



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## St. Paul's College students boycott segregated Virginia movie theater, Lawrenceville, VA, 1960

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

*Time period notes: The duration of the campaign is not clear*

Spring

1960

to: Fall

1960

**Country:** United States

**Location City/State/Province:** Lawrenceville, Virginia

**Location Description:** St. Paul's College

**Goals:**

To change the Lawrenceville movie theater's segregated policy.

### Methods

**Methods in 1st segment:**

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 192. Alternative economic institutions

**Methods in 2nd segment:**

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 192. Alternative economic institutions

**Methods in 3rd segment:**

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 192. Alternative economic institutions

**Methods in 4th segment:**

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 192. Alternative economic institutions

**Methods in 5th segment:**

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 192. Alternative economic institutions

**Methods in 6th segment:**

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 192. Alternative economic institutions

**Additional methods (Timing Unknown):**

- 010. Newspapers and journals

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Change

**Cluster:**

Human Rights

**Group characterization:**

- University students

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

St. Paul's College students (exact leaders not known)

**Partners:**

Faculty

**External allies:**

St. Paul's administration

**Involvement of social elites:**

Not known

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

- Faculty
- Students

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

- administration

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

**Segment Length:** *Approximately 1 month*

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

Lawrenceville's Movie Theater

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

Not known

**Campaigner violence:**

Not known

**Repressive Violence:**

Not known

## Success Outcome

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

0 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**

0.5 points out of 1 point

**Growth:**

2 points out of 3 points

**Notes on outcomes:**

The length of this case is due mostly to the college's new movie theater, which gave students an alternative to the local movie theater. The boycott of the movie theater was executed, but was not successful or widely publicized to get the attention of the white population. While the boycott got some students active in the civil rights movement, students did not follow their boycott up with any other action.

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St. Paul's College is a historically African American college in Lawrenceville, a town in rural Virginia. Although Lawrenceville was a predominantly African American town, segregation laws persisted. In 1960 only 750 of the 17,000 African Americans in the town paid their poll tax and registered to vote. The town lacked a branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a black lawyer, or a black bondsman.

Inspired by the Greensboro and Rock Hill sit-ins in 1960, seven students at St. Paul's proposed the idea of campaigning to change the segregated policies of the town to a council of faculty and students. While the administration supported the goals of the students, they opposed the idea of sit-ins and picketing, believing it to be dangerous. Therefore, the student group decided to refrain from open confrontation and instead to boycott the local white-owned movie theater because of its segregated seating policy. The students' goal was to continue the boycott until the management agreed to let people sit wherever they'd like. In addition to boycotting the movie theater, the group of students set up a Fund for Equal Rights and collected about two hundred and fifty dollars to support activities elsewhere.

The administration of the college established an alternative movie theater on campus that offered viewings of the same movies at lower prices. The movie theater lost customers as a result of the boycott and in the spring of 1960, the theater was on the edge of closure.

Over time, however, the students' own enthusiasm for the boycott fell off and by fall 1960 they were returning to the movie

theater in town.

The theater remained segregated and the campaign was abandoned.

## Research Notes

### Influences:

This campaign was influenced by student sit-in campaigns such as Greensboro (see "Greensboro, NC, students sit-in for U.S. Civil Rights, 1960"), Orangeburg (see "Orangeburg, South Carolina, college students protest segregation, 1960"), and Rock Hill (see "Rock Hill, SC, students sit-in for U.S. civil rights, 1960"). (1)

### Sources:

Oppenheimer, Martin. *The Sit-in Movement of 1960*. Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Pub., 1989.

Caution, Tollie L. "The Protestant Episcopal Church: Policies and Rationale Upon Which Support of Its Negro Colleges Is Predicated." *The Journal of Negro Education* 29.3 (1960): 274-83. JSTOR. Web. 26 Jan. 2011.

### Additional Notes:

It is very difficult to find information about this case. It seems that Martin Oppenheimer is one of the few authors who describes this event.

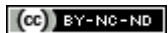
Edited by Max Rennebohm (27/07/2011)

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

Nicole Vanchieri, 30/01/2011

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### 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/local-community-or-neighborhood-level-campaign>