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lift every VOICE

ISSUE 1 A Newsletter from the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University

HONORING THE SIT-IN STUDENTS

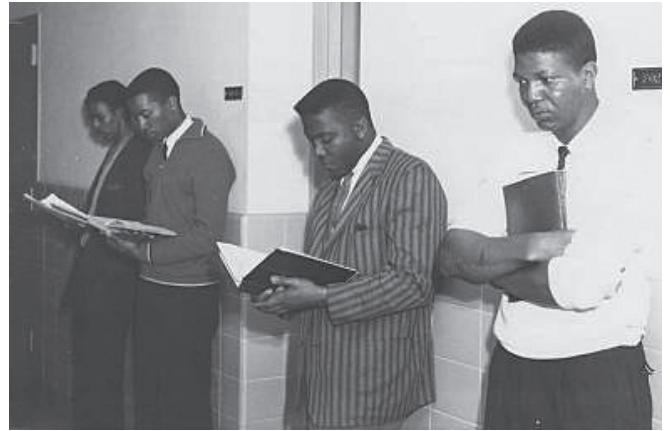
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2010 marks the anniversary of three epoch civil rights events – the fiftieth anniversary of the Student Sit-In Movement, the forty-fifth anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March, and the fifty-fifth anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University is observing each of

these signal events through a variety of programs, including conferences, seminars and art exhibits.

The first of these observances was the Center's commemoration of ASU's Sit-In Movement. The National Center hosted a much awaited one-day conference in observance of the 50th Anniversary of the 1960 Alabama State University Student Sit-In campaign. Fifty years prior to the day of the conference, February 25, 1960, 39 ASU students attempted to sit-in at the County Courthouse restaurant in downtown Montgomery. They were not arrested, but the event led to weeks of demonstrations by ASU students and faculty. It also led to the expulsion of the so-called Sit-In leaders. The conference consisted of four sessions, each

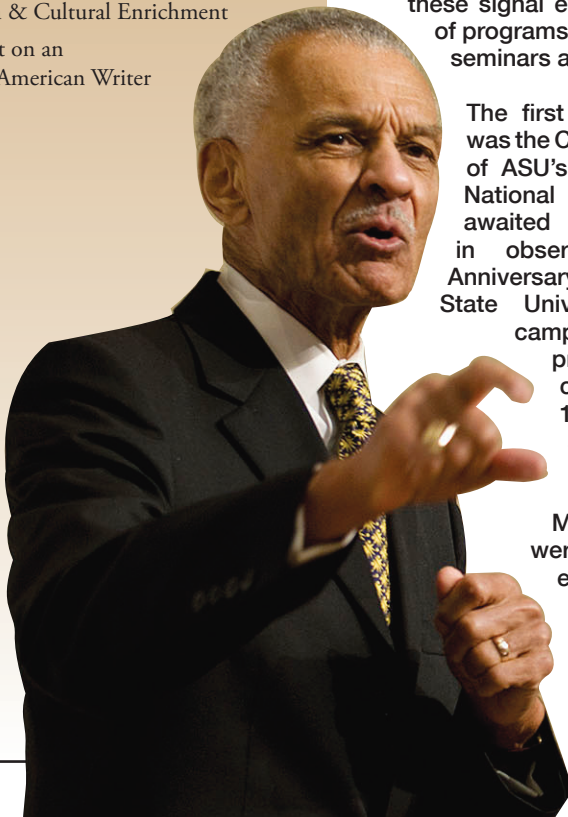


ASU Sit-in students, February 25, 1960.
Jack Robin Collection, Penn State University

focusing on different aspects of the Sit-In campaign. The highlight of the day came when seven students who participated in the 1960 Sit-In protest shared their experiences with the over 500 conference attendees at the Ralph D. Abernathy Auditorium.

The Sit-In participants included James McFadden, Joseph Peterson, St. John Dixon, Joe L. Reed, Cornelius Benson, William Renfro, Eleanor Moody Shepherd, and Aner Ruth Young. The panelists relived the days of student activism by tracing the origins, development, and impact of the Sit-In protest, not only on their own lives but on the modern Civil Rights Movement.

The conference began with a plenary session featuring civil rights activist, Rev. C. T. Vivian. Reverend Vivian used his fierce oratory style to describe his own participation in a 1947 lunch counter protest, and his work with the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference when he helped train Sit-In students in Nashville, Tenn. Vivian also related his work with the Student Nonviolent



C.T. Vivian

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

With this issue, the National Center announces the “rebirth” of our newsletter, “Lift Every Voice.” This publication has as its intent to inform our community of our mission, the success of our many diverse programs and the outstanding progress that we have made toward accomplishing that mission. Since the National Center’s inception in 1997, we thank ASU’s administration, staff and faculty for their outstanding support as we have grown to be acknowledged as one of our city’s leading cultural heritage centers.

The National Center’s many activities during the year of 2010 have been well received by our local and international community. Having received international publicity for our celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Student Sit-in movement at ASU, the Center was overjoyed to play a major role in highlighting the injustice of students expelled for their courageous civil rights activism in 1960. The Center’s one-day Sit-in conference led to another courageous act by ASU’s President William Harris to award diplomas formerly denied to these outstanding student leaders, thereby righting wrongs and changing the course of history. The National Center also made its own history by hosting renowned international speakers including Ms. Winnie Mandela and Mrs. Nontombi Naomi Tutu. A special E.D. Nixon Institute program honored the community of Mobile Heights for its history as the first post-World War II African-American sub-division in the 1950s to provide housing for African-Americans during a time of racial segregation in Montgomery.

This issue renews the National Center’s efforts to document this rich history and preserve this heritage for future generations. It is a truly glorious mission! We offer our newsletter to all of our supporters to communicate these accomplishments. Please join us as we “Lift Every Voice.”

-Janice R. Franklin, Ph.D.



Rev. Boone Collection, ASU Archives

RESEARCH

Over the past year, Teresa Benton Baxley worked under the direction of History and Political Science Department chair, Dr. Dorothy Autrey, to write a biography of long-time activist, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Field Director, and Alabama Action Committee founder, Rev. Richard Boone. In addition to conducting extensive interviews and inquiries at several regional repositories, Baxley used papers donated by the retired Methodist minister to Alabama State University for the bulk of her research.

Entitled, “Richard Charles Boone: Montgomery Civil Rights Activist and Proponent of Nonviolence, 1960 - 1973,” the thesis covers the path Boone traveled, from his angry youth to his resolute conviction that nonviolent social action is the key to dissolving social iniquities in American society. The only documentation of Rev. Boone’s life and work, Baxley’s manuscript is supported by hours of personal interviews with Boone and his counterparts in the Civil Rights Movement, such as civil rights activists Worth Long, Dr. Gwen Patton, and Alice West. Because historians have long overlooked the day-to-day work necessary to achieve the goals set by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders, documenting the life and struggles of little-known Montgomery activist Richard Boone will, in part, substantiate the work of black Alabama citizens in the continued fight for racial equality.

-Teresa Benton Baxley

