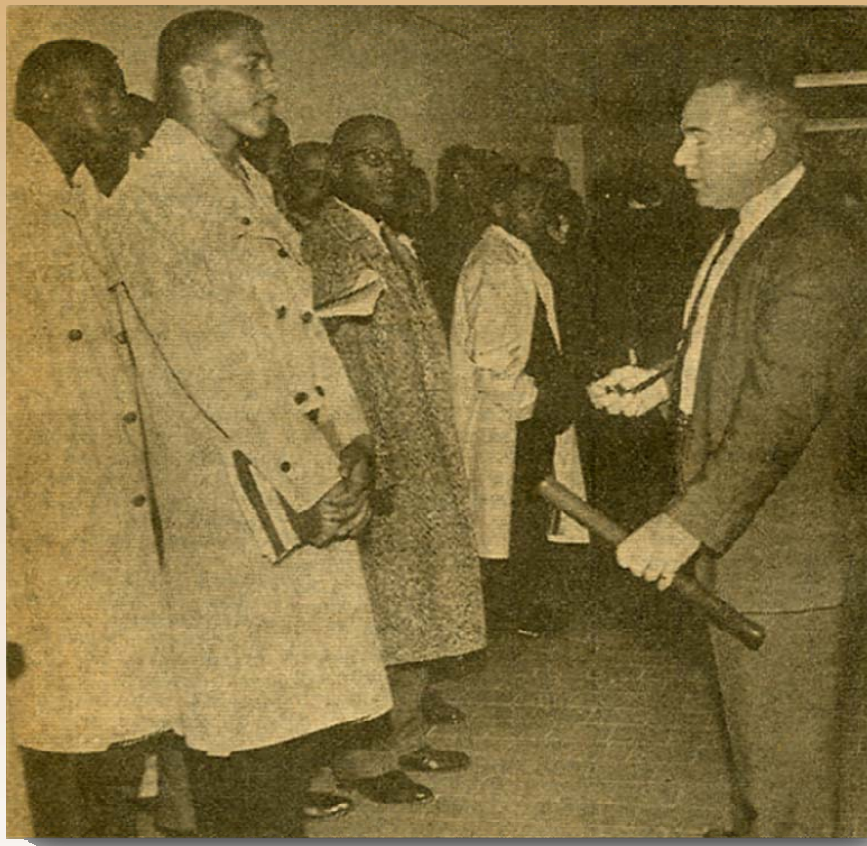




The Student Sit-In Movement at Alabama State University A One Day Conference

“What I Began by Reading I Must Finish by Acting”
Henry David Thoreau



Sherriff Max Sim Butler Questions ASC Students at Montgomery County Courthouse
United Press International - 1960

9:00 A.M.

Thursday, February 25, 2010

Ralph David Abernathy Hall

Sponsored by the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and
African-American Culture at Alabama State University
Montgomery, Alabama

The National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture
 Dr. Howard Robinson, Presiding

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9:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m.

Welcome and Occasion **Dr. William H. Harris**
 President, Alabama State University

Invocation **Rev. E. Baxter Morris**
 Pastor, First Baptist Church
 Sit-In Movement Church

“Civil Rights Song” **Rev. Richard Boone**
 ASU Graduate and Veteran of the Selma to Montgomery March
 SNCC, SCLC, and the Alabama Action Committee

Introduction of Speaker **Dr. Dorothy Autrey**
 Chair, Department of History and Political Science

Session I

Plenary Session **Rev. C. T. Vivian**
 Executive Staff, Southern Christian Leadership Conference,
 Veteran of the Sit-ins, Freedom Rides and Selma to Montgomery March

Session II - 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

St. John Dixon v. State of Alabama **Attorney Kendall C. Dunson**
 Fred D. Gray - Attorney for ASU Students, 1951 Alabama State College Graduate
 St. John Dixon - ASU Sit-In Student and Lead Plaintiff
 Karen Boyd - University of Georgia Ph.D. Candidate, Member of the Association for Student
 Conduct Administration

