Young people fought for racial justice

When we think of the heyday of the civil rights movement, personalities such as Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., James Farmer, Floyd McKissick, and James Meredith come to mind. Individuals such as these were pioneers in the movement. However, we often forget that our young people played monumental roles in that struggle for racial equality.

Without the key efforts of young people, it is doubtful that the civil rights movement would have been as successful as it was. Young people of all ages risked their lives for equality. Their involvement in the movement is one of the most maginificent stories of the 1950s and 60s. The paragraphs that follow will describe some of the courageous activities of the young during the civil rights movement.

Oklahoma City

Lunch counters in department stores were segregated throughout the South in the 1950s. Blacks could not take a seat at a lunch counter and order food no matter how much money they had spent in the store. In Oklahoma City, a black woman, Clara Luper, and 13 young people decided that they were going to integrate the lunch counters. It was not an idle threat.

On August 19, 1958 Clara Luper and the 13 youth went to the Katz Drug Store and asked to be served. Mrs. Luper described what actually happened that hot night once they entered the drug store:

"I was thinking about what should have been done, Lena Pogue, the six-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Louis J. Pogue, grabbed my hand; and, we moved toward the counter."

At this point fifteen-year-old Barbara Posey, who was the spokesperson for the group took charge. Replying to the irate and shocked white waitress, Barbara calmly said, "We'd like 13 Cokes please." At this point, the fury of the whites was unleashed. The demonstrators were cursed, called 'nigger', and pushed. One of the young girls, Linda Pogue, "was knocked off a seat, she smiled ..nd sat back on the stool."

It became clear to the segregationists at Katz Drug store that these young people were serious as well as disciplined and determined. In two days the whites at Katz decided to desegregate their lunch counters locally and in 38 outlets in Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas and Iowa.

This group of young people led by Mrs. Luper and their spokesperson, Barbara Posey, did not stop with desegregating Katz. They demonstrated at segregated department stores throughout Oklahoma City for a decade. Like the original demonstrators, most who joined were members of the local NAACP Youth Council. These young people of Oklahoma City confronted racial segregation head-on in thought and deed.

Little Rock

Little Rock, AK was another Southern city where young people took a courageous and dangerous stand for freedom. In September 1957, nine black students led by the great Daisy Bates, who was president of the state NAACP, desegregated the all-white Central High School. On September 4th, Minnijean Brown, Jefferson Thomas, Carlotta Walls, Elizabeth Echford, Thelma Mathershed, Terrance Roberts, Melba Pattillo, Gloria Ray and Ernest Green entered the all-white school as white mobs shouted, "niggers, niggers, go home," and "two, four, six, eight, we ain't gonna integrate."

The violence and the threat of violence in Little Rock was so intense that President Eisenhower sent in 1,000 paratroopers and placed 10,000 members of the Arkansas National Guard on federal service to put down the mob.

Even in the face of this violence and harassment the "Little Rock Nine" never waivered. Day after day they approached the school door with dignity.

Speaking of those courageous students, Mrs. Bates said that "each day I wondered where they got the courage to re-enter the dimly lit corridors of Central High School to face new provocations and new assaults on their bodies as well as their dignity."

AWAIT DECISION — James Meredith, 29-year-old Air Force veteran from Kosciuski, Miss., and his attorney Constance Baker Motley as they await the decision on whether or not Meredith will be allowed to register at U. of Miss. It happened in 1962.

Fourteen year-old Carlotta Walls personified the courage of the "Little Rock Nine." At the beginning of the campaign Mrs. Bates reminded Carlotta that the mobs would be at the school and asked if she still wanted to participate. Carlotta responded, "Oh, I'll be there, even if I have to go it alone."

Throughout the school year these students attended their classes and studied hard while being kicked and cursed by their white classmates. They had to be protected by the National Guard each day while they attended classes. After two years of tension and confrontation, Central High School was finally desegregated. These nine young people who ranged from 14 to 16 years in age, risked their lives so that all people could get a good education regardless of race.

Lunch Counter Sit-ins

In the spring of 1960 young people throughout the South took a courageous stand for racial equality. This time it was young black college students. On February 1, 1960, Ezell Blair Jr., Franklin McCain, Joe McNeil, and David Richmond, all students at North Carolina A&T College, sat-in at the Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro. These students decided that they were no longer willing to cooperate with racial segregation. They decided that they were going to conduct sit-ins until Woolworth desegregated the lunch counters.

