civil rights going back to the end of the civil war as reconstruction came around. African-Americans was fighting social and political rights. The social rights black Nashvillians fought for was establishing historically black colleges and universities which included Fisk University, Roger Williams University, Meharry Medical College, Walden University, Tennessee State University, and American Baptist Theological Seminary. These historical black colleges and universities gave African-Americans an opportunity to get higher education on what they were denied during slavery. The political side was seeing African-Americans getting elected to office and other government positions during reconstruction. Passing of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments which gave black Nashvillians freedom, citizenship, and voting rights.

The passing of the civil rights' bill in 1875 gave blacks in the city access to public accommodations that were segregated between blacks and whites. Black leaders in Nashville tested the new law by going to these segregated restaurants downtown to attempt to get service at these restaurants. African-Americans would be organizing in protesting and boycott streetcars in 1905, and they created they own streetcar company call the Union Transportation Company. Despite the company only existing for two years, the Nashville Street Boycott was an example of civil right protest which was existing in the city in the early 20th century. As the *Brown v. Board*

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<sup>20</sup> HOUSTON, BENJAMIN. "A Manner of Segregation: Lived Race Relations and Racial Etiquette." In the *Nashville Way: Racial Etiquette and the Struggle for Social Justice in a Southern City*, 13-46. University of Georgia Press, 2012.

of education declared segregated schools segregated but unequal, Nashville desegregated their schools following Kelly versus Board of Education case which several elementary schools started to desegregate in 1957. The Nashville Street Boycott and Kelly versus Board of Education were examples of early civil rights activism occurring in the city of Nashville prior to the Nashville Sit-Ins. The main importance of early civil rights activism in Nashville was an example of black Nashvillians fighting for their rights prior to the 1960 sit-ins. The main issues which black Nashville faces in the city was Jim Crow segregation at public accommodation at lunch counters and riding streetcars. Blacks in the city wouldn't expect these laws which they protested them at public accommodations in Nashville. Like many cities in the south, Jim Crow segregation occurred in Nashville. As it was believed that African- Americans started to protest Jim Crow segregation in the 1950s and 1960s. African-American were fighting against segregation going back to the early 1900s. The 1905 Nashville Streetcar protest was an example of protest despite the failure of the protest in desegregating streetcars in the city.

As Nashville was desegregated their schools, people like Reverend Kelly Miller Smith and James Lawson was establishing the Nashville Christian Leadership Council and organizing nonviolent workshops in training students who in non-violent tactics in what they were going encounter in them downtown lunch counters. In the next chapter, will explain the nonviolent workshops which was organized by Jim Lawson and Nashville Christian Leadership Council.

## **Chapter 2: Organization and Planning of the Nashville Sit-Ins**

The Nashville Christian Leadership Council organized the planning of the Nashville Sit-Ins. The organization was founded by Reverend Kelly Miller Smith in 1958. He started organizing nonviolent workshops to be held by James Lawson. The Nashville Christian Leadership Council was already conducting nonviolent workshops when the organization decided in 1959 to start targeting Nashville downtown lunch counters. They began to recruit students from four following historically black colleges and universities: Fisk University, Tennessee A&I University, Meharry Medical College, and American Baptist Theological Seminary. Students who attended these colleges and universities would become future civil rights leaders. These students included Diane Nash, Marion Barry, John Lewis, Bernard Lafayette, and James Bevel. These students would form the Nashville Student Movement which would be the organization that would be involved in the Nashville Sit-Ins. This chapter is going to explain how James Lawson's nonviolent workshops' planning was successful in preparing the students for the sit-ins along with how Lawson and Nashville Christian Leadership Council introduced a new passive strategy in sit-ins movement and civil rights campaign. Lawson non-violent workshop training will be important in training students on what they were going encounter at the lunch counters. Lawson knew that the students would encounter resistance among white storeowners who would refuse them service. He knew that the students would encounter violence among white segregationists. The training indeed helped the students to become more prepared and disciplined for the lunch counter protests.

The techniques of nonviolence protest in the civil rights movement were practiced by many activists. Mohandas Gandhi used nonviolence which he led the Indian people in protest



British rule. Many civil rights activists felt that the use of nonviolence would work to fight against segregation and racism in the south. James Lawson was one of the believers in nonviolence to protest discrimination at public accommodations. The main thing that sets the Nashville Sit-Ins apart besides being the first city to desegregate lunch counters in the south was its planning and organization by Lawson workshops. Lawson's nonviolent workshop was the key to success for the sit-ins.

There were several reasons that these nonviolent workshops in training the students made the Nashville Sit-Ins successful. The first reason was Lawson was already educated and experienced in nonviolence. Lawson became a believer in pacifism as he was attending Oberlin college located in Oberlin, Ohio when he joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). Lawson got educated more on nonviolence when he traveled to India seeing how Gandhi used nonviolence to help India get free of British control of the country. The second reason was the student's involvement in the workshops. The students who participated in the workshops came from historically black colleges and universities in Nashville which had its history of civil rights activism. Fisk University, Tennessee A&I University, Meharry Medical College, and American Baptist Theological Seminary provided Lawson their participation. College students like Diane Nash and Marion Barry were attending Fisk University while John Lewis, Bernard Lafayette, and James Bevel were attending American Baptist Theological Seminary.

On February 1957, James Lawson met Martin Luther King Jr while he was attending Oberlin College located in Oberlin, Ohio. Lawson was attending Oberlin College at the time while working on his master's degree in religious studies.<sup>21</sup> King led the Montgomery Bus

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<sup>21</sup> Halberstam, David, *The Children* (New York City, New York: Random House, 1998) 12.

Boycott a year earlier in Montgomery, Alabama which was nonviolent protest. It was successfully able to desegregate buses in the city which was headed by the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). King was also a founder member and leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference which founded in Atlanta, Georgia in 1957. Both Lawson and King were believers of non-violence. The nonviolence tactics of Mohandas Gandhi used against the British influenced them both. Lawson visited India once which affected him more on his beliefs of nonviolence. Lawson would also become inspired to become a civil rights activist after hearing about the Montgomery Bus Boycott while in India. He was fascinated on how King and others who were involved in the movement was using non-violence tactics and civil disobedience. The protest of boycotting riding on Montgomery buses occurred after Rosa Park's arrest in refusing to move back of the bus on December 1955.<sup>22</sup>

He recalls in meeting and speaking 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.'"<sup>23</sup>

The success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott was an inspiration for Lawson on what nonviolent protest could accomplish. He had the same belief that nonviolent tactics would be useful in the attempt to desegregate lunch counters in Nashville. Besides being influenced by Gandhi's teachings of nonviolence, it could be argued that Lawson influenced by King and the Montgomery Bus Boycott influenced him to move to Nashville in bringing the nonviolence teachings he learned from Gandhi to teach students in the used of nonviolence at the Nashville

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<sup>22</sup> Halberstam, 13

<sup>23</sup> James Lawson interview: James Lawson: Reflections on Life, Nonviolence, Civil Rights, MLK.

lunch counters. Lawson, who was northern, was also aware of the Jim Crow segregation which was occurring in the south at the time.

The leading organization that was responsible for organizing the nonviolent workshops was the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC). The NCLC was created after a meeting occurred by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Atlanta, Georgia on January 18, 1958, which a Nashville representative attended the meeting. On the same day, NCLC was founded by Kelly Miller Smith which gathered other black ministers at the Capers Memorial CME Church. Smith and the NCLC had the belief that about attacking social problems that exist in the Nashville community based on the Christian faith. James Lawson and Glenn Smiley who became members of the organization came with an agreement that the first nonviolent workshop would hold between March 26-28, 1958 at Bethel A.M.E. Church.<sup>24</sup>

The NCLC had three main objectives which were increasing voter registration, facilitating black employment, and desegregating lunch counters and restrooms at the downtown Nashville stores. As early 1959, NCLC starts 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. We planned a series of workshops on nonviolence to start the process." These workshops were attended students from the HBCU'S in the city.

