Cambridge, Maryland, activists campaign for desegregation, USA, 1962-1963

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

January
1962
to: July
1963

Country: United States
Location City/State/Province: Cambridge, Maryland

Goals:
Ending public segregation, creation of public housing

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 048. Protest meetings

Methods in 2nd segment:

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

Methods in 5th segment:

- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 162. Sit-in

Methods in 6th segment:

- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 071. Consumers' boycott
Classifications

Classification:
Change
Cluster:
Democracy
Economic Justice
Human Rights
National/Ethnic Identity
Group characterization:

- African Americans
- College students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Civic Interest Group of Baltimore (CIG); the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), including Reggie Robinson & Bill Hansen; the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee (CNAC), including Gloria Richardson

Partners:
Not known

External allies:
Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); black students from Maryland State College, Howard University, Lincoln University, and Morgan University; white students from the Northern Student Movement (NSM) including: Swarthmore College, Haverford College, Bryn Mawr College, Beaver College, and Johns Hopkins University.

Involvement of social elites:
Robert Kennedy

Joining/Exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Black students from outside Cambridge
- Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee
- Congress of Racial Equality
- White students from Northern Student Movement

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Robert Kennedy

Segment Length: Approximately 3 months
Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:
Southern whites, Rescue and Fire Company (RFC), state senator Frederick Malkus, police chief Brice Kinnamon, Osvrey Pritchett

Nonviolent responses of opponent:
Nonviolent protest by segregationist whites

Campaigner violence:
Violence used by both sides in the Cambridge riots in June and July of 1963

Repressive Violence:
Freelance violence against demonstrators, allowed by police, as well as arrests and police beatings

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
5 points out of 6 points

Survival:
1 point out of 1 points

Growth:
2 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:
1963 success in Maryland de jure end to segregation, but the campaign was not entirely nonviolent.

Cambridge, a small city in Eastern Shore Maryland, was racially divided in 1960 between African Americans and European Americans. Unemployment rates for African Americans were quadruple those of white people and segregation was pervasive in public and private spaces alike.

When a segregated Maryland restaurant on a major highway not far away (Route 40, which went between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore) refused to serve African diplomat Adam Malik Sow, the Civic Interest Group of Baltimore (CIG) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) began freedom rides and sit-ins in protest (see “CORE’s Route 40 Project: Maryland campaign for desegregation and U.S. Civil Rights, 1961”). Demonstrator persistence put pressure on the Kennedy administration and Maryland Governor J. Millard Tawes to call for desegregation in the area. This success prompted CIG to expand the protests to cities in nearby Eastern Shore.

In January of 1962, CIG and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) affiliates Reggie Robinson and Bill Hansen led a march in Cambridge protesting segregation. Police arrested and townspeople beat high school and college student demonstrators. That same night, supporters, including Gloria Richardson, met at Waugh Church and began to form the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee (CNAC).

A week later CNAC held a second march in Cambridge. This protest was larger, including members of CORE, black students from Howard University, Morgan, Lincoln University and Maryland State Colleges, and white students from three colleges near Philadelphia: Swarthmore, Haverford, and Bryn Mawr (who networked through the Northern Student Movement).

State senator Frederick Malkus led the opposition with support from police chief Brice Kinnamon, mayoral candidate Osvrey Pritchett, and the Rescue and Fire Company (RFC), which threatened to deny ambulance service to African Americans. Police allowed angered white crowds to beat demonstrators.
Later that year, Governor Tawes and the Maryland General Assembly passed an anti-discrimination bill. However, the opposition managed to include an amendment under which counties could choose to ignore the bill entirely.

Fifty men and women marched downtown on March 29, 1963, to protest the discriminatory policies at the Dorsett Theater and the Rescue and Fire Company. Nonviolent white protesters met them at the doors. Police arrested seventeen of the original demonstrators, including Gloria Richardson, on charges of trespassing and disturbing the peace. The next day, protesters held a sit-in at Collins Drugstore, as well as demonstrations outside the RFC, the Dorsett Theater, city hall, the county courthouse, the town jail, and the offices of the state Board of Education and State Unemployment. Soon CNAC called for a full-scale boycott of the downtown area. Within the next seven weeks, police arrested eighty demonstrators.

On June 13, 1963, five hundred protesters marched downtown. The next night, both sides erupted in violence, set fires, threw bricks, and shot guns. In response, Governor J. Millard Tawes held a meeting in which he offered to speed up school desegregation, build public housing, and establish a biracial commission in exchange for an end to the protests. Unable to trust the offer, CNAC rejected it. On June 14, Tawes declared martial law and sent troops into Cambridge to quell the protests.

CNAC met with Tawes and Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall to pressure the school board into desegregation by fall of 1963. The National Guard left Cambridge on July 8. That same day, proprietor Robert Fehsenfeld assaulted protesters outside the Dizzyland Restaurant. Protesters and responders continued to cause disturbances over the next few days. On July 10, 300 whites surrounded 250 black protesters in a march to the courthouse. A violent confrontation at the Dizzyland on July 11 sparked the re-entrance of the National Guard. That night, 250 demonstrators began a “freedom walk” back to the courthouse. There was violence on both sides.

On July 23, with Robert Kennedy presiding, city officials and civil rights leaders, including Gloria Richardson, signed the Treaty of Cambridge. The agreement called for immediate desegregation of schools and hospitals, the construction of low-rent public housing, the Maryland Department of Employment Security and the Post Office hiring black workers, the appointment of a human relations commission and an amendment to the 1962 bill desegregating public spaces.

Research Notes

Sources:


Additional Notes:
Edited by Max Rennebohm (27/07/2011)
Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:
Rebecca Contreras, 30/01/2011