These students were so determined and dignified in their efforts that they inspired thousands of other black college and high school students to launch similar protests. Within just one month, sit-in protests by black students had occurred in North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky and Maryland. By the end of March, these protests had spread to Georgia, Texas, Ohio, West Virginia, Louisiana and Arkansas. Never before had the South witnessed such a powerful movement against racial oppression carried out by young people in conjunction with thousands of adults.

The student sit-ins was a watershed for the civil rights movement. Once thousands of young people became involved, the walls of segregation began to crumble much faster. In honor of the sit-ins, Dr. King proclaimed that, "when the students sat-in they were really standing up for their right. No one can ride your back unless it is bent."

Out of the sit-ins came a key organization of the civil rights movement—the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). This organization of students played a central role in overthrowing segregation. It became as important as the NAACP, SCLC, and CORE. It galvanized the student power of the period.

Birmingham Struggle

Then there was Birmingham in 1963 led by Dr. King! It is accurate to say that if the young people of Birmingham had not participated in this historic struggle, it would not have been victorious. By the 1960s Birmingham was considered the racist capitol of America. Whites in Birmingham, led by "Bull" Connor, controlled blacks through every conceivable means imaginable, including violence. So many homes and churches in Birmingham had been bombed by whites that the city had come to be known as "Bombingham."

In the spring of 1963 Dr. King and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) went to Birmingham for the explicit purpose of overthrowing segregation by conducting mass demonstrations and protests. By early May of 1963, over a thousand black people had been thrown in jail for participating in demonstrations. Up to this point no one younger than 14 had been allowed to participate in demonstrations because of the likelihood of violence and arrests.

In early May the decision was made to allow young children to participate. They were overjoyed. King was attacked by the white press for allowing children to participate in such a dangerous enterprise. King pointed out later that, "one of the most ringing replies came from a child of no more than eight who walked with her mother one day in a demonstration. An amused policeman leaned down to her and said with mock gruffness: 'What do you want?' The child looked into his eyes, unafraid, and gave her answer. 'Freedom,' she said."

On May 2nd, the young began marching, sitting-in and going to jail by the thousands. Dr. King reported that, "at one school, the principal gave orders to lock the gates to keep the students in. The youngsters climbed over the gates and ran toward freedom...At the height of the campaign, by conservative estimates, there were 2,500 demonstrators in jail at once, a large proportion of them young people."

For their efforts the young people were attacked by "Bull" Connor's dogs, some were beaten by policemen and many were thrown against buildings by high pressure water hoses. Yet, the young shouted out, "The police can't stop us now. Even Bull Connor can't stop us now." The brilliant scholar and activist, Vincent Harding, reports that many of the young people enjoyed bathing and shouted to the fireman, "We'll be back tomorrow with soap."

The segregationists in Birmingham were forced to grant the demands of King and the movement because the jails were full and the merchants were losing money because the young people went into their store, sat down, and sang freedom songs. Dr. King concluded that, "It is clear that the introduction of Birmingham's children into the campaign was one of the wisest moves we made. It brought a new impact to the crusade, and the impetus that we needed to win the struggle."

Challenge for Today's Youth

Young people throughout the black community today need to be aware of what their counterparts did during the 1950s and 1960s. The young people proved that they were capable of engaging in creative protest to free their parents, teachers, and themselves. In many ways the young led the "grown-ups" during the civil rights movement. By looking back, young people should come to realize that they need not be filled with despair, dope and hopelessness. History teaches that young people can still be the masters of their destinies. In the process, they can change the world.

Black inventors and their invention

By Alice Chandler

Most Americans black or white have heard of Benjamin Banneker who invented America's first wooden clock in 1754. It reportedly kept accurate time for twenty years. A Marylander, Banneker's genius and free status placed him in the early annals of American history. In comparison though few have heard of Maryland's Henry Blair, a black who patented a corn harvester in 1834.

The parade of men of color included the obvious that have gained acceptance. Such names include: Jan Ernst Matzeliger, Lewis Latimer, Granville T. Woods, Garrett A. Morgan and Norbert Rillieux. The not so obvious are Elijah McCoy, Henry Beard, Lewis Temple, Elbert R. "Doc" Robertson, Andrew J. Beard, Henry Boyd and Benjamin Montgomery. Inventions such as the golf tee, the "saratoga chip" (potato chip) and even ice cream are known to have black inventors though the latter, ice cream is still controversial.