The reason NCLC decided to target lunch counters is that they were the main economic area which many African-Americans went to spend their money. African-Americans at the stores

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<sup>24</sup> Houston, 83.

were able to buy items at the stores but weren't allowed to eat at the lunch counters. The leaders held meetings as they discussed targeting lunch counters downtown to protest segregation.<sup>25</sup> Attempts were made by the NCLC to negotiate with business leaders of department stores who refused to negotiate with them. In response to the failed negotiations, the NCLC started to invite students to participate in the sit-ins.<sup>26</sup>

Lawson was to make contact to Paul LaPrad, a white student who was attending Fisk University at the time from Delphi, Indiana. Lawson encouraged him to join the non-violent workshop. He also advised LaPrad to recruit other students from Fisk University to join the non-violent workshops. One of the students that LaPrad reached out and recruited to join the workshops was a bright young student from Chicago name Diane Nash. What inspired Nash to get involved in the Nashville Sit-Ins was when she attended the state fair with a date when she witnessed the Jim Crow Segregation occurring among public accommodations in Nashville when Nash went to use the lady's bathroom which she saw the white and colored signs.

Nash asked her date that if he was offended by the segregation among public accommodations. He wasn't since he seen white and colored signs all his life living in the south. As Nash attended the workshops, she started liking the studios which she felt the sit-ins had a purpose in attempting to desegregated lunch counters. Nash joined the workshop also made other people joined the workshops especially men since Nash was light-skin and beautiful which many people view light-skin people attractive.

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<sup>25</sup> Houston, 86

<sup>26</sup> Houston, 87.

Another Fisk University student named Marion Barry who was a Fisk graduate student at the time joined the sit-ins. Barry inspired in joining the workshops after he had an experience while attending Lemoyne College in Memphis as an undergraduate student. He ran into problems with the school board of trustees with racism. Despite not being sure if he believes in nonviolence, but he also thought that the workshops gave him the opportunity to participate in the attempt to desegregate the lunch counters.<sup>27</sup>

Barry recall, “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.”<sup>28</sup>

Another student who joined the nonviolent workshop included John Lewis who was from Troy, Alabama was attending American Baptist Theological Seminary at the time. 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. Lawson and Lafayette recruited James Bevel who was another American Baptist Theological Seminary student, to join the nonviolent workshops. Gandhi's teachings of nonviolence

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<sup>27</sup> Halberstam, 63.

<sup>28</sup> Marion Berry Eyes on the Prize interview. <http://repository.wustl.edu/concern/videos/r781wh721#>

influenced Bevel which was from Mississippi.<sup>29</sup> Nash, Barry, Lewis, Lafayette, and Bevel being involved in the nonviolent workshops were going to be very important because they became important students' leaders during in the Nashville Sit-Ins, and the Civil Rights Movement as a whole.

The NCLC was able to unite church leaders all around Nashville with the goal in mind to end segregation in the city. The main goal for the Nashville Sit-In movement was the use of nonviolence. Lawson's ideology of nonviolence was teaching the students the tactics of the method being nonviolent because that was his belief in the ideas of nonviolence. He also believed it was the solution to solving people problems rather than violence. Lawson also stated that it came from three movements that existed throughout American History like the women suffrage. These three movements show the importance of how nonviolence can be used without the use of violence in getting goals accomplished. The women suffrage movement was about gaining voting rights for women through the implementation of nonviolence which women acquired in 1920. Labor movement came under president Franklin Roosevelt New Deal Program. The labor movement supported issues which included economic security, workplace safety, and wage security.

Lawson argued and believed it was one group of people rather than being separate in the United States. Therefore, Americans didn't need to segregate, and Lawson thought nonviolence was the solution to the world problems regarding conflict and war. The Christian principles in which Lawson used which based on nonviolence, and the nonviolent tactics by Gandhi to train students for the Nashville Sit-Ins. Gandhi ideas of peaceful resistance against the British was

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<sup>29</sup> Houston, 88.

what Lawson saw as a tactic which African-Americans in Nashville can use against whites. Lawson believed that nonviolence would end segregation in the south similar Gandhi used of nonviolence used British colonization.<sup>30</sup>

The nonviolent workshops were held at Clark Memorial United Methodist Church. The training that occurred at the studio which included students who sit at chairs while other students acted as white segregationists calling them racial slurs and attacking them. Workshop training included students sitting in chairs as other students harassed them. Lawson told the students to remain calm while whites attacked them at the lunch counters. The workshops also gave students the rules of conduct once they started the sit-ins protest. The plan for the student 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.<sup>31</sup>

Main issue on desegregated lunch counters by the used of non-violence was the same ideology that Gandhi and the Indians used against the British. Lawson most likely had the idea and know that once the students start setting in the lunch counters that segregationists who begin attacking the protesters at the lunch counters. Lawson also believed that the use of nonviolence like the way how Gandhi used the methods of nonviolence in India to gain their independence from Britain. It would be used the same way to segregated lunch counters in Nashville.<sup>32</sup>

Nash felt that the workshops were too idealistic of the real problems which were occurring in relations to segregation. Despite Nash personal differences of opinions about the use

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<sup>30</sup> Owens, Aaron M., "The Price of a Woolworth's Burger:" The Importance and Overshadowing of the Nashville Sit-Ins" (2013). Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 1210. <http://dc.etsu.edu/etd/1210>.

<sup>31</sup> Owens, 36

<sup>32</sup> "The Rev James Lawson: The Non-Violence Struggle."

of non-violence for the movement, she knew that workshops were beneficial in training the students for the lunch counters by the used of nonviolence. She was won over by the leaders of the sit-in movement Nash 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 in 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 attack by people that were older than them at the lunch counters.<sup>33</sup>

Lawson taught the acts of non-violence on how to combat segregation to Nash and the students at the workshops. The workshops, which were headed by Lawson and Reverend Glenn E. Smiley, became popular all-around Nashville. Lawson discussed the theory and methods of non-violence 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. It was able to take the offering 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 couldn't eat at lunch counters. Under the leadership of Nash, the NCLC keep in mind of Lawson non-violent ideologies as they were

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<sup>33</sup> Halberstam, 101.



planning for the sit-ins. The students next step was to start attending the lunch counters downtown to start protesting segregation.<sup>34</sup>

During the 1950s, racism was still very well known in the city of Nashville. Lawson solution to the problem was the department lunch counters be desegregated. The students that attended Lawson workshops were able to observe lunch counters which they realized that the lunch counters were an opportunity to start the attempt to desegregated downtown lunch counters in Nashville. During the Christmas season of 1959, some of the students who were involved in the workshops which included women, targeted the department stores downtown. Nashville newspapers like The Nashville Tennessean and the Nashville Banner wasn't alert or didn't know that the students were planning the sit-ins.<sup>35</sup>

Figure 3: James Lawson in a nonviolent workshop meeting with students.



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<sup>34</sup> Tavis Smiley, interview.

<sup>35</sup> Halberstam, 91

The Nashville Sit-In protest was organized and expected to provide success to the movement in attempt to integrate lunch counters in Nashville. Students testing segregation in the city continued; Other public accommodations like bus stations were also segregated. Racism was seen at every department store, one of the largest department stores in Nashville which students target was Harveys during the protests. Harveys store did treat the protesters more kindly than other local department stores. Cain-Sloan which was another department store treat the protesters more harshly which they ask the students to leave the store, or they would call the police.

There was a meeting at First Baptist Church where the students gather 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 on 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. Sit-ins spread to other cities across North Carolina and Virginia. Douglas Moore, who was participating in the Greensboro Sit-Ins, phone Lawson which he asked Lawson that if they were ready to join in the sit-in movement that was spreading across the south which Lawson agreed.

The main unique thing about Lawson and the NCLC non-violent workshops where it was the first time doing the sit-in and civil rights movement that students who participated in the

campaign trained and practicing the nonviolent tactics of nonviolence. One main reason that Lawson was able to attract many students to join the workshops was it was racial type of civil disobedience. It can be argued that no other sit-in protests or any other public right events before the non-violent workshops and Nashville Sit-Ins had an organize non-violent workshop that was teaching students in the practice and teaching of nonviolence that used during their protests at Nashville downtown lunch counters.<sup>36</sup> Other sit-ins that occurred before the Nashville Sit-Ins occurred in cities like Wichita, Kansas back in 1958. That sit-in didn't have any non-violent workshops in preparing students on what they were going to encounter at the lunch counters. In the next chapter will focus overall entire Nashville Sit-Ins which occurred from February 13th, 1960 to May 10th, 1960 on how the students used the teachings of non-violence in what they learn at James Lawson workshops in using at downtown lunch counters. The significant of the workshops made the students very disciplined in practicing nonviolence at the lunch counters. The students would be much preparing for the protests after receiving the training from the workshops.

