



Global Nonviolent Action Database

Published on *Global Nonviolent Action Database* (<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>)

Black students, community, allies begin desegregating Jackson, Mississippi, 1962-1963

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

October

1962

to: 18 June

1963

Country: United States

Location City/State/Province: Jackson, Mississippi

Goals:

The campaign stated eight demands to the Jackson administration: desegregate all public facilities, including parks, playgrounds, and libraries; eventually desegregate all public schools; remove segregation signs from all public places; desegregate lunchrooms and lunch counters in downtown stores; hire blacks on the city police force; upgrade the salaries of black municipal workers; employ black crossing guards for school zones; and form a biracial committee.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 061. Boycott of social affairs › Refusal to attend 'Blacks only' half of State fair

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 071. Consumers' boycott

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 016. Picketing
- 071. Consumers' boycott

Methods in 4th segment:

- 016. Picketing
- 071. Consumers' boycott

Methods in 5th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 016. Picketing
- 071. Consumers' boycott

Methods in 6th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 011. Records, radio, and television › Rebuttal of Mayor's speech aired on public television
- 016. Picketing
- 034. Vigils
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches
- 045. Demonstrative funerals › Funeral for martyred Medgar Evers merged into a march for both grieving and protest
- 051. Walk-outs › Black elected officials walk out of negotiations with the mayor
- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 162. Sit-in
- 167. Pray-in

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- Black high school students
- College students
- Middle class Black residents
- black ministers

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Medgar Evers

John Salter

Black Ministers of Jackson

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (North Jackson Chapter)

Partners:

Youth Council of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

National office, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Tougaloo College students

Tougaloo College Faculty

Lainer High School students

Brinkley High School students

Citizen's Committee for Human Rights in Jackson

External allies:

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

Congress on Racial Equality

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Involvement of social elites:

President John F. Kennedy

Attorney General Robert Kennedy

Lena Horne

Dick Gregory

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- North Jackson chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- North Jackson chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Youth Council (NJYC)

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Black ministers of Jackson

Groups in 5th Segment:

- Brinkley High School students
- Congress on Racial Equality (CORE)
- Lainer High School Students
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (National headquarters)
- Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Attorney General Robert Kennedy
- Dick Gregory
- President John F. Kennedy
- Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Exit) Lena Horne

Segment Length: 6.5 weeks

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Mayor Allen Thompson

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known.

Campaigner violence:

not known

Repressive Violence:

Police arrests over 500 campaigners. Whites gathered to antagonize the students participating in the sit-ins with insults, spray paint, and condiments. They also beat several students. A gunman killed campaign initiator Medgar Evers. Police beat Salter, Ed King, and other march participants.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

1 point out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

The Mayor only agreed to three out of eight demands, two of which he agreed to before demonstrations began. The NAACP moved on to other Mississippi towns, focusing on black voter registration.

Jackson was the largest city in Mississippi in 1960, with 250,000 residents, 50,000 of whom were black. Medgar Evers, a field secretary for the Jackson chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began to build up NAACP Youth Councils at colleges and high schools in the area since 1961. Since the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were in other parts of Mississippi, the NAACP was the only consistent nonviolent group in Jackson.

On 22 September 1962, Youth Council members, mentored by John Salter, began printing the North Jackson Action newsletter to call for change in Jackson and to provide a voice for the Youth Councils. John Salter was a sociology professor of white and Native American descent at Tougaloo College, an African American college founded in 1869 just north of Jackson. The newsletter brought funding and praise to the Youth Councils in Jackson.

The first plan of action was to boycott the Mississippi state fair scheduled for early October, 1962, where attendance would be divided between 'whites only' days and 'blacks only' days. The boycott was successful, with only 3% of blacks participating in the fair.

After the success of the state fair boycott, North Jackson Action announced a boycott of Capitol Street stores in downtown Jackson beginning 16 November 1962. The Youth Council, along with Evers and Salter, came up with four goals for the boycott: hiring and promotion equality, integration of public spaces, use of courtesy titles towards black peers (such as Mrs., Miss, and Mr.) and service on a first-come, first-served basis.

They distributed leaflets stating the goals on Capitol Street. After a few weeks, Salter began to plan to picket the Woolworth's store on Capitol Street. On 12 December 1962, Salter, his wife, and four Tougaloo students picketed in front of Woolworth's.

A group of 50 policemen arrested the six of them, marking the first arrests of the campaign.