The twelve black inventors I have chosen are only the tip of the iceberg, but they will either refresh or add to your storehouse of black history.

Andrew J. Beard in 1897 received $50,000 for his inventions of the "Jenny Coupler" an automatic device for coupling railroad cars.

Henry Boyd obtained a patent in 1836 in the name of a white man for a machine which produced rails for beds.

Lewis Latimer's 1881 patent was for the first incandescent electric lamp with a carbon filament. He also made the first drawing for the Alexander Graham Bell's first telephone. His talents as a draftsman employed him with General Electric and Westinghouse. He also prepared a textbook on the Edison Company's lighting system.

Jan Ernst Matzeliger built the lasting machine for shoes. It allowed the upper and lower halves of a shoe to be mechanically joined. The machine also discharged a completed shoe at the end of the process. Born in Dutch Guiana to a Negro mother and Dutch father, he is one of the pioneers whose appearance could have easily been mistaken for white.

Elijah McCoy was granted 72 patents during his lifetime. Most of the machines provided continual lubrication of machine parts without stopping the mechanism. These inventions were especially helpful to the locomotive and steamship industries. Though he was born in Canada he moved to Michigan and began his work as an inventor in 1872.

Benjamin Montgomery was a slave of Jefferson Davis, who invented a boat propeller. The irony of this slave's invention is that the U.S. Attorney General denied Davis the right to the invention of his slave because a slave could not enter into a contract with the government, because a slave was not a citizen. Further more the ruling stated the invention could not be assigned to his owner.

Garrett A. Morgan is the man responsible for the automatic traffic light and gas mask. The latter saved the lives of many soldiers during World War I. He sold the patent rights to his stop signal to the General Electric Company for $40,000.

Rillieux Norbert was born a Louisiana slave, but was sent to France for his education. His invention of refining sugar resulted in revolutionized sugar production. Some stories state his main concern was to reduce the dangers of sugar refining for the slaves, however the end product was also profitable for the sugar plantation owners. The process resulted in a refined sugar which kept its sweetness yet got rid of the dark color the sugar took on from the heat process.

Roberts is the only name given to this inventor who had an exhibit at an 1851 exhibition of Negro mechanics. His contribution allowed derailed railroad cars to be replaced on a track.

Elbert R. "Doc" Robertson won a $13,000,000 suit in royalties for a patent of the chilled groove wheel which was stolen by a white man who sold it to the Chicago Railway Company. His other inventions included the third rail used by elevated railroads and a mold which made concrete pillars used for building foundations. He died in 1925 after years of litigations over his patent rights on his railroad inventions.

In 1848 Lewis Temple invented the toggle harpoon which was important to the whaling Industry of New England.

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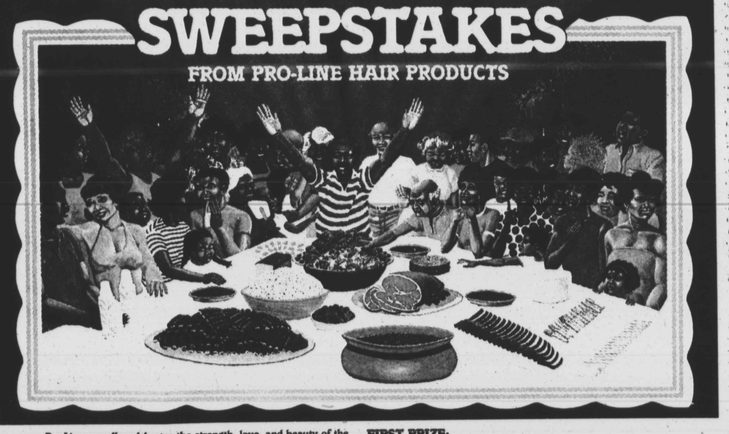

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Black History Month

The Afro-American and the Constitution 1970 — present

[EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is courtesy of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History]

By Meldon Hollis

The Civil War Amendments

In the period immediately following the Civil War, the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments were added to the Constitution to resolve the issue of citizenship on behalf of the newly freed slaves.