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<sup>36</sup> Digital SNCC Gateway <https://snccdigital.org/events/jim-lawson-conducts-nonviolent-workshops-in-nashville>

### **Chapter 3: February 13th: The Start of the Sit-ins**

The Nashville Sit-Ins would begin on February 13th, 1960, nearly two weeks after the Greensboro Sit-Ins occur. The sit-ins would go on for three months until the lunch counters would start to desegregate their lunch counters making Nashville the first southern city to do so during the sit-in movement. Nashville Sit-Ins were the most organized and disciplined of the sit-in movement that spread across the south in the early '60s. Students used the nonviolence training which they received from Jim Lawson and the Nashville Christian Leadership Council. They used their tactics at the lunch counters when they encountered white segregationists. The main thing that was unique about the Nashville Sit-Ins was the students who were involved not only went to the Woolworth lunch counters but also Walgreens and Greyhound and Trailways bus terminals. Nashville also received media attention from ABC and CBS as well who documented the sit-ins as it was occurring. The primary outcome of the sit-ins were Nash, Barry, Lewis, Lafayette, and Bevel would come out of the sit-ins as leaders. This chapter will explain the events that occurred during the sit-ins.

The Greensboro Sit-Ins that occurred on February 1, 1960, became the catalyst of the sit-in movement in the south. Greensboro Sit-In also gained the sit-ins national attention to the sit-in movement. It should be noticed that lunch counter sit-ins were occurring back in 1943 which one sit-it happened in Chicago. Members of the University of Chicago who was inspired by Gandhi teachings of non-violence founded the organization called Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). It wasn't until the 1950s when more sit-in campaigns occurred in cities included Baltimore, Durham, Wichita, and Oklahoma City. The sit-ins that occurred in Wichita, Kansas which was known as the Dockum Drug Store Sit-In was able to integrate their lunch counters in 1958

successfully. Sit-ins that occurred in Durham, North Carolina which was known as Royal Ice Cream Sit-In which was led by Douglas Moore. Despite the sit-in in not being a successful in ending segregation in the city, it was a significant influence for the Greensboro Sit-Ins two years later.

The Nashville Sit-Ins occurred almost two weeks after the Greensboro Sit-Ins occurred. Both sit-ins would push for equal rights to eat at the lunch counters downtown. In 1960, Nashville had a reputation as being a cosmopolitan city. Nashville also was considered a moderate city as well. Nashville had different nicknames including “The Rock City” which the name comes from the limestone cliff that located near the Cumberland River. The city also had the nicknamed “The Protestant Vatican” since the city had many churches that exist throughout the city. It was also called “the Athens of the South” of their colleges and universities. Since Nashville was known to be a popular city for country music which the city was known as “the music city.”<sup>37</sup>

Nashville also was known to have a progressive stance on racial issues. Some of Nashville public accommodations like the police, fire, and government departments were integrated, but other public accommodations in the city like restaurants, public transportation, movie theaters, grocery stores, neighborhood, and hospitals were segregated throughout the city.<sup>38</sup> The sit-ins focused on integrating department store restaurants, pharmacies, and transit terminals. The location of the lunch counters was the students were going to protest was located Fifth Avenue, North. Lunch counters that were targeted was Kress, McClellan, and Woolworth

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<sup>37</sup> Houston, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Houston, 15.

stores. It estimated around one-hundred twenty-four students want to different stores during lunchtime waited to get served. Kress department store manager, R. L Prescott told the protesters that they couldn't help persons of color because it was against company policy. When the students went to McClellan's, the staff start sitting in the empty seats to prevent the students from sitting there.<sup>39</sup> Woolworth lunch counter was open but later close following Kress and McClellan stores.

On February 13, 1960, the Nashville Christian Leadership Council and Nashville Student Movement would begin their sit-in campaign at downtown lunch counters. Students would start to stage the sit-ins at three lunch counters downtown.<sup>40</sup> The non-violent tactics which Lawson taught the students at his workshops which they use during the demonstrations.<sup>41</sup> Despite the protests that occur at the three department stores lunch counters, the protesters didn't witness any violence at the lunch counters that day. The Nashville police were called to escort the students out of the store. The students would continue the sit-in protests the next coming days. Other sit-in protests would occur at another lunch counter by the students would stay at the Grant's Department Store and Walgreens' Drug Store. Students from American Baptist Seminary, Fisk University, and Tennessee State University met at Fifth Avenue North to begin protest at the lunch counters.<sup>42</sup>

The students who were involved in the protests at the lunch counters read books and did their homework. The students left the department stores at 3:45 pm where the students attended a

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<sup>39</sup> James Telly, "Lunch Counters Strikes Hit City"

<sup>40</sup> The Nashville Story

<sup>41</sup> Diane Nash Eyes on the Prize interview, 1985. <http://repository.wustl.edu/concern/videos/qf85nd261>

<sup>42</sup> James Telly, "Lunch Counters Strikes Hit City"

mass meeting that was taking place at Nashville First Baptist Church. The students and Kelly Miller Smith had the meeting about the planning and organizing of the sit-ins. On February 27, 1960, the sit-ins continued Fifth Avenue North. The non-violent protests occurred downtown since the department store merchants refused to desegregate their lunch counters. It was a resolution that the Nashville city council and department merchants seek to end the protests. Facing economic ruin if the protests continued at the stores, the merchants realized that a resolution needs to happen as soon as possible.

James Lawson and Student Central Committee knew violence among the segregationist whites at the lunch counters was looming. The group decides to meet with Nashville police prevent any abuse, but the police refuse to help protect them. There was a meeting held by the students and Reverend Kelly Miller Smith at the First Baptist Church before going to the department stores to protest. At the meeting, specific tactics were discussed on what they were planning on doing at the lunch counters. The leaders of the committee wanted to continue the sit-ins downtown. The reason was to let Nashville city council know that the students would keep the sit-ins at the lunch counters until it was desegregated.<sup>43</sup>

The plan was for the students to sit at the lunch counters until the store merchants decided to close the store. After the meeting, three hundred students left First Baptist Church which they headed to the stores on Fifth Avenue North. As the students marched along Fifth Avenue North and entered the stores, thousands of angry whites, who crowded the streets which the crowd was kept back by Nashville police. Students would experience a violent encounter at the McClellan a Woolworth department stores. White segregationists attacked a student named Paul La Prad as

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<sup>43</sup> Halberstam, 127-28.

he was sitting by two black students Peggy Alexander and Maxine Walker as they sit silently.<sup>44</sup>

Following the attack, the police came to the store where they arrested Le Prad. The other students forced out of the store.<sup>45</sup>

John Lewis recalls: The first day nothing in terms of violence or disorder happened. It continued for a few more days, and it continued day in and day out. Finally, on Saturday, February twenty-seventh, when we had about a hundred student prepared to go down it was a beautiful day in Nashville, we got a call from a local white minister who had been a real supporter of the movement. He said that if we go down on this day, he understood that the police would stand to the side and let a group of white hoodlums and thugs come in and beat people up, and then we would be arrested. We decided to go, and we all went to the same store. It was a Woolworth in the heart of the downtown area, and we occupied every seat at the lunch counter, every place in the restaurant, and it did happen. A group of young white men came in, and they started pulling and beating the young women primarily. They put lighted cigarettes down their backs. In their hair, and they were hitting people. In a short time, police officials came in and placed all of us under house arrest, and not a single member of the white group, the people that were opposing our sit-in, was arrested. That was the first time that I was arrested. Growing up in the rural South, you learned it was not the thing to do. To go to jail was to bring shame and disgrace on the family. But for me it was like being involved in a holy crusade, it became a badge of honor. I think it was in keeping with what we had been taught in the workshops, so I felt excellent, in the sense of righteous indignation, about being arrested, but at the same time I felt the commitment and dedication on the part of the students.<sup>46</sup>

John Lewis and other students acted out of courage for their bravery in going to the lunch counters. Despite the local white minister warning the dangers that the students were going to face, they still decided still go at the lunch counters to continue the protest. The violence continued at other lunch counters where students were attacked. Whites severely beat three protestors at Woolworth's. While two demonstrators were sitting quietly at the lunch counters which the two white men told them "Go home nigger." Two other protestors were beat violently which they were arrested that day for disorderly conduct. The police were also arresting students

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<sup>44</sup> Halberstam, 132

<sup>45</sup> Halberstam, 132-33

<sup>46</sup> Hampton and Fayer, 57-58.



who refused to leave the lunch counters. The students were arrested for disorderly conduct; the remaining students who stay at the Woolworth Lunch Counter were also attacked that day until around 5:00 pm. Protesters got attacked included being burnt with a cigarette and spit on. An elderly white man attack protestor as they sat at the lunch counters. Whites went to the second floor of the Woolworth Lunch Counters which they push protestors down the stairs and beaten them as Diane Nash, and seventy-five students were booked and fingerprinted in the Nashville Jails.<sup>47</sup> Nash experienced in the jail were different from what other students experienced while in jail. Because of her light skin complexion, she wasn't treated harshly compare to her fellow students who were darker than her.<sup>48</sup> Even two white officers talked to Nash about how her light skin complexion separated herself from other blacks.