11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Lunch / The Great Debates, One of Three Debates, Spring 2010 **Dr. Carlos Morrison**
Fred Shuttlesworth Dinning Hall Debate Coordinator

Resolved: Non-violent direct action is the most effective approach to challenging racial discrimination

<u>Team One Captain, Carlisa Ray</u>	<u>Team Two Captain, Taylor Poe</u>
Trey Lipscomb	Crystal Russell
Brandin Mahoney	Rhonda Wynn
Najah Gordon	Ebony Thomas

Session III - 1:15 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Institutional Session:

Alabama State College and White Oppositoin **Moderator, Dr. Howard O. Robinson**

*Governor John Patterson - Attorney General, 1954 - 1959, Alabama Governor, 1959 - 1963
 Juanita Abernathy - SCLC, Student Sit-In Supporter and Civil Rights Champion
 Charles Varner Jr. - ASU graduate 1959, ASU Vice President for Development and Public Relations
 Dr. Ralph Bryson - Professor of English since 1953, and now Chair, Dept. of Languages and Literatures
 Drew H. Lackey - Lieutenant, Montgomery Police Department
 Calvin Whitesell - Montgomery City Attorney

Session IV - 2:45 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

ASC Student Sit-In Session **Moderator, Dr. Alma Freeman**

James McFadden	Joseph Peterson	James Earl Davis
St. John Dixon	Alvin Holmes	Aner Ruth Young
Joe L. Reed	Cornelius Benson	
Eleanor Moody Shepherd	William Renfroe	

Concluding Statement **Dr. Howard Robinson**

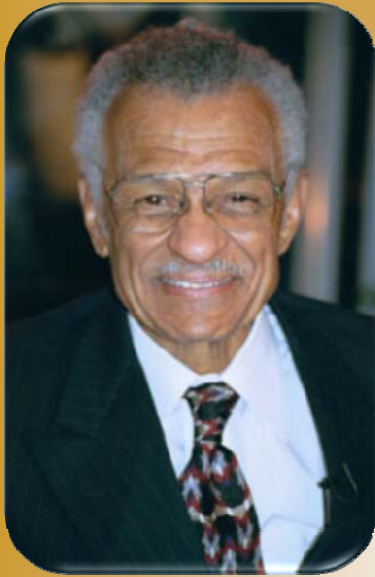
Recognitions **Drs. Franklin and Robinson**

Remarks **Dr. Janice R. Franklin**

Dean of the Library, Director of the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture

* Governor John Patterson’s comments were pre-recorded

Keynote Speaker



C.T. Vivian says his mother and grandmother had a vision for his life. Despite losing their family farm to the Depression, a home to arson and their husbands, these women were determined that their son would become an educated, self-confident leader and continue the family's progress from slavery. Because of this foundation, Vivian spent his life using his position to stand up for the rights of others and became a vanguard in the struggle for racial equality.

The only child of Robert Cordie and Euzetta Tindell Vivian, young Cordy Tindell ("C.T.") moved to Macomb, Illinois with his mother and grandmother in 1930. The women chose Macomb because it had non-segregated schools and a local college. After graduating from Macomb High School in 1942 where he had been an active student leader, Vivian began a stint at Western Illinois University. He decided to leave college and moved to Peoria to work at the Carver Community Center as assistant boy's director. There he met his wife, Octavia, who also worked at the center.

In 1947, Vivian participated in his first non-violent action to end segregation at lunch counters in Peoria. But because of his strong religious upbringing and beliefs, he says he was called to a life in the ministry. However, he saw no separation between civil rights, faith and ministry because "racism is a moral issue." With the help of his church, he enrolled in American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville in 1955.

Also in 1955, he and other ministers founded the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference, which was later an affiliate of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The group organized and trained students to embark on a movement to end segregation in Nashville. The Nashville affiliate organized the city's first sit-ins in 1960. In 1961, he joined members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and other ministers to continue the Freedom Rides into Jackson, Mississippi when a group from the Congress of Racial Equality was forced to abandon the Rides after brutal confrontations with segregationists in Birmingham and Anniston, Alabama. The SNCC group was arrested and Vivian was badly beaten at Parchman Prison in Jackson. In 1963, Martin Luther King asked Vivian to work on the Executive Staff of the SCLC as the national director of affiliates. As an SCLC strategist, he worked to help get the Civil Rights Bill and Voting Rights Acts passed. In 1965, he confronted Sheriff Jim Clark on the steps of Selma's courthouse while leading blacks to register to vote.