At the center of those Amendments was the assumption that through Constitutional mandate, the states could be compelled to recognize the legal equality of all citizens without regard to race or previous condition of servitude.

A full century after the enactment of the Civil War Amendments, the reach and limitations of those Amendments are still a topic of much debate.

In the years between 1970 and 1985 the debates have been similar to those which took place during the post-Reconstruction era. Those debates too centered around the application and the limitations of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments as they applied to the Afro-American struggle for equality in America.

The issue of slavery having been resolved and the most obvious badges of legal and social subordination having been abolished as a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and The Fair Housing Act of 1968, the debate in the last decade has shifted to issues of educational, economic and political opportunity.

The debate about the appropriate role of government in the struggle for equality has begun to focus on the steps that federal and state governments should take to address the present effects of past discrimination.

Since 1970, however, the constitutional debate has centered around two important questions. Those questions concern the limits of the government's ability to address the effects of pervasive societal discrimination and the conflict between strategies to advance the interests of Afro-Americans as a group or as individual members of a protected class.

This debate has led to an exploration of the limits of public authority to assure access for Afro - Americans to schools, employment, and political office.

The School Desegration Cases

Since 1970, as in each decade since the adoption of the Civil War Amendments, Black Americans and their political allies looked to the Constitution for support in their struggle to establish and enforce their civil rights.

This article will describe some of the important Constitutional issues which have arisen since 1970.

From 1954 to 1964, Civil Rights activists labored to end obvious, legally enforced badges of racial subjugation. Brilliant legal strategies, executed with discipline and often at high physical costs won the first stage of the war to eliminate racial inequality in America.

The Constitutional issues raised in the last decade and a half differed in focus if not in purpose from those raised during that period often referred to as the Civil Rights Movement.

School desegregation cases, while only one of the areas which saw significant developments over the past fifteen years have played a central role in the development of civil rights strategies. It was the education cases which provoked a successful assault on legally enforced segregation.

For this reason it would be difficult to understand recent developments in employment, political participation and higher education unless they are placed against the backdrop of the significant school desegregation cases.

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) overruled the infamous "separate but equal" doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson,* (1896). In the *Brown* decision the court had ordered that school desegregation take place with all deliberate speed; but 14 years after the *Brown* decision, it had become clear that the all deliberate speed order of the court had resulted in more deliberate than speed.

In 1968 in *Green v. County School Board,* the Supreme Court clarified the level of effort required by governmental agencies which had previously enforced racial segregation.

It was commonly believed that all that was required of school systems that discriminated in the past was that they stop their past discriminatory practices.

In a demonstration of its frustration at the glacial progress of school desegregation, the Supreme Court required a more active effort on the part of public officials.

In the *Green* decision the Court said where the government had in the past supported, created, or enforced racial segregation, public officials had an affimative duty to move toward unitary systems and to eliminate the vestiges of racial discrimination.

The Court established a new standard finding "freedom of choice" plans unrealistic and requiring more effective action in their place. Justice Brennan wrote that "(The) burden on a school board today is to come forward with a plan which promises realistically to work *now*."

In a school desegregation case involving the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, and the surrounding Mecklenberg County, the Supreme Court established broad powers of District Courts to take remedial steps to eliminate forced racial segregation in school systems.

These powers included the altering of attendance zones and the transportation of students by bus as a way to fix or alter the racial composition of schools. In addition, where the state had enforced separation of the races, the district courts were permitted to reassign students and faculty on the basis of race in specific areas to achieve racial balance.

Swann v. Mecklenberg County (1971) was the first case in which the Court endorsed "transportation" of students as a remedy for school segregation.

This order, which appeared clear and simple at the time, had proved to be of limited effect when applied to the large urban school districts of the Northeast, Midwest and West.

De jure segregation was the form of segregtion most commonly found in the southern and border states prior to *the Brown* decision. In many northern and urban areas, systems of racial segregation had been established and enforced by the action of school board members but was not supported by statue.

De facto segregation is distinguished from *de jure* in that *de facto* segregation is not supported by statute as is *de jure* segregation. In *Keyes v. School District No. 1,* (1973) the Court first confronted the problem of *de facto* segregation.