From December 1962 to April 1963, the boycott continued with 65% to 90% of blacks in the city participating. Medgar Evers learned that the conservative national NAACP headquarters was not in support of the local direct action; the New York City office ignored his requests for funding. Since the Jackson branch of the NAACP could not afford to bail out large groups, the next picket did not occur until 4 April 1963, during the Easter shopping sales, when police arrested four students for picketing a store.

Salter, through the North Jackson Action newsletter, brought the Jackson NAACP branch greater attention, funding, and support from other civil rights organizations like the SNCC and CORE.

On 9 April 1962, Roy Wilkins, the executive director of the NAACP's national organization, finally spoke in support of the Jackson branch. Wilkins saw that the recent successful campaign by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Birmingham, Alabama, brought national attention to segregation in the South and effectively desegregated Birmingham in a significant way. From a public relations perspective, the national NAACP saw Jackson as a way to broaden its image from its previous conservative profile. The national office gave funding to the Jackson campaign, but remained in some tension with the tactic of sit-ins.

Despite internal conflict, the boycott and weekly meetings continued. On 12 May 1963, Evers sent out letters to city officials in Jackson stating the NAACP's goal of integration in Jackson and restated the four goals from the beginning of the boycott.

In response, Mayor Allen Thompson went on television the next day to portray Jackson as a city without racial inequality, characterizing the NAACP as outside agitators. After gaining permission from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Evers, a Jackson native, gave a reply to the mayor's speech on public television on 20 May.

Meanwhile, one of the more conservative groups working for integration, the Citizens Committee for Human Rights in Jackson, agreed to a meeting with Mayor Thompson in exchange for not participating in demonstrations. To take advantage of this apparent betrayal, the Jackson branch of the NAACP and the other groups held a mass meeting to elect representatives for the meeting with Thompson.

22 May was set for the meeting with Mayor Thompson. Thompson, however, replaced most of the elected delegates with his own. Thompson called for a second meeting on 27 May with his group and allowed in those he rejected as spectators. The representatives laid out eight goals: form a biracial committee, desegregate all public facilities, including parks, playgrounds, and libraries; eventually desegregate all public schools; remove segregation signs from all public places; desegregate lunchrooms and lunch counters in downtown stores; upgrade the salaries of black municipal workers; employ black crossing guards for school zones; and hire blacks on the city police force

Thompson agreed to the latter two goals only. The campaigners already expected that the mayor would not agree to most goals, and upon hearing his answer, walked out.

Demonstrations resumed. On 28 May, six Tougaloo students and John Slater staged a sit-in at Woolworth's. For a distraction, a small picket line formed in another section of Capitol Street. Police arrested the picketing students, but took no action on the sit-in due to the Supreme Court's recent ruling that sit-ins were legal.

The police, unsure of how to treat the students, did nothing for over two hours. In that time, a crowd of white citizens in the store grew large and restless. Eventually, a young white man walked over to a student, Norman Bailey, and punched him in the head. When Norman fell to the floor, the man continued kicking him for several minutes until an undercover policeman stopped him and arrested them both.

A white Tougaloo student, Joan Trumpauer, took Bailey's place with the other two students, Pearlina Lewis and Anne Moody. The crowd continued attacking the group: yelling insults, pouring condiments, and even spray painting them. The store closed

and the mob disbursed. The sit-in received national attention.

The next day Lainer High School and Brinkley High School students marched out of school during lunch hour and sang freedom songs. Police arrested a student and an adult.

The day after that, 30 May, around five hundred students from five high schools marched with banners and signs towards Farish Baptist Church, where the NAACP held mass meetings. Police stopped the Brinkley group and arrested all 75 students marching from that school. When the remaining groups reached the church and began marching towards Capitol Street, police arrested the other 400 students. Without enough police cars, police crammed the students into garbage trucks.

Meanwhile, ministers of the Mississippi Methodist Church revoked the membership of Reverend Ed King, a white minister, for his involvement in the sit-in. On the same day, NAACP president Roy Wilkins visited Jackson to check on the situation. Although he praised the efforts of the strategy committee and even got arrested for participating in a picket line, he also sided with the conservative black ministers and businessmen who worried about the direct action of the campaign. Wilkins' visit brought to the surface the tensions within the local NAACP between those who agreed and disagreed with using nonviolent direct action.

On 4 June, Mayor Thompson declared the campaign finished. To show that the campaign was still going strong, Evers, Salter, and the rest of the strategy committee launched an 'Allen Thompson blitzkrieg': a series of small demonstrations on Capitol Street all day, ending in a small pray-in at city hall. Police arrested 32 people.