It seems since Nash was a light skin African-American this gave her privileges above other people with a darker complexion than her. The United Students National Studies Association (USNSA) who heard about the students that were arrested after the protests at the Nashville lunch counter begin to target Kress, Walgreen, and Woolworth. The organization supported the sit-in movement and Diane Nash. They even phoned Nash while she was sitting in jail. The organization phoned Nashville mayor Ben West which they addressed him that he releases the student who was arrested at the lunch counters. Students who weren't met with Nashville police which it was discussed talking to mayor West to see the end of desegregation.

Mrs. A.S. Cheathm of Fisk University was the one who posted the bail for the students. Z. Alexander Looby also posted bond for the rest of the students who were still locked up in jail.

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<sup>47</sup> Halberstam, 133-35.

<sup>48</sup> Halberstam, 133-35.

The Nashville Sit-Ins would continue going into March which included the students protesting at the lunch counters along with meeting violence and arrested. Students expand the lunch counters protests to the Greyhound and Trailways bus terminals lunch counters. The students entered the Greyhound terminal lunch counter which they were refused service and asked to leave the restaurant but refused which they were arrested.



Figure 4: Matthew Walker, Peggy Alexander, Diane Nash, and Stanley Hemphill eating lunch at the Post House Restaurant in the Greyhound Bus terminal.

On March 2, 1960, Jim Lawson got expelled from Vanderbilt University for his involvement in the planning of the Nashville Sit-Ins. Vanderbilt University later made a statement explaining that Lawson was ousted because he broke the school conduct in his participation in the sit-ins. On March 3, 1960, Nashville judicial system had a growing number of cases which came from arrests that involved the sit-in demonstrations which was submerged. Z. Alexander Looby wanted the sentencing of the students that protested at the Greyhound and Trailways terminals to be postponed by Judge Andrew Doyle. That same day, the sit-ins got halted by the advisement of Looby and Coyness L. Ennix. The reason Looby and Ennix decided to suspend the sit-ins were that they were hoping that the biracial committee which Mayor West sit up in finding a resolution to desegregated lunch counters downtown.<sup>49</sup>

Despite the Looby and Ennix serving as a legal defense aid to the group, they didn't have control of the students or halting the sit-ins. The biracial committee goal was to find a solution to the violence that was occurring downtown on the students attempt to desegregate lunch counters. West who knew that he needed the black votes for his reelection since he won a lot of black votes in is the previous election. West was hoping that the biracial committee was to find a stance on the sit-ins. The rest of the students that were still in jail was release which the committee agreed to halt any sit-in demonstration store lunch counters.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the committee putting a halt on the sit-ins, the committee still hadn't reached an agreement with the store owners about desegregating the store lunch counters. Department store managers had a meeting with the biracial committee for three hours. Madison Sarratt and the

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<sup>49</sup> Sumner, David E. "The Publisher and the Preacher: Racial Conflict at Vanderbilt University." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (1997): 39

<sup>50</sup> Owens, 54

committee explained that the department store lunch counters which were separate but equal were going to be the first step of lunch counters in being desegregated. The students rejected the Sarratt plan, and the student movement became impatient with the biracial committee which the students continued the sit-in movement. On March 16, 1960, the second sit-in demonstration occurred of the Greyhound Terminal bus station. The students who attended the lunch counters was Diane Nash, Matthew Walker, Stanley Hill, and Peggy Alexander. They all went to the Post house restaurant around 1:30 pm which they were surprising getting serve at the lunch counters. The Greyhound Terminal bus station lunch counters the first lunch counters to desegregate in Nashville. As the students were finishing their meals, Hill and Walker got attacked by four white men which they were beaten severely. Nash and Alexander weren't harmed in the attack by the four white men which police was called following the attack.<sup>51</sup>

After the desegregation that occurred at the Greyhound lunch counters, there were discussions among students about planning and organizing other sit-ins demonstrations following the success of the desegregation. The Student Central Committee was planning for more sit-ins at other plans across Nashville, but plans were halted, the reason for it was because the biracial committee had to present their ideas to Mayor West. Leaders of the Student Central Committee stopped the plans in hopes to see what the biracial committee was planning for the sit-ins.<sup>52</sup>

Z. Alexander Looby left Nashville and went to Washington D. C to meet up with lawyer Thurgood Marshall. Marshall had invited Looby to a national meeting on issues that deal with arrests that deal with problems with the sit-in demonstrations which was occurring across the

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<sup>51</sup> Owens, 56

<sup>52</sup> Owens 57

south. During the cooling off period, the protests in Nashville continued. During this time, the Nashville Sit-Ins started to get national attention. CBS was planning to film a documentary about the sit-ins that were occurring in Nashville. CBS documentary film looked at James Lawson teaching other students about the nonviolent method at the workshops in preparing for the sit-in protests in downtown Nashville.<sup>53</sup>

On March 25, 1960, the filmmakers of CBS had the opportunity to witness the sit-in demonstration downtown which was indeed in the film documentary. Tennessee governor Buford Ellington attacked the filmmakers in their involvement in the sit-ins. After Ellington attack on the filmmakers, the filmmakers left Nashville. An investigation was an issue by Ellington on CBS role in the movement. Filming the documentary had a consequence in which the biracial committee had to include the events in their study. Ellington attacking the sit-in demonstrations didn't affect the sit-in movement which Reverend Kelly Miller Smith and the NCLC support the sit-in campaign to desegregate. The Woolworth department store closed in fears that other sit-ins protests that occurred at the store as the sit-in protests continue.<sup>54</sup>

On March 30, 1960, the biracial committee had a meeting about resolving the issue about the sit-in protests downtown.<sup>55</sup> Sarratt's committee explained that lunch counters should be separated between black and white sections. It was a ninety-day plan which gave the store owners the option to continue the policy after the ninety days were up. Students refused to accept the plan which was given to them. The students instead had a meeting with the managers of the departments' stores which they requested for the lunch counters to be desegregated which the

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<sup>53</sup> Sumner, David, *The Media's Role in a Nonviolent Movement: The Nashville Student Movement*.

<sup>54</sup> Sumner, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Owens, 58.

managers refused. The students continued the sit-in protest downtown. Protestors meant at the Davidson County courthouse hoping that Mayor West help to integrate lunch counters downtown. On April 4, 1960, the sit-in demonstrations had aid from another downtown department bus boycott from other African-Americans. After being under pressure to stop the student demonstrations by Mayor West, the student ends the events.<sup>56</sup>

The sit-in demonstrations at the lunch counters downtown affected the stores financially. Woolworth and Kress's stores were losing business during the boycott. The buses were also losing money as well since blacks weren't riding the bus anymore. Even the two newspapers the Tennessean and Banner had advertisement losses since the boycott was going on. During the first weeks of April, the students and the merchants of the department stores found common ground. Continue negotiations were occurring; during the first week of April, the sit-in demonstrations continue to be violent.

On April 13, 1960, a massive protest occurred which a thousand people protested in front of the department stores located at Fifth Avenue North. During the same day, a teenage student named Rufus Jamison who attended Cameron High School got harassed by a white crowd. Jamison wasn't involved in the sit-in demonstrations, but he was attacking from the white crowd including throwing balls of paper at him while he was walking at a beauty shop located at Twelfth Avenue South. He responded by throwing a lighted cigarette at them. The crowd start to throw glass at him while he was fighting them back. Thirty angry whites ran up the stairs at the top floor of the arcade and attacked Jamison. The women workers at the shop attempted to stop

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<sup>56</sup> Owens, 59.

the mob, but they keep on attacking Jamison.<sup>57</sup> The police later arrived where they arrested Jamison where he was sent to a juvenile detention center which he was later released. Following Jamison arrested, six other people were arrested that day as well.

