



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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African Americans march for civil rights in St. Augustine, Florida, 1963-64

- U.S. Civil Rights Movement (1950s-1960s)

1963

1964

Country: United States

Location City/State/Province: *St. Augustine, FL*

Goals:

Formation of a biracial city commission in St. Augustine government to address racial discrimination, End segregation of public institutions, Allow the hiring of African American city workers, policemen, and firemen, Drop charges against activists who had been arrested for nonviolent action during the campaign

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention › Activists contacted officials to protest the whites-only event that LBJ was attending
- 015. Group lobbying › NAACP officials were promised a meeting with the St. Augustine city commission, but they were met with tape recorders
- 016. Picketing

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 016. Picketing
- 162. Sit-in

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 038. Marches

Methods in 4th segment:

- 015. Group lobbying

Methods in 5th segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 038. Marches

- 162. Sit-in
- 175. Overloading of facilities

Methods in 6th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 016. Picketing
- 038. Marches
- 165. Wade-in

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- African American leaders
- community members
- students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Dr. Robert B. Hayling, Rev. Goldie Eubanks

Partners:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, Mrs. Mary Peabody, Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Involvement of social elites:

Lyndon B. Johnson, Jackie Robinson, wives of prominent Episcopal Bishops

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Jackie Robinson

Segment Length: *about 2 months*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

St. Augustine City government

Repressive Violence:

beatings, shootings, destruction of activist possessions (car and home), death threats

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

3 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

As the nationwide struggle for civil rights in the United States, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, continued into 1964, tension between civil rights activists and the city government was rising in St. Augustine, Florida. Public institutions remained segregated, and Klu Klux Klan violence against African Americans increased, despite activists' protests and pleas to the government.

St. Augustine, the oldest European-founded city in the country, had a long history of civil rights activism, starting as an Underground Railroad destination in 1738. St. Augustine's first NAACP chapter was founded in 1915. A number of student- and community-led nonviolent actions had been organized and carried out through the early 1960s, but had little widespread effect as individual actions that were not centralized around a campaign with organized goals. The Black citizens of St. Augustine were frustrated that most social institutions in the city remained segregated.

In early 1964, leaders of the St. Augustine chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), including Dr. Robert B. Hayling, formed four main goals of actions they were leading as part of St. Augustine's campaign for civil rights. These goals included: (1) the formation of a biracial committee in St. Augustine's city government to address discrimination in the city, (2) the ending of segregation in public institutions, (3) the hiring of Black city workers, firemen, and policemen, and (4) the dropping of charges against nonviolent protesters

taking part in the St. Augustine campaign for civil rights.

Hayling contributed significantly to the leadership of the St. Augustine civil rights campaign. He became an advisor of St. Augustine's NAACP Youth Council (SAYC) in 1960, along with Rev. Goldie Eubanks. Hayling had recently graduated from the Meharry Medical College in Nashville, and had taken part in the Nashville civil rights sit-in campaign.

Nonviolent action to combat segregation took on a renewed energy as 1964 approached and city leaders began to prepare for a celebration of the city's "400th birthday." The legislation for the celebration, written by an all-white committee, described St. Augustine as "the oldest community of the white race in the U.S."

The first event of the celebration, in which Lyndon B. Johnson dedicated a restored building with a banquet to follow, was originally to be whites-only. Under guidance of Hayling, St. Augustine NAACP leaders wrote Johnson asking him to cancel his visit because of the widespread segregation in the city. This convinced Johnson to designate two tables for Black people at the event. Johnson also told the NAACP leaders that they would be able to speak to the City Commission the following day if no one picketed the event. However, when St. Augustine NAACP leaders arrived for their promised meeting, they were greeted by tape recorders because white officials would not agree to meet with them.

By June 1963, when it became apparent that St. Augustine social institutions were remaining segregated, Dr. Hayling led a small groups of pickets outside a local Woolworth convenient store. Picketers carried signs that read, "If We Spend Money Here Why Can't We Eat Here?"