On 6 June 1963, Mayor Thompson effectively issued an injunction to the NAACP, CORE, and Tougaloo College faculty by banning parades and mass demonstrations without a permit. The campaign's strategy committee had broadened to gain a wider base for the struggle ahead. The mayor's move to issue an injunction was believed to represent his hope that the strategy committee could be divided. However, it brought unity instead. Even the black ministers and business leaders opposed the injunction, and the NAACP launched an appeal to remove it.

On Friday, 7 June, the coalition's strategy committee ignored the injunction and continued the blitzkrieg, with dozens of demonstrators arrested. That night, singer Lena Horne and black comedian Dick Gregory came to Jackson to host a benefit concert attended by most of black community in Jackson. On Sunday, demonstrators staged pray-ins at five white churches. Only one white congregation let the demonstrators pray without interruption. Meanwhile the appeal to the injunction found the Mississippi state court siding with Mayor.

On Wednesday, 12 June 1963, just after midnight, a gunman killed Medgar Evers as he left his car. The next day, organizers and adult citizens of Jackson held a vigil and a march. When part of the group sang freedom songs, police began arrests for disturbing the peace. The relative self-restraint by the police that lasted for over a week ended when policemen heavily beat John Salter.

Due to growing racial tension, the mayor agreed to allow a silent march after Evers' funeral on Saturday. Many came to Jackson to join in honor of the martyred Evers, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The march filled nine blocks and included members NAACP, CORE, SNCC along with Jackson citizens. Once the march reached Capitol Street, one marcher began singing, and the rest of the crowd joined in.

Tension grew during the events of the day. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. began to leave after the funeral for safety reasons, but when several police saw King leave with Salter, they beat the men and took them in for interrogation. The march turned violent as police began arrests. Several marchers grabbed bricks and rocks to throw at the police.

A US Justice Department representative tried to defuse tensions by standing between the police and the demonstrators. Another marcher took a policeman's bullhorn and told the demonstrators to go home before violence broke out. The crowd listened and dispersed.

The next day King and Salter were in a car accident that left both men injured and hospitalized for several days. While Salter and King were in the hospital, President John F. Kennedy, through letters sent by Attorney General Robert Kennedy, began putting pressure on the Mayor to meet with the campaign's strategy committee.

The day after Evers' funeral, the NAACP had formally announced its move away from mass demonstrations in Jackson. SNCC disagreed and officially left the coalition. Without slain Medgar Evers, injured John Salter, or jailed Ed King, the strategy committee now largely represented the conservative groups and some CORE operatives. Negotiations with the mayor resumed.

Even though the mayor agreed to only three of the eight goals (hiring black policemen, upgrading black municipal worker salaries, and employing black crossing guards for school zones, the strategy committee accepted the terms and ended the direct action campaign on 18 June 1963.

While the NAACP treated the news as a victory, the student organizers and adult supporters of direct action were disappointed that their efforts did not lead to desegregation of public areas in Jackson.

Research Notes

Influences:

The NAACP was influenced by the actions of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Birmingham, Alabama occurring around the same time.

Sources:

Hartford, Bruce. "1962." Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement. Tougaloo College, n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis62.htm#1962jackson>>.

Hartford, Bruce. "1963 January-June." Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement. Tougaloo College, n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis63.htm>>.

Hartford, Bruce. "Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement -- Hunter Bear." Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement -- Hunter Bear. Tougaloo College, 1 Jan. 2005. Web. 21 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.crmvet.org/nars/hunteri.htm>>.

O' Brien, M, J, and Julian Bond. We Shall not be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in and the Movement it Inspired. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2013. Ebook.

Pettus, Emily Wagster. "Miss. honors 50th anniversary of its Woolworth's sit-in." USA Today. Gannett, 12 June 2013. Web. 21 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/05/28/50-years-mississippi-woolworths-sit-in/2365789/>>.

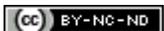
Salter, John R.. Jackson, Mississippi: an American Chronicle of Struggle and Schism. Hicksville, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1979. Print.

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

Kerry Robinson 26/04/2014

A project of Swarthmore College, including Peace and Conflict Studies, the Peace Collection, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility.

Copyright Swarthmore College.



Global Nonviolent Action Database is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

Original website design and artwork created by [Daniel Hunter](#).

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>.

Registered users can [login](#) to the website.

Source URL (retrieved on 02/20/2020 - 03:28): <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/black-students-community-allies-begin-desegregating-jackson-mississippi-1962-1963>

Links:

[1] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/wave-campaigns/us-civil-rights-movement-1950s-1960s>

[2] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/mainly-or-initiated-people-color>

[3] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/mainly-or-initiated-student-participants>

[4] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/example-paradox-repression>