On April 19, 1960, Z. Alexander Looby's house was bombed. When the bombing occurred, Looby and his wife were sleeping at the time and they were luckily able to escape the explosion. The bombing destroys the front of Looby house along with destroying Meharry Medical School window and doors along with the cafeteria buildings. Hubbard Hospital which was located two hundred yards away was blow out. Looby and his wife escaped injury, the students who were at Meharry escape injured from the broken glass. Police officers, firefighters, reporters, and demonstrations leaders crowded the house following the bombing.<sup>58</sup>

The Student Central Committee organize a meeting in a discussion of the bombing of Looby's home. Student demonstrators go together to march to City Hall to confront Mayor West. The student demonstration to City Hall led by Diane Nash, Curtis Murphy, Rodney Powell, and Bernard Lafayette. The students were representing Meharry, Fisk, and American Baptist Theological Baptist. It estimated that the students numbered around two thousand by the time they came to City Hall plaza awaiting Mayor West. West finally came out of the office to confront the crowd that Nashville Airport restaurant was desegregated, but it was up to the department store merchant to agree with the desegregation. He also mentioned that the people who were responsible for bombing Looby home would be found and arrested. Mayor West fear that the large crowd would start to riot eventually.

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<sup>57</sup> David Halberstam, "2 Whites Among 7 Arrested As Sit-in Disorders Continue," *Tennessean*, April 13, 1960.

<sup>58</sup> Halberstam, 228.

Mayor West continued to dodge the crowd's questions. Diane Nash confronted the mayor which she asked if the mayor if people should be discriminated based on their race. He responded to her saying that nobody should be mistreated based on their race. He still explained that it was up to the department merchants to desegregate lunch counters. The crowd left the plaza which they return to their schools to desegregate lunch counters downtowns. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr visit Fisk University which he made a speech to the crowd mentioned about how the Nashville Sit-Ins was the best organized and best disciplined in the south. King also argued that the Nashville students had the best understand in the used-on nonviolence which they carry out at the lunch counters. Following King visit from Fisk University, Nashville Sit-In movement would continue to grow which additional people are joining the movement. As the sit-ins were getting national attention, the student leaders appear on national television shows. Diane Nash made a television appearance on a show called the College News Conference which aired on ABC. Nash argued on the show that segregation in the south was holding the country back from progressing.

Following the march to City Hall, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr visited Fisk University which he made a speech to the crowd mentioned about how the Nashville Sit-Ins was the best organized and best disciplined in the South. King also argued that the students had gotten a better understanding of the philosophy of the non-violence movement than any other groups. King also claimed that the students of the Nashville Sit-In movement were saving the country and future generations from hate. Following King visit from Fisk University, Nashville Sit-In movement would continue to grow. Nashville Sit-Ins organizing, planning, and direct action of the sit-in demonstrations was an example and standard for future sit-in demonstrations. As the sit-ins were



getting national attention, the student leaders appear on national television shows. Diane Nash made a television appearance on the College News Conference which aired on ABC. Nash argued during the programming that segregation that was occurring in the south held the country back from progressing. Nash and nearly two hundred students attended the USNSA conference in Washington D.C. The USNSA voted by 80-13 in support of the movement.

The department store merchants felt the pressure and economic burden as the sit-in demonstrations occurred. Since the sit-in had a national spotlight, the merchants didn't see an end of the sit-ins on May 10, 1960; the lunch counters started to desegregate downtown. Certain people were picked by the student leaders to go to the lunch counters. The Nashville police department, and the United Church Women supported the sit-in demonstrations. Blacks and Whites got served at the lunch counter without incident. The student who was selected by the leaders continues to be served without incident until 4:00 pm. On May 24, 1960, the Nashville Christian Leadership Council announced that the department stores, bus stations, restaurants, and pharmacies were desegregated. Other restaurants downtown would continue to be desegregated in the following weeks. Nashville became the first city in the south to desegregate lunch counters two months before the Greensboro Sit-Ins desegregate their lunch counters.

Despite the Nashville lunch counters being desegregated, other public accommodations would remain segregated in Nashville in the following years up to the 1964 civil rights bill was pass which desegregates public accommodations. This chapter explained how the Nashville Student Movement was able to organize a successful sit-in campaign at the lunch counters downtown. What made the Nashville Sit-Ins unique besides being the first southern city to desegregate but the outcome of the sit-ins. The success of the sit-ins can be credited to Lawson

nonviolent workshops 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 the sit-ins wouldn't have been successful as it was. The student's involvement in the sit-ins shows how young people were able to carry out a nonviolent direct-action campaign without having to rely on much the older civil right activists who carry on most of the early civil right campaigns. The sit-in campaigns, like Nashville, were led by young college students which a lot of older civil right leaders had the confidence that they would carry on the sit-in campaign.

Students who participated in the sit-ins came from the four historically black colleges and universities in the city. That included Fisk University, Tennessee A&I University, Meharry Medical College, and American Baptist Theological Seminary. Most of the students who participated in the Nashville Sit-Ins were attending these universities. These four historically black colleges and universities had importance for the Nashville black community because these universities were created for black students to get higher education where other schools in the city like Vanderbilt didn't allow black students attended until the early 1950s'. Another factor in the success of the lunch counters was the students who participated weren't only black college students but also white college students like Paul LaPrad who was attended Fisk University who joined the sit-in campaigns. The participation of black and white students working together at these sit-in campaigns show how two different races of people can work together. Most of the events during the civil rights movement saw both blacks and whites participating in these events.

Lastly, what came out of the sit-in campaigns were civil right leaders like Nash, Barry, Lewis, Lafayette, and Bevel who would go on to participate in the significant civil right movement events like the Freedom Rides and March on Washington along with working with the civil right organizations' SCLC and SNCC. The next chapter will talk about the NCLC and SCLC how these two organizations were foreshadowing SCLC relationship with SNCC during the civil rights movement.

#### **Chapter 4: Organizations and Practices of SCLC, NCLC, and SNCC**

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC), and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were the three major civil rights organizations who had an involvement during the Civil Rights Movement. The NCLC was responsible for training the college students on nonviolent tactics at the workshops. The SCLC was accountable for participating in civil rights events like Birmingham Campaign, March on Washington, and the Chicago Freedom Movement. Some of SNCC founders, which included Diane Nash and Bernard Lafayette, would participate in the Freedom Rides campaign in 1961. This chapter will examine these three organizations' involvement during the civil rights movement.

The SCLC was founded on January 10, 1957, in Atlanta, Georgia. The founders of SCLC included Martin Luther King Jr, Ralph Abernathy, Fred Shuttlesworth, Joseph Lowery, and Bayard Rustin. Creation of the organization came right after the success of the desegregation of the Montgomery buses in Montgomery, Alabama, which the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) involvement in that movement led to the victory of desegregation of the city buses. King was involved with the MIA and the bus boycott as it is occurred during that time. King participation in the Montgomery Bus Boycott could have been influenced in the creation of SCLC.

The first meeting of the organization took place between January 10 and 11, 1957. During the meeting, the SCLC members decided to focus on the protest movements on voting.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> F. Carl Walton, *Black Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 135.

The structure of the SCLC included Martin Luther King Jr as president, C.K. Seele was vice president, A.L. Davis second vice president, T.J. Jemison secretary, Fred Shuttlesworth corresponding secretary, Ralph Abernathy treasurer, Kelly Miller Smith chaplain, and Lawrence Reddick SCLC historian.

The SCLC was supposed to be a sizeable southern organization whose organizational structure was based like the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The SCLC was able to include action workshops, voting clinics, and mass rallies across the South. SCLC would be involved in many of the significant civil right movement events that occurred during that time. The major events the SCLC was involved in included the Crusade for Citizenship (1957), the Albany Movement (1962), Birmingham Campaign (1963), and other major civil rights campaigns during that era.

The Crusade for Citizenship was an unsuccessful attempt to registered voters in the south. The main goal for the project was to get more voters during the elections of 1958 and 1960. Civil rights activist Ella Baker and John Tilly helped organized the Crusade for Citizenship. Baker was Associate Director of the SCLC and Tilly was SCLC executive director.<sup>60</sup> The Albany Movement was another unsuccessful attempt by the SCLC and SNCC with goal in mind to end racial segregation in Albany, Georgia. Tension occurred between SCLC and SNCC when King came to Albany on December 15, 1961. Many people in SNCC fear that the movement would focus the attention on King being involved. Despite the tension, King involvement in the movement made more people to join. King and others were jailed until an agreement was made between community leaders and city officials that if King left the city then the city would

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<sup>60</sup> Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America In The King Years 1954-63* (New York City, New York: Simon and Schuster Inc, 1988), 228-33.

comply to their demands.<sup>61</sup> Following, King departure from the city, most of the public accommodations would remain segregated.

