

M.I.A.

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October 7, 1959

A MOVE TOWARD INTEGRATION

On August 28, 1959, the Montgomery Improvement Association made an initial move toward integrating the schools. A statement was sent to the board of education, calling upon them to assume and carry forth their responsibility in compliance with the "law of the land" as spelled out by the Supreme Court. We consider integration of schools in Montgomery a major task. It will require patience, courage and determination. At this point, suffice it to say that, we are geared for the struggle. Court action is our last resort.

The MIA is conducting a voter registration campaign. The churches of the city are playing a major role under the leadership of Mr. Rufus A. Lewis. The following ministers participated in a survey, Dr. M. L. King, Jr., Reverends Ralph D. Abernathy, A. W. Wilson, H. H. Hubbard, R. W. Hilson, W. J. Powell, B. D. Lambert, G. F. Lewis, E. D. Bell, S. S. Seay and Father Robert E. DuBose, Jr.

YOUTH IN QUEST OF NEW EXPERIENCES

The youth of Montgomery are moving toward the front lines of the struggle for freedom. The unprovoked police brutality among them has not foiled their quest for new experiences in the area of race relations. Fourteen (14) of us left Montgomery on July 24, to attend an institute on non-violence and to participate in work-shops on social problems. There were ten (10) teenagers and four (4) adults in the group. Among the young people were (1) college graduate, two (2) college students and seven (7) high school students. Two (2) of the adults were ministers of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Reverend M. Petway and S. S. Seay.

The Institute on non-violence was being held at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. It was sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Miss Ella Baker, Executive Director of the conference was director of the institute. Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., is the President of the organization. This was indeed a council on non-violence attended by visitors from the southern states. It was a new experience for the young people from Montgomery. They listened to presentations from men and women of the best minds and the most decisive thought on the question of non-violence.

WORKSHOP AT HIGHLANDER

Highlander Folk School is located at Monteagle, Tennessee on top of the Cumberland mountains. Men and women of all races, creeds and nationalities attend the school for the purpose of experiencing the practical application of brotherhood and to seek answers to social problems at grass-roots level. The service of the school has attracted the attention of such persons as Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., who are regular contributors to the school.

We arrived on the campus, Sunday afternoon July 24. We joined other representatives from different sections of the nation and one from Canada. Ministers, lawyers, business people, students and teachers were there. The daily schedule began at 7 o'clock a.m. and ended around 9:30 p.m. The theme for this session was, "Emerging Patterns of the South." Topics for group study were: Housing, employment, Welfare, Education. The afternoon recreation program consisted of swimming, volleyball and square dancing.

May I say, parenthetically, that the swim period was always a pleasure-pain to me. Among the young people from other sections were some

very fine swimmers. The young people from Montgomery, Alabama could not swim. They have no lakes nor pooles in which to learn to swim. The lakes and pooles in and around Montgomery are for white youth only.

HIGHLANDER RAIDED BY TROOPERS

At the close of the workshop a banquet was given on Friday evening at 7:30 p.m. After statements had been made by youth and adults of both races dinner was served. At the close of dinner a film, "Facing the South" was shown. It was around 8:30 p.m., we were watching the picture. A few adults had gone to cooler spots out on the front lawn. A woman outside screamed. The group inside shuddered but did not move. Someone rushed in from the lawn and reported that the school was being raided by State Troopers. By this time several uniformed and plain clothes men were in the building. Two officers were assigned to keep watch over the dining room where the group was watching the picture. One officer ordered the film discontinued. Except for an occasional flash from flashlights in the hands of the troopers, we were in complete darkness. For more than an hour and a half we sat quietly but calmly while darkness and (what we considered) unprovoked authority of the state of Tennessee prevailed.

At the beginning of the raid one of the young men from Montgomery drew his chair close to me. In a soft but steady tone of voice he said to me, "this is the time to pray." This was a baptism I had known many times during my long struggle in the south. Years of devotion and experience had prepared me. I knew the school, like other institutions of its kind, was under constant watch. It had been previously investigated by forces that are trying to halt progress toward freedom and human dignity. I was prepared for that eventful hour.

