

The Albany Movement campaigns for full integration in Georgia (Fall 1961- Summer 1962)

- [U.S. Civil Rights Movement \(1950s-1960s\)](#) [1]
- [\(mainly or initiated by\) people of color](#) [2]

- [U.S. Civil Rights Movement \(1950s-1960s\)](#)

Timing

Mid-November

1961

to:

Summer

1962

Location and Goals

Country:

United States

Location City/State/Province:

Albany, Georgia

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

Enfranchisement of black voters and full integration of public facilities

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 020. Prayer and worship
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 020. Prayer and worship
- 037. Singing
- 048. Protest meetings

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 020. Prayer and worship
- 037. Singing
- 048. Protest meetings

Methods in 4th segment:

- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 020. Prayer and worship
- 037. Singing
- 048. Protest meetings

Methods in 5th segment:

- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 020. Prayer and worship
- 037. Singing
- 048. Protest meetings

Methods in 6th segment:

- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 020. Prayer and worship
- 037. Singing
- 048. Protest meetings

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 038. Marches
- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 162. Sit-in

Segment Length:

Approximately 2 months

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) members
- local ministers
- other Black leaders
- students from Albany State College

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Charles Sherrod, Cordell Reagon, and Charles Jones, three SNCC field secretaries sent to Albany to conduct voter registration drives.

William G. Anderson, a local black physician

Partners:

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), there were major disagreements between SNCC and NAACP

students from Albany State College

local ministers

Black leaders

External allies:

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) - Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC joined the campaign later

Involvement of social elites:

President John F. Kennedy and the federal government were keeping a close eye on the situation in Albany, Georgia, but they never stepped in to support the demonstrators.

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Albany State College students
- Local ministers
- NAACP
- SNCC

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length:

Approximately 2 months

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Albany Police Chief Laurie Pritchett and the Albany authorities

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

None known. However, police chief Pritchett was a master at combating Martin Luther King's nonviolence with

what appeared to be his own nonviolence, but he was really just keeping the repressive violence to a minimum and prohibiting angry whites in Georgia from lashing out violently against the demonstrators.

Campaigner violence:

None known

Repressive Violence:

Chief Pritchett attempted to keep repressive violence to a minimum to keep up the image of fighting nonviolence with nonviolence; however, violence did occur in the prisons that were holding the uncooperative demonstrators.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

0 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

1 point out of 3 points

Total points:

2 out of 10 points

Notes on outcomes:

Although the movement exposed Chief Pritchett and Albany as a target for civil rights groups to go after, the events effectively strengthened the opposition movement as it gave cities across the South a blueprint to successfully deal with nonviolent tactics. At the end of the campaign in 1962, very small numbers of blacks could vote in Baker, Lee, Mitchell, or Terrell counties, and a black in Albany could not buy a cup of coffee downtown. Also, the local schools, bus terminal, library, and swimming pool were still segregated.

Chief Pritchett was very effective of containing the incident and limiting media exposure by preventing large amounts of repressive violence against the nonviolent demonstrators

Up until 1961, the extent of the civil rights movement in Albany, Georgia had been limited to small student groups refusing to obey segregation laws; however, with the arrival of a prominent civil rights group the community would be energized. Albany, Georgia was chosen by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to conduct voter registration drives and SNCC arrived in September 1961 to begin the challenging process of mobilizing support and excitement around their cause. They began signing up voters and encouraged the students, who had previously led the movement on their own, to challenge the current administration in Albany and segregation in general.

In mid-November 1961, the campaign officially began when the Albany Movement was formed with the stated goals of enfranchisement of the black voter and full integration of all public facilities. This group, comprised of SNCC members, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) members, Albany State College students, local ministers, and other Black leaders, would elect William J. Anderson, a young black physician, as their president. The Albany Movement held mass meetings and organized demonstrations and marches. By mid-December 1961, about 500 demonstrators had been arrested by Albany Police Chief Laurie Pritchett and the Albany authorities.

At this juncture, the Albany Movement called on Martin Luther King Jr. to capitalize on the current momentum created by the surge in arrests and to form wider media exposure for the campaign in Albany. In December,

King spoke at a mass meeting and then, on the following day, he was arrested by the Albany authorities during a march. The movement suffered a major blow, though, when King, who thought that the Albany officials had agreed to a set of terms, posted bail and was released; however, upon release he discovered that the city authorities would not take into consideration anything the Albany Movement was demanding.

After this setback, King decided to commit to the effort of desegregation in Albany and he brought in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to help organize the campaign. The campaign had a major obstacle to deal with in the form of Albany Police Chief Laurie Pritchett, who had mastered the art of appearing nonviolent. The police chief preached about his use of nonviolence with a focus on mass arrests instead of mass beatings and was very conscious to appear nonviolent when the TV cameras and reporters were around. Pritchett kept up with the overwhelming amount of arrests by using the jails in surrounding counties (Baker, Mitchell, and Lee Counties).

The movement came to end in late summer of 1962, when the Albany Movement lost momentum in the face of Pritchett's seemingly inexhaustible ability to arrest and jail all demonstrators the campaign threw at him. King got himself arrested a second time but was also released again. By late August, the campaign had fizzled completely and the civil rights coalition had to admit defeat; however, the tactics and lessons they learned would be transferable to a later success in Birmingham, Alabama.

Over the year long campaign, with high points of action occurring in December 1961 and the summer of 1962, demonstrations led to the arrests of more than 2,000 local black residents. Several nonviolent tactics were employed by the Albany Movement over the course of the movement including: protest marches, mass meetings, petitions, speeches, prayer, boycotts, and sit-ins. However, maybe the most unique nonviolent tactic implemented during this movement was singing. During the mass meetings, song would prove to be a very effective tool to rally and energize the demonstrators. After the Albany Movement, SNCC formed the "Freedom Singers" to utilize this powerful tactic.

King and the civil rights movement were not the only ones to come out of Albany with lessons learned. The stubborn Albany Police Chief had taught the rest of the South how to successfully stave off the mighty nonviolence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Pritchett proved that if one commits to appearing to be nonviolent in front of the cameras one can use repressive violence behind the scenes and still exude an image of nonviolence. Emphasizing his use of mass arrests as a tactic instead of mass beatings, Pritchett preached to the nation how one can use nonviolence to combat nonviolence. However, his misleading commitment to "nonviolence" faltered in 1963-1964, when another campaign ended up defeating the formidable police chief partly by exposing the cleverly hidden violence that took place in the jails (see "Peace campaigners fight for civil liberties in Albany, GA, 1963-1964").

One of the major issues surrounding the Albany Movement's 1961-1962 campaign was the lack of aid from the federal government. President John F. Kennedy and his administration promised that they were watching the situation in Albany closely; however, because of Pritchett's use of arrests and avoidance of public violence, the federal government never felt enough pressure from American citizens to intervene. The lack of intervention by the Kennedy administration in this case reinforced the frustration and distrust that many civil rights demonstrators had for the federal government.

Research Notes

Influences:

The nonviolent tactics of Martin Luther King, Jr. had a major influence on the campaign headed up by SNCC (1).

The way this movement developed it was a major influence for both the civil rights activists and their opponents. The civil rights leaders realized what had gone wrong in this instance, while the opposition used this case as a plan for combating nonviolence. Scholars now say that Albany's failure led to Birmingham's success (see "African Americans campaign for equal accommodations, Birmingham, Alabama, USA, 1963"). (2).

Sources:

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Additional Notes:

Edited by Max Rennebohm (30/07/2011)

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Anthony Phalen, 06/11/2009

[Back to top](#)

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