After leaving SCLC in 1966, he moved to Chicago to direct the Urban Training Center for Christian Missions where he trained clergy, community leaders and others to organize. Later, as a coordinator for the Coalition for United Community Action, Vivian led a direct-action campaign against racism in trade unions and helped mediate a truce among Chicago gangs. In 1972, he became the director of Seminary Without Walls at Shaw University Divinity School in Raleigh, N.C.

His leadership roles also included, service on the boards of the Center for Democratic Renewal, and the National Voting Rights Museum. He helped to establish the Capital City Bank, a black-owned bank in Atlanta. Vivian has provided civil rights counsel to Presidents Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton and continues to lecture on racial justice and democracy. He resides in Atlanta, Georgia.

Historical Perspective

February 25 - March 30, 1960

Alabama State University Student Sit-Ins



Expelled ASC Students
Life - March 1960

On February 25, 1960, Alabama State College (ASC) students decided to stage a sit-in challenging segregated dining facilities at the Montgomery County Courthouse. They were inspired by four North Carolina A&T students who on February 1, 1960 sat in at a White only Woolworth restaurant in Greensboro, North Carolina. ASC students were the first college students in the Deep South to participate in the modern sit-in campaign. The over two dozen sit-in students set in motion a series of events that had far reaching implications. From their protests emerged a wave of demonstrations that rocked the seat of state government. And when Whites reacted violently, it galvanized local Black support. That support did not, however, protect students from summary dismissals; nor did the dismissals prevent John Patterson, the Governor of Alabama, from purging activist faculty, including the popular history professor Lawrence Reddick, or forcing the resignation of college president Harper Councill Trenholm.

Battle lines were clearly drawn between ASC student protestors and Montgomery segregationists. Whites were instructed to fire their Black workers and staunch segregationists demanded the college be closed. White men armed with eighteen-inch baseball bats assaulted Black shoppers in downtown Montgomery. *The Detroit Sunday Times* ran a quarter page photograph that captured White men beating Black women on Montgomery streets. Montgomery Chamber of Commerce president Carl Bear made an appearance on NBC's Today Show, where he demonized students, calling their actions a "coldly deliberate, calculated move . . . to goad and provoke the southern White man to the very limits of his patience and endurance."

Martin Luther King Jr. countered with an appeal to President Dwight Eisenhower. He asked the chief executive to intervene in what the minister described as "a reign of terror..." that has "...broken out in Montgomery." King told the President that city officials backed by the police, "launched an incredible assault" on Black citizens and the "students of Alabama State College." Rev. Ralph David Abernathy responded to the violence by threatening a boycott of downtown merchants.

Emboldened by support from the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and schools as near as Tuskegee Institute and Talladega College, and as far away as Occidental College in California, ASC students intensified their protests. In one episode near the ASC campus, thirty-seven students as well as professor Olean Underwood were arrested. Undaunted, students insisted that they would persist until "we gain our rights as guaranteed us by the Federal Constitution and Bill of Rights." The students then turned their comments to the Governor. In a statement to Governor Patterson, the students declared:

It is disappointing to students of an institution of higher learning who have been and are still being taught democracy, that there are still those who will threaten us and look upon us as criminals because we are trying to put into practice the ideals we are being taught and the principles on which our nation was founded.

On Wednesday, March 2, the all White State Board of Education, unanimously accepted Governor John Patterson's expulsion resolution, despite president Harper Councill Trenholm's counsel against it. Patterson's resolution ordered the expulsion of the individuals that state officials identified as sit-in leaders. In the face of expulsions, ASC students turned to attorney Fred Gray, 1951 ASC graduate, and the court system. In the 1961 landmark *St. John Dixon v. State of Alabama Board of Education*, the federal court ended the practice that allowed colleges and universities to act *in loco parentis*, or in place of the parent, to discipline or expel students without regard for student rights. Even today, the decision resonates as the leading case on due process rights for students in public higher education.