In Denver, Colorado, the Supreme Court for the first time, applied a constitutional mandate to a northern school system which had never been "officially" segregated. The Court also found that efforts to eliminate "unofficial" segregation required system - wide remedies even though the discriminatory activity had been restricted to one predominantly black district in the city.

It is often difficult to measure the degree to which a specific discriminatory act influences racial composition. In 1974, a lower court in Michigan found that public officials had conspired to restrict black students and low-income housing projects to the City of Detroit, while limiting the access of black students and families to suburban school districts.

Official actions in the location of low-income housing and school contributed to and maintained segregated attendance patterns in the school systems. The result of the interaction of the public policies led to a predominantly black inner city schools and white school systems in the suburbs.

As a remedial measure to correct the racially segregated school systems, the District Court ordered the urban and suburbar school districts consolidated.

In *Milliken v. Bradley,* Justice Berger concluded tha the Constitution did not permit the consolidation of urban and suburban districts simply because of the desire to attain racial balance.

School district lines could be modified only where it had been shown conclusively that a constitutional violation in one district had a segregative effect in another district. The *Milliken* decision dampened efforts to integrate inner city schools by consolidating districts across city-suburban lines.

But five years later in two cases concerning the Columbus and Dayton, Ohio school districts, the court ordered system-wide remedies based upon the fact that the respective school boards had not met their duty to eliminate segregated attendance patterns.

These cases are important because the Supreme Court reaffirmed the principle that a constitutional violation in one part of the school system usually had a system-wide impact and therefore required system - wide remedies.

It is not clear what duties fall upon public officials as the racial composition of student bodies changes in response to changing housing patterns and "white-flight." The very core of the *Brown* decision is now being reconsidered in black communities as well as majority communities.

In predominantly black urban and rural areas, Black parents have begun to question the desirability of committing scarce educational resources to desegregation efforts, wondering if under current circumstances it is not wiser to invest them in the pursuit of educational quality.

While the civil rights strategies of the 60's and the 70's were effective in curtailing the legally enforced and more obvious forms of segregation in the South, segregation in the nation's school systems remains a significant problem thirty years after the *Brown* decision.

In nine of the 10 largest school systems in the United States, public school enrollment is primarily non-white. In 14 states and the District of Columbia, at least 30 percent in 100 percent of the students are members of racial and ethnic minorities.

The problem of racially segregated educational facilities has been as pervasive in colleges and universities as among elementary and secondary schools. The legality of separate and unequal systems of higher education has been in the courts for half a century.

These cases usually involved Afro-American students who sought admission to historically white institutions where their attendance was prohibited by law. While the courts generally upheld the right of the southern states to maintain separate systems of higher education, they also required the states to provide "equal" educational opportunities for Afro-American students.

The practice of providing "separate but equal" educational opportunities at colleges and universities could no longer be sustained after the *Brown* decision.

The constitutional principles established in pursuit of increased educational opportunity for Afro-Americans at the elementary and secondary level have placed a clear duty on state governments to create unitary higher-education systems.

But legal principles developed to desegregate elementary and secondary education are not easily applied to colleges and universities. At the level of higher education two difficult but important questions about the duty to prohibit segregation in education remain unresolved.

The first is the duty of state governments to dismantle historically segregated systems of higher education.

The second is the need to in-

Continued on Page 17

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¼ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ teaspoon ground red pepper
Brush chicken with salad dressing, coat with combined remaining ingredients. Place chicken on rack of broiler pan. Bake at 350°, 45 to 50 minutes or until tender.
3 to 4 servings
Variation: Substitute seasoned croutons for croutons. Omit seasonings.

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6 eggs, separated
2 tablespoons milk
¼ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons PARKAY Margarine
1 four-oz. can mushrooms, drained
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Combine egg yolks, milk and salt; beat until thick and lemon colored. Fold into stiffly beaten egg whites. Melt Margarine in 10-inch oven-proof skillet over low heat. Add egg mixture. Cook over low heat, 10-12 minutes or until underside is golden brown. Sprinkle mushrooms over half of omelette. Bake at 325°, 10-15 minutes or until top is firm. Remove from oven; make deep crease across center. Top mushrooms with two process cheese food slices. Slip turner under omelet; tip skillet to loosen and gently fold in half. Top with 1 process cheese food slice, cut diagonally. Continue baking until process cheese food begins to melt. 4 servings

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