A month later, sixteen SAYC members sat-in at segregated local lunch counters. Police detained four of the arrested teens who sat in at Woolworth's -- Samuel White, Audrey Nel Edwards, Joe Ann Anderson, and Willie Carl Singleton -- because their parents would not sign a form pledging that the juveniles would not participate in protests until they were age 21. A local judge sent these teens, who became known as The St. Augustine Four, to the county jail for a month and to reform school for five months.

On Labor Day, Dr. Hayling led a demonstration of over 100 participants at the Old Slave Market in protest of the incarceration of the teens and the failure of the city government to meet with local NAACP leaders or create a biracial commission. The police intercepted the march and arrested Hayling, Rev. Goldie Eubanks, and 25 other protesters. Officials sentenced Eubanks to six months in jail.

In mid-September, Hayling and three other activists -- James Hauser, Clyde Jenkins, and Jimmie James Jackson -- were observing a Klu Klux Klan rally from a distance when Klan members found them, captured them, and took them back to the rally. At the rally, Klan members beat them

and stacked them to be burned when the Highway Patrol interrupted the rally. They arrested four white Klan members for the beating, along with the four Black activists. The Highway Patrol charged the Black activists with assaulting the 300 Klan members at the rally. The charges against the white Klan members for the beatings were later dropped. Over the next few months, the KKK and other white segregationists committed a number of violent acts against Black community leaders, including shootings, and the burning of a home and a car.

On February 10, 1964, Dr. Hayling went to the office of Florida Governor Ferris Bryant to inform him of the need to protect Black citizens in St. Augustine. On March 6, Dr Hayling, along with Henry Twine, Rev. Goldie Eubanks, and Mrs. Katherine Twin traveled to Orlando to ask for assistance from Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC.

Over the month of March, SCLC began mobilizing northern allies to join the campaign in St. Augustine. St. Augustine authorities arrested Mrs. Mary Peabody, the 72-year-old mother of the Massachusetts governor and the wife of an Episcopal Bishop, two other wives of prominent Episcopal Bishops, Hayling, and others at a restaurant in March. Mrs. Peabody was jailed for two days.

Over 150 Black high school students and supporters marched nonviolently in protest. Hosea Williams led marches to the slave market and sit-ins throughout the city. St. Augustine authorities arrested so many activists over the month of March that there was only standing room left at the county jail.

In early June at a press conference, Dr. Martin Luther King called for nonviolent allies from around the South to gather in St. Augustine and demonstrate against racial discrimination. Two days later, an unknown perpetrator shot at the place where he was supposed to stay after directions to it were published in the local paper. When King arrived in St. Augustine, local authorities arrested him at the front of the Monson Motor Lodge Restaurant.

Civil rights activists organized a number of nonviolent marches to the Old Slave Market. Soon, white segregationists and Klan members began to rally to intercept these marches with violence. On June 9, federal judge Bryan Simpson ordered the St. Augustine police to allow and to protect the peaceful marches.

On June 15, Jackie Robinson, the first Black major baseball league player, traveled to St. Augustine to support the demonstrations and speak at protests. Throughout the month of July, police committed a number of violent acts against activists trying to use whites-only beaches and pools. Marches toward the Old Slave Market continued.

Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on June 19, but did not go into effect for a few weeks. During this time, the Klu Klux Klan's

violent attacks on the marches to the Old Slave Market became more intense. To try to stop the marches, Florida Governor Farris Bryant told protesters that a secret biracial committee had been formed; however, this was a lie. An attempt to form the committee was made in August, but white members refused to join.

The events led by civil rights activists in St. Augustine put major pressure on the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which led to desegregation. The city hired more Black workers and dropped charges against the nonviolent protesters. However, a biracial city commission, another main goal of the campaign, was never formed.

Research Notes

Influences:

Nashville sit-in campaign

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