Following Albany, King and the SCLC would focus on their attention on the issues that occurred in Birmingham, Alabama. King, Bevel, and rest of the SCLC would work with Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and his organization the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR). The campaign would occurred on April 3, 1963, with the goal in mind protesting segregation that occurred in the city. The campaign occurred during Easter time where this campaign would become one of the most violent campaigns during the Civil Rights Movement. The violence would include police commissioner Eugene “Bull” Connor telling the local police and the fire departments to spray fire hoses and dogs attacked demonstrators. The Gaston Motel where King and members of the SCLC was staying was bombed. King was also arrested and sent to jail where he wrote his famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail” letter.<sup>62</sup> Despite King arrest and violence that occurred during the campaign, an agreement was made between city officials and leaders that public accommodations in the city would be desegregated. The campaign in Birmingham would become one of the most successful campaigns during the movement.

After the Birmingham Campaign, March on Washington occurred on August 29, 1963, which would followed with the St. Augustine Movement and the passing of the Civil Rights Act on July 2, 1964. The Civil Rights Act would followed with the Selma to Montgomery Marches which occurred at Selma and Montgomery, Alabama. SCLC and SNCC would be involved in

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<sup>61</sup> Branch, 526-28.

<sup>62</sup> Branch, 602.

that movement where it would lead to passing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act on August 6, 1965. What made the SCLC unique and different from other civil rights organizations was the focus on the strategy of direct action on several civil rights' issues. While the NAACP and National Urban League (NUL) focused or more legal action of Civil Rights issues, SCLC focused on attacking injustice by civil disobedience and nonviolent protest. It can be argued that the SCLC was a more radical civil right organization than the NAACP and NUL. SCLC was also allied to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during its early years.

The NCLC was founded by Kelly Miller Smith which the organization came around after a meeting that occurred by the SCLC in Atlanta, Georgia on January 18, 1958. As the NCLC formed, NCLC focus and the goal was attacking social problems on the context of the Christian faith. James Lawson and Glenn Smiley felt that Christian social action was based on the discipline of non-violence.<sup>63</sup> The first NCLC workshop was held from March 26-28, 1958 at the Bethel A.M. E church.<sup>64</sup> The primary workshop goal was to establish the concept of non-violence based on Christianity.

Many people who attended the Christian workshops came from historically black colleges and universities in the city. Workshops were also accompanied by future civil rights leaders like Diane Nash, Marion Barry, John Lewis, Bernard Lafayette, and James Bevel attended these workshops. Nash and Barry were attending Fisk University while Lewis, Lafayette, and Bevel were attending American Baptist Theological Seminary. In early 1959, NCLC decided to protest lunch counters in their attempt to desegregate downtown lunch

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<sup>63</sup> Story of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Story of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council, 2.

counters. The NCLC first attempted to negotiate with the store merchants which refuse to negotiate. Students started to attend the works which they got training by Lawson and others in the ways of nonviolence. Attempts were made to desegregate Harvey's and Cain-Sloan's lunch counters in November and December 1959 by testing lunch counter sit-ins downtown. The students went to the stores where they bought their goods which they sit at the lunch counters but refused service.<sup>65</sup> The NCLC decided to resume the lunch counter protests after the Christmas break, but Greensboro Sit-Ins occurred first before Nashville on February 1, 1960. On February 13, 1960, the Nashville Sit-Ins began they went on for three months until May 10, 1960. The lunch counters in the city start to desegregate on that day.

The success of the NCLC and Nashville Student Movement would pave the way in the creation of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). SNCC was founded at a conference which held from April 16-18, 1960, in Raleigh, North Carolina. The meeting called by Ella Baker who was an executive director of SCLC.<sup>66</sup> Martin Luther King Jr and James Lawson attended the meeting. King was hoping that SNCC would be the youth version of the SCLC, but SNCC wanted to be independent of SCLC during their involvement in the movement.

Students who were involved in the Nashville Sit-Ins would be required with the organization to use their nonviolent teachings that they learned from the NCLC which were used in the sit-in campaign. Nash would become a founder of SNCC while Lewis became president of the organization from 1963-66. Lewis would leave SNCC since Stokely Carmichael (later name Kwame Ture) turn the organization away from integration to a black nationalist organization

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<sup>65</sup> Lovett and Wynn, 96

<sup>66</sup> Carson, 19.



who attempted the black power slogan. SNCC turning to a black nationalist organization occurred following March Against Fear Campaign from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi from June 6-25, 1966. Despite SNCC and SCLC having differences, they would work together in the major civil rights events like Freedom Rides, March on Washington, and Selma to Montgomery marches during the civil rights movement.

The SCLC, NCLC, and SNCC involvement in the Civil Rights Movement had a major impact. These three organizations were involved in every major civil rights' campaign during that time. The SCLC were formed following the success of the desegregation of buses in Montgomery, Alabama. NCLC were formed following Smith being influence by the SCLC. Some members of NCLC and NSM would be founders of SNCC like Nash and Lafayette. These three organizations had connection with each other which was very important to the movement. Despite their differences, these organizations show how old and young activists can worked together for a common goal. Prior to these organizations being formed, the leadership in the movement was focused mostly by the older members. When NCLC, NSM, and SNCC formed, that approached change where leadership included young activists in the movement. Many young activists would play an important role during the Civil Rights Movement.

It seems that SNCC emerged based on the sit-in movement that was occurring in Greensboro and Nashville along with the civil rights organizations of SCLC and NCLC. It can be argued without SCLC and NCLC there wouldn't have been any SNCC to come into existence. Ella Baker, King, and Lawson who were members of SCLC and NCLC saw the success that the students had in the sit-movement which they most likely felt they could find the same success working with SCLC in other critical civil rights events. The senior civil right leadership also felt

that youth involvement would be a great benefit of the movement. Indeed, the civil right leaders getting youth involved in the civil rights movement would payoff seeing the SNCC involvement in major civil rights events like the Freedom Rides and Selma to Montgomery Marches. It can also be argued that if Nash, Barry, Lewis, Lafayette, and Bevel involvement with the SNCC, the Civil Rights Movement may have not been successful like it was without their involvement.

## **Chapter 5: The Individuals of the Movement**

Diane Nash, Marion Barry, John Lewis, Bernard Lafayette, and James Bevel involvement in the Nashville Sit-Ins influence them to be involved in other civil rights campaigns. They would use the nonviolent tactics that they learn at the workshops and the sit-ins in their participation in other civil rights events that they would be involved. Nash became one of the founders with SNCC which she would participate in the Freedom Rides, Barry working with SNCC, and Lewis is also working with SNCC which he became chairman one time. Lafayette who was also one of the founders of SNCC, and Bevel who would go on to work with both SNCC and SCLC. Their involvement in the civil rights movement would be significant indeed of its success. This chapter would talk about where they come from, their participation in the training, and what they did after the movement.

Diane Nash was born in Chicago on March 5, 1938. Nash parents were Leon Nash and Dorothy Bolton Nash. Nash had a middle-class upbringing which her family moves from Memphis, Tennessee to Chicago which her family was most likely apart from the Great Migration. The Great Migration was a movement which includes blacks leaving the south to escape Jim Crow and racism while looking at job opportunities elsewhere. Most blacks headed to cities which included Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; New York City, New York; and Los Angeles, California. Nash spent most of her childhood with grandmother Carrie Bolton. Nash grandmother worked as a seamstress for a white doctor. Because of her being light-skinned,

Nash got advice from her white doctor to separate herself from other black people who were darker and poorer than her. It was Bolton who moved her family from Memphis to Chicago.<sup>67</sup>

Bolton had an influence on Nash's life where she saw her grandmother imitated white society. Nash mother who divorce Leon Nash later married John Baker who worked as a sleeping car porter. Nash was able to move back with her mother since her mother now was able to support her financially. Despite growing up in a middle-class household, Nash still experience racism growing up in Chicago. Chicago was indeed racist and segregated like many cities across the United States. It was one of the reasons why Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and Southern Leadership Conference in 1965 would challenge racism and segregation which was occurring in Chicago at the time.

Nash 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 transfer to Fisk University which was another historically black college university in Nashville, Tennessee.