Silence was finally broken. Someone started whistling in a low but understandable tone. It was the theme song of the school, "We Will Overcome Someday." One of the girls from Montgomery, Alabama picked up the tune and started singing. The other young people from Montgomery joined in. Soon every one was singing except the troopers. Out of the darkness and imprison suspense the echo resounded across the mountains until tension was broken and fear dispelled. A verse was added to the song just for that occasion: "We are not afraid, We are not afraid tonight."

When the group sang this verse the officer moved over toward the light switch. He reached for it but did not turn on the light. It is my guess that he had a flash of memory that when the film was turned off, I asked that the lights be turned on. He stated that, we didn't need any light. As he withdrew his hand from the light switch he said, "you can sing but don't sing so loud". The group kept singing at the same pitch. The group sang for more than an hour. Finally, the lights were turned on. One of the officers asked, "the big man over there (speaking of me) to keep them quiet until we get the name of everyone." They took our names. We were informed that Mrs. Septima Clark and three of the white men had been arrested.

One of the most unforgettable aspects of the raid was the condition of Mrs. Clark's grand-daughter. Her pathetic cries for the return of her grand-mother can never be forgotten.

Up to this point we did not know the purpose of the raid. When we learned that the search was for whiskey we were astounded. When the group was told the amount of the bond, they quickly raised five hundred dollars (\$500.00) cash. But this was not used. A neighbor secured the bond. Mrs. Clark was returned to the campus around 2 o'clock a. m. Sometimes later a copy of the charges was brought. When we read it we were falbbergast.

Here we are. We have been at the school from July 26 until July 31. We have not seen, smelled nor heard of any alcoholic beverages. To those who know about these mountains and the mockery of prohibition this may sound strange. But it is the eternal truth. Soft drinks were available on an honor system. You could get them and pay for

To understand the basic intents and purposes of the raid on Highlander School by the State Troopers of Tennessee one must understand the forces at work in the struggle over civil liberties involving freedom, full-citizenship, justice and human dignity. Highlander is an integrated school. It is located in Tennessee. It is a leading institution in the area of leadership training. Those who oppose integration have indicated more than once that they consider Highlander Folk School, Myles Horton, Founder and Septima Clark, Director, major threats to the status quo the so-called way of life to which they wearily cling. The raid on the school is the very essence of desperation.

During the raid pages were torn out of the book, Stride Toward Freedom, by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Some of the notes on the workshop by students were destroyed. A small quantity of liquor was found in a home adjacent the campus. This is a crucial period in the life of Septima Clark and Highlander Folk School. The forces of darkness will not let the work go unchallenged. But the friends of the school and the friends of Mrs. Clark will not stand idly by. "We will overcome; Deep in our hearts we do believe we will overcome."

THE JUDGE RULED

On September 8, 1959, Federal Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr., declared Montgomery's parks segregation ordinance unconstitutional and ruled that city parks must be integrated if they are to ever re-open. The parks were closed on January 1 after suit was filed by Attorney S. S. Seay, Jr. It remains to be seen whether or not the city will appeal the case.

MIA LEADERS

Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., left Montgomery during the month of September for a lengthy speaking tour beginning in San Francisco at the National Baptist Convention. He visited Honolulu, Hawaii and spoke under the auspices of the Honolulu Council of Churches. Reverend and Mrs. Ralph D. Abernathy also visited the National Baptist Convention along with many of Montgomery's leading baptist ministers who are also board members of the MIA. Reverends King, Seay and Abernathy are now in attendance at the Fall meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference convening in Columbia, South Carolina (Sept. 29 - Oct.1)

AN APPEAL

The Montgomery Improvement Association is in need of your continued support in the struggle for full citizenship for all people. The opposition is formidable. But with a little help from our many friends "we shall overcome." We have the leadership; the legal know-how and the courage. The financial need is urgent. Our membership campaign is in progress now. We are asking that you please renew your membership and also try to solicit a membership for us. To keep our newsletter coming your way, we must have your support. Memberships may be sent in on or before the membership campaign begins. We need your encouragement.

Memberships are: Adults, \$2.00, \$5.00 and \$10.00. Youth .50 and organizational memberships are fifty dollars (\$50.00).

Take A Membership out with us today! !