In their protests, ASC students became part of a wave of youth unrest throughout the region. In April of 1960, ASC sit-in veterans joined 300 other young activists from fifty-eight colleges and twelve states at Shaw College in Raleigh, North Carolina. Student activists convened in response to a call issued by Ella Baker and Martin Luther King Jr. of the SCLC. These youth organized the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and energized the burgeoning civil rights movement.



Historical Perspective

Alabama State University Student Sit-Ins



A fundraising newspaper article describing the protest surrounding the ASC sit-in campaign, also led to a landmark United States Supreme Court 1964 decision, *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*. On March 29, 1960 Black civil rights leaders, including Reverends Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy, Fred Shuttlesworth, Joseph E. Lowery, and Solomon Seay Sr., had placed a full-page fundraising advertisement, entitled, "Heed Their Rising Voices" in the *New York Times*. In this ad, the ministers accused state authorities of expelling ASC students from school, deploying truckloads of police armed with shotguns and tear-gas to surround the campus, and padlocking the dining hall in an attempt to starve students into submission. Montgomery Police Commissioner Lester B. Sullivan and Mayor D. Earl James initiated a \$500,000 libel suit against the *New York Times* and the Black civil rights ministers. Clearly, a number of the claims in the *New York Times* advertisement were inaccurate. Nevertheless, the 1964 United States Supreme Court ruling in this case established that an actual malice standard has to be met before press reports about public officials or public figures can be considered to be defamatory or libelous. This ruling effectively freed previously stifled news outlets to report on civil rights without the fear of being sued.



John Jones Collection
ASU Archives

A third important federal ruling, *Barbara A. and Richard A. Nesmith v. H.D. Alford et al.*, emanated from the ASC sit-in movement and was handed down in 1963. The case developed from an incident taking place just over a month after the Montgomery Courthouse sit-ins, on March 30, 1960. ASC sit-in veterans, along with Reverends Solomon Seay and Robert Earl DuBose, both of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), joined Professor Richard A. Nesmith and his all-White class from MacMurray College in Illinois for lunch at the Regal Cafe. The White sociology class had come to Montgomery to examine first-hand the use of non-violent direct action. That meal ended with the arrests of all participants. The diners were charged and quickly found guilty of disorderly conduct. In their appeal, the presiding judge handed down a verdict where he said "for Whites to eat with Negroes was so offensive to southern customs that a breach of the peace might have been committed by Whites." Therefore, the participants in the incident were clearly guilty of "conduct calculated to provoke a breach of the peace." In a series of court cases that ended in the United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, the court ruled:

Liberty is at an end if a police officer may without warrant, arrest, not the person threatening violence, but those who are its likely victims merely because the persons arrested are engaged in conduct which, though peaceful and legally and constitutionally protected, is deemed offensive and provocative to settled social customs and practices. When that day comes, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion will all be imperiled.

In the spring of 1960, Alabama State students knew their struggle had just begun. Twenty students had been placed on probation and nine expelled from school. Another thirty-five Montgomery students had been arrested. Meanwhile, attorneys Fred Gray and Charles Conley represented embattled students in local, state and federal courtrooms. Six months after students began the sit-in movement, restaurants and lunch-counters in twenty-six southern cities ended their segregationist policies. But in Montgomery, White businesses continued to discriminate against African Americans. ASC students, however, remained undaunted. They had courageously challenged segregation at its core, and they had joined a swelling movement that sought to overturn racial inequities. They would be victorious.