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<sup>67</sup> 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.

What was unique about Nashville during the 1950s, was the race relations in the city were more progressive than other southern cities at the time. African-Americans were able to serve on the police force and fire departments along with helping on government broads.<sup>68</sup> Nash first encountered with racism in Nashville occurred when she was on a date while attending the Tennessee State Fair. What happened was that Nash was going to the bathroom which she was forced to use the segregated colored restroom. Nash started in an interview “This was the first time that I had encountered the blatant segregation that exists in the South signs designating white or colored had a tremendous psychological impact on me.”<sup>69</sup> Nash asked her date if he was offended by the public accommodations that were segregated which he wasn’t. He probably used to see Jim Crow Segregation his whole life living in the south. Nash later asked other students at Fisk University if they were offended by the segregated public accommodations which they weren’t offended by the segregated public accommodations. The experience that Nash face in seeing southern segregation at public accommodations at the Tennessee State Fair-inspired her to joined Lawson workshops and got involved in the Nashville Sit-Ins.

Nash would have an important role involving herself in the Nashville Sit-Ins which can be seen her participate in the lunch counters protests, jailed, and confronting Mayor Ben West about the segregation of the downtown lunch counters. After the Nashville Sit-Ins, Nash would go on to become a founding member of SNCC which she would also have significant involvement in the organization participating in the Rock Hill, South Carolina sit-ins and 1961 Freedom Rides. After the Freedom Ride, Nash would go to have a romantic relationship with

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<sup>68</sup> Wynn, 287

<sup>69</sup> "Diane Nash: AUGUST 1961, NATIONAL CATHOLIC CONFERENCE FOR INTERRACIAL JUSTICE, DETROIT, MICHIGAN." In *Women and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965*, edited by Houck Davis W. and Dixon David E., 157. University Press of Mississippi, 2009.

James Bevel would have which the couple married and had two children, Sherrilyn in 1962 and Douglas in 1964. The couple would move to Jackson, Mississippi where they would participate freedom summer voting there.<sup>70</sup> Nash would go on to be involved in the Selma to Montgomery Marches; Nash would later divorce Bevel in 1968 which she raised her children as a single mother working odd jobs that include community service organizations, public speaking, and real estate which she made a career out of. Nash also went to participate in anti-war and feminist movements as well. On May 7, 2007, Nash received an honorary doctorate at Fisk University.<sup>71</sup>

Marion Barry was born on March 6, 1936, in Itta Bena, Mississippi which his family moved to Memphis, Tennessee when he was eight years old. Barry attended Le Moyne College where he received his bachelor's degree in Chemistry. He moved to Nashville to attend Fisk University working on his masters in Organic Chemistry. While attending Fisk, Barry heard of Jim Lawson and NCLC workshops which he participated in preparing for the Nashville Sit-Ins. He took part in the Nashville Sit-Ins until lunch counters were desegregated. Barry would later go joined the SNCC which he became the organization first chairman. He would then move to Washington D.C. become the founder of the organization Pride Inc which the organization goal was to help unemployed man. Barry would go on to get involved into politics which he elected to Washington D.C. Independent school board in 1971 which he served as president of until 1971. He would go on to run for Mayor in the 1978 Washington D.C. mayor election as a democratic defeating Republican candidate Arthur Fletcher. Barry would go on to served three terms as mayor until he had to step down in 1990 after being convicted of drug charges which he served three months in prison. He would later return to politics where he was elected mayor in 1994

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<sup>70</sup> Wynn, 299.

<sup>71</sup> Wynn, 300.

which he served until 1998 where he didn't seek a fifth term. Barry died on November 23, 2014 from cardiac arrest.

John Lewis was born on February 21, 1940, by a family of sharecroppers. Growing up in Troy, Alabama Lewis experienced firsthand the Jim Crow segregation of public accommodations separated between blacks and whites. Lewis later moved to Nashville Tennessee where he attended the American Baptist Theological Seminary in 1957. While visiting the American Baptist Theological Seminary, Lewis started to get involved issues that deal with racial equality in the city of Nashville to help end racial desegregation in the city. He joined the Nashville chapter of National Association of the Advancement of Colored People. Lewis started to participate in Lawson workshops in 1959.

Lewis would have a significant role in the Nashville Sit-Ins in 1960 and Freedom Rides in 1961. He became one of the main organizers of the 1963 March on Washington which he gave the keynote speech. He became chairman of SNCC in 1963 which he would remain until 1966. The organization started on adopting the black power movement in their organization during that time. Lewis also participated in Selma and Montgomery Marches which Alabama State Troopers violently attacked him. He would go on to have a successful political career which he won a seat in Congress in 1986 in Georgia which he remains to this day.

Bernard Lafayette was born on July 29, 1940, in Tampa, Florida. Lafayette moved to Nashville to attend American Baptist Theological Seminary where he was recruited by his friend John Lewis to join Lawson and NCLC nonviolent workshops. Lafayette would also have an important in the Nashville Sit-Ins to desegregate lunch counters downtown. After the Nashville Sit-Ins, Lafayette would take part in the 1961 Freedom Rides with SNCC and participate in the

Selma to Montgomery Marches along with Chicago Freedom Movement. He has affiliated with civil rights organizations like the American Friends Services Committee, SCLC, and Poor People Campaign. Lafayette also earned a Doctor of Education and became a professor.

James Bevel was born in Itta Bena, Mississippi on October 1936. Bevel was also raised in Cleveland, Ohio until he moved to Nashville, Tennessee in 1957 to attend American Baptist Theological Seminary. Bevel joined Jim Lawson and NCLC non-violent workshops after fellow Theological students Lewis and Lafayette recruited him to do so. He also had an essential role during the Nashville Sit-Ins in 1960. After the Nashville Sit-Ins, Bevel participated in the Freedom Rides in 1961. Bevel would marry Diane Nash and have two children with her. The couple moved to Mississippi to help with voter registration. After the Freedom Rides, Bevel would go joined King and SCLC in 1962 working with the organization in the civil right movement events like the Birmingham Campaign, Selma to Montgomery Marches, and Chicago Freedom Movement. After King got assassinated, Bevel would get involved in politics in the 1980s and 1990s as a Republican. Bevel's career and life would take a downhill in 2008 when it was discovered that he committed incest on one of his daughters when she was still a teenager. He was convicted of the crime, but died from pancreatic cancer on December 19, 2008.

The students went on to have successful careers; it seems that the Nashville Sit-Ins was more effective in creating leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. Looking at Diane Nash, James Bevel, John Lewis, Marion Berry, and Bernard Lafayette would continue to be involved in civil right events during that period after the Nashville Sit-Ins. The success that Nash, Lewis, Berry, Bevel, and Lafayette during the Civil Rights Movement and after the Civil Rights Movement can be credited to the peaceful teachings of that they learn from Lawson and NCLC workshops.



Their participation in the Nashville Sit-Ins influences them to become civil right activists putting their lives at risk for change to fight against Jim Crow Segregation. The Nashville Sit-Ins also leaders out of these activists for their involvement of the major civil right events during this time. The influence of Nashville activists during the Civil Rights Movement was especially from 1960 to 1965. These activists would have an important involved in the during these five years. These activists took part every major event like the Freedom Rides, Birmingham Campaign, and Selma to Montgomery Marches. It can be argued without their involvement in the civil rights movement participating in the significant events that occurred during that period like the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill and 1965 Voting Rights Bill the Civil Rights Movement could have been a lot different.

## Conclusion

Lawson and Smith started their workshop at churches located in Nashville, Tennessee, training students in what they would experience at the lunch counter. They both began to be planned and organized the sit-in demonstrations in 1959. Lawson modeled the workshop and sit-ins based on the nonviolent tactics he learned in India. It was able to teach older and younger people the ways of nonviolence in attempt to end segregation in public accommodations in Nashville. The restaurants in Nashville were observed by the students in November and December 1959. Lawson and the students started to target the lunch counters in December 1959. The students were planning to resume the sit-ins after Christmas break until the sit-ins that took place in Greensboro occurred on February 1, 1960.

The Greensboro Sit-Ins, despite the planning, occurred a month before February. Early planning of the sit-ins wasn't organizing like the sit-ins in Nashville were planned and organized. The Nashville Sit-Ins were carefully arranged and prepared by Lawson and Smith by hosting nonviolent workshops in training students for what they would encounter at the sit-ins. But Greensboro Sit-Ins didn't feature any peaceful seminars, and the planning sit-ins were only discussed by the students. The differences in the sit-ins were in the organizing and planning of the sit-ins. The Nashville Sit-Ins were being planned two years prior to the Greensboro Sit-Ins. The impact of these workshops these students on what there were going to encounter at the lunch counters. The workshops trained the students to be organized and disciplined during sit-in movement. It was able to train the students on being nonviolent as reacting by harassment and attack by white segregationists. It can be argued without the nonviolence training these students learn from Lawson the Nashville Sit-Ins wouldn't be successful like it became. Lawson and

Smith start their workshop at churches training students in what they would encounter in the sit-ins. Both started to plan and organizing the sit-in demonstrations back in 1958. Lawson modeled the workshop and sit-ins based on the principle tactics of nonviolence. The workshops by Lawson and Smith was able to teach young people the ways of nonviolence in effort to end segregation in public accommodations in Nashville. Lunch counters started to be targeted in December 1959 when the students were planning to resume the sit-ins after Christmas break.

The Greensboro Sit-Ins planning of the sit-ins occurred a month before February 1, 1960, the earlier planning of the sit-ins wasn't organizing like how the way the Nashville Sit-Ins was planned and organized. While the Nashville Sit-Ins were carefully organized and plan by Lawson and Smith by hosting nonviolent workshops in training students for what they would encounter at the sit-ins The Greensboro Sit-Ins didn't feature any nonviolent workshops, but the planning sit-ins were only discussed by the students a month before the sit-ins begin.

Lawson's workshop was able to force a reconsideration in the role that the Greensboro Sit-Ins had in the sit-in campaign. Leadership of Lawson and Smith who supported the youth involvement in the sit-in campaign. The months of planning in the James Lawson workshop had a huge advantage over the Greensboro Sit-Ins. Sit-ins in Nashville laid out the foundation and showed an example on how to organize a sit-in protest. While the Greensboro Sit-Ins shows an example of how to spark a movement, the Nashville Sit-Ins shows an example how to execute a sit-in movement as a model for other sit-ins. Lawson's workshop training made the Nashville Sit-Ins unique among other sit-ins. The Nashville Sit-Ins also paved the way on the fight against segregation which its participants would take part in a major civil right event. Lawson's workshop also helped turn the students into warriors in which they used the lessons that they

learned from Lawson's workshops. Lawson's workshops would make the Nashville activists the most disciplined and organized of the sit-ins in 1960. The protest of the 1960 sit-ins also involved economic boycotts, stand-ins, pray-ins, and sleep-ins. Nashville Sit-ins also got recognition as being the most expert in the sit-in methodology along with getting praise from Martin Luther King Jr being the best organized movement.

Another difference between Nashville Sit-Ins and Greensboro Sit-Ins was regarding media. The Nashville Sit-ins was mentioned in newspapers, conferences, and television programs. Nashville Sit-Ins were documented by the newspapers *the Tennessean* and *the Banner*. ABC and CBS documented the sit-ins as they occurred. The United States National Student Association USNSA sympathized with the students and citizens in Nashville. Z. Alexander Looby went to Washington D.C. to meet with Thurgood Marshall. Greensboro Sit-Ins didn't get that same media attention like Nashville. The local news didn't document the events that were occurring at the lunch counters downtown. Unlike the Nashville Sit-Ins, the Greensboro Sit-ins wasn't planned and the first day of the protests many people didn't know that the sit-ins were occurring downtown. While the sit-ins in Nashville desegregated their lunch counters in May 1960, the sit-ins in Greensboro would continue into July 1960 two months after the ending of the sit-ins in Nashville. While the process of desegregation lunch counters was occurring in Nashville the sit-in leaders like James Lawson and others were a part of it while the Greensboro Four wasn't a part of the Greensboro Sit-Ins when their lunch counters were getting desegregated. It seems that the Greensboro Sit-Ins and Nashville Sit-Ins had its similarities and differences. It indeed a fact that the Nashville Sit-Ins was the better organized and most

influential of the sit-ins-based on the non-violent workshops, the aid of black colleges and churches, and leadership that came from Lawson and Smith.

The main historical significance of the Nashville Sit-Ins was the trained leadership. The support of colleges and churches involvement in the sit-in movement was a contributing factor for the success of the sit-ins. College and universities that were involved in the sit-ins were historically black colleges and universities that included Fisk University, Tennessee State University, Meharry Medical College, and the American Baptist Theological Seminary. Nashville colleges and universities had a major involvement in the sit-ins where the students attended these schools. Nashville has an interesting history of HCBU's going back after the civil war.

The Nashville Sit-Ins were being planned two years prior to the Greensboro Sit-Ins going back 1958. It had a better organized leadership than Greensboro by Lawson and Smith. Lawson and Smith workshops at churches training students in what they would encounter in the sit-ins and preparing for the sit-ins. The students that were involved in the sit-ins were properly trained. Students who were involved in the Greensboro Sit-Ins didn't have that same opportunity of training in workshops for their sit-in protest. Lawson and Smith started to plan and organize the sit-in demonstrations back in 1958 while the planning and organization for Greensboro Sit-Ins occurred a month before the sit-ins. It can be argued that had not the Greensboro Sit-Ins occurred before the Nashville Sit-Ins it would most likely occurred first since the sit-ins had been planned for two years. The planning and organization of the Nashville was the better organization than Greensboro. The Nashville Sit-Ins also had leaders that would emerge during the demonstration like Nash, Bevel, Lewis, Lafayette, and Barry. They would go on to have important roles and

involvement in other civil rights events which included the Freedom Rides, Birmingham Campaign, and Selma to Montgomery Marches. The Greensboro four wouldn't be involved in any other major civil rights events after the Greensboro Sit-Ins. So, the Nashville Sit-Ins created better leaders in the Civil Rights Movement than the Greensboro Sit-Ins.

The planning and organization of the Nashville Sit-Ins were better organized than the Greensboro Sit-Ins. The reason was the Nashville Sit-Ins involved organization which included the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference and Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Nashville Sit-Ins also had leaders that would emerge during the demonstration like Nash, Bevel, Lewis, Lafayette, and Barry. They would go on to have essential roles being involved in other civil rights events which included the Freedom Rides, Birmingham Campaign, and Selma to Montgomery Marches.

The Nashville Leadership Council pioneered non-violent workshops, and the sit-ins created future leaders of the civil rights movement in Nash, Barry, Lewis, Lafayette, and Bevel. Under the leadership of Lawson and Smith, Nashville Leadership Council had the full support of the students which they saw being leaders themselves in the sit-in movement. The main formula for the Nashville Sit-Ins' success was a combination of adult leadership guidance, support, and resources, and young people's bravery and courage. The young leadership of Nash, Lewis, Bevel, Lafayette, and Barry had a significant impact not only on the sit-ins but the movement. It can be argued that if it wasn't for the involvement of Nash, Lewis, Bevel, and Lafayette, the civil rights' struggle could have a different outcome. The four had an impact in the major civil rights events at the time which included the Freedom Rides, Birmingham Campaign, and the Selma to Montgomery Marches as well. It may even be argued that their involvement in the Nashville Sit-

Ins and other civil rights movement events alone helped with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The sit-ins also influenced Nash, Barry, Lewis, Lafayette, and Bevel during and after the Civil Rights Movement looking at how the change affected their careers going further. Nash became a civil rights activist, Barry were elected a mayor of Washington D.C., Lewis was elected into Congress in Georgia, Bevel would go on to be civil rights activist, and Lafayette becoming a professor. The Nashville Sit-Ins indeed had a significant effect on them during the campaign and after. It can be argued that the Five also helped the way that African-Americans view themselves. Before the five became involved in the movement, black leadership mostly came from traditional black leaders with aid from their white allies. Many traditional black leaders didn't want to take the risk to improve the black freedom struggle and didn't want to upset their white partners. Lewis, Nash, Bevel, and Lafayette decided to go against that, risking their lives for African-American Liberation while other black leaders were afraid to. Another impact that the Nashville Sit-Ins was the creation of the Nashville Student Movement and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). It can be argued that the Nashville Sit-Ins pioneered the nonviolent workshops during the sit-in movement and Civil Rights Movement since the Nashville Sit-Ins were planned back in 1959. Lawson and the NCLC were training students in the tactics of nonviolence in preparing for the Nashville Sit-Ins. Lawson's workshops paved the way to the creation of the Nashville Student Movement.

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