Student Sit-In Campaigns and Surrounding Protest



Penn State
Jack Rabin Collection



STUDENTS RALLY IN FRONT OF CAPITOL

This crowd of Alabama State College students marched on the state Capitol early today in the largest demonstration to date. Around 600 students were in the march. After singing two songs, the students marched back to the college campus in

orderly fashion. There were no arrests and only one small incident nearby. (See story on Pg. 1) — (Journal photo by Don Patterson)

One Incident
Is Reported
During Rally

Sullivan Lambasts
Racial Coverage

Press coverage of the racial situation in Montgomery was criticized yesterday by the police and fire

Gallion Calls
Student Rally
'Propaganda'

Montgomery Advertiser - March 6, 1960

Nine Students Expelled by Governor Patterson and the State Board of Education

1. Elroy Emory of Ragland, Alabama
2. St. John Dixon of National City, California
3. Edward E. Jones of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
4. Bernard Lee of Norfolk, Virginia
5. James McFadden of Prichard, Alabama
6. Joseph Peterson of Newcastle, Alabama
7. Leon Rice of Chicago, Illinois
8. Howard Shipman of New York City, New York
9. Marzette Watts of Montgomery, Alabama

20 Student Sit-in Participants Placed on Probation by Governor Patterson and the State Board of Education

1. Henry Allen of Seale
2. Richard Ball of Fairfield
3. Willis C. Battle of Phenix City
4. Cornelius Benson of Birmingham
5. Samuel Bouie of Anniston
6. Floyd Coleman of Sawyerville
7. Henry Crowford of Montgomery
8. James Earl Davis of Prichard
9. Thomas C. Ervin of Heflin

Sit-in Participants Placed on Probation (continued)

10. Arthur Lee Foster of Montgomery
11. Isham Harris of Troy
12. Jonathan Hicks of Chatom
13. Trehnholm Hope of Selma
14. Jerry Lee Johnson of Collinsville
15. Andrew William Jones of Birmingham
16. Eddie Lee McSwain of Eufaula
17. Theophilus Moody of Camden
18. Joe Louis Reed of Evergreen
19. William Renfroe of Roba

Additional Student Sit-in Participants

1. Alvin Holmes
2. Aner Ruth Young
3. Eleanor Moody Shepherd
4. Other participants not yet identified

Student Sit-In Session

Freedom Rides and Sit-In Movement Song

CHORUS

Heed the Call Americans all
Side by equal side
Brothers sit in dignity
Sisters sit in pride.

The time was 1960
The place the USA
February first
A history-making day
From Greensboro across the land
The news spread far and wide
That quiet and brave students
Took a giant stride.

CHORUS

Heed the call Americans all, side by equal side,
brothers sit in dignity, sisters sit in pride.

From Mobile, Alabama To Nashville, Tennessee
From Denver, Colorado
To Washington, D.C.
There rose a cry for freedom
And Human dignity

“OH, COME ALONG MY BROTHERS
AND TAKE A SEAT WITH ME!”
 (“OH, COME ALONG MY SISTERS AND TAKE A
SEAT WITH ME!”)

CHORUS

Heed the call Americans all, side by equal side,
Brothers sit in dignity, sisters sit in pride.

No mob of violence or hate
Shall turn us from our goals
No Jim Crow Law or police dogs
Shall stop our free-born souls
Three thousand soldiers bound in jail
Shall lift our voices and sing
“WE ARE SOLDIERS IN THE ARMY WITH
MARTIN LUTHER KING!”

CHORUS

Heed the call Americans all, side by equal side,
Brothers sit in dignity, sisters sit in pride.



CITY, COUNTY AND STATE OFFICERS KEEP ORDER DURING DEXTER DEMONSTRATION

City, county and state law enforcement officers joined hands
Friday afternoon on Dexter Avenue to prevent protesting Negroes
from marching on the state Capitol and at the same time

officers to keep the white throng at a safe distance. Two ice
trucks were brought to the scene for hosing down demonstrators
on either side. Two sheriff's deputies mounted on horses can be

Negroes began their abortive march from Dexter Avenue. Rep-
resentatives to the Capitol. Moments after this picture was taken
the Negroes were forced to march to the church. Leading the

Standing on his right by Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, president of the
Montgomery Improvement Assn. Rehearsed in
efforts to reach the C.C. the Negroes returned to the

Montgomery Advertiser
March 7, 1960

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Surveillance Photographs of ASC Students at the Montgomery County Courthouse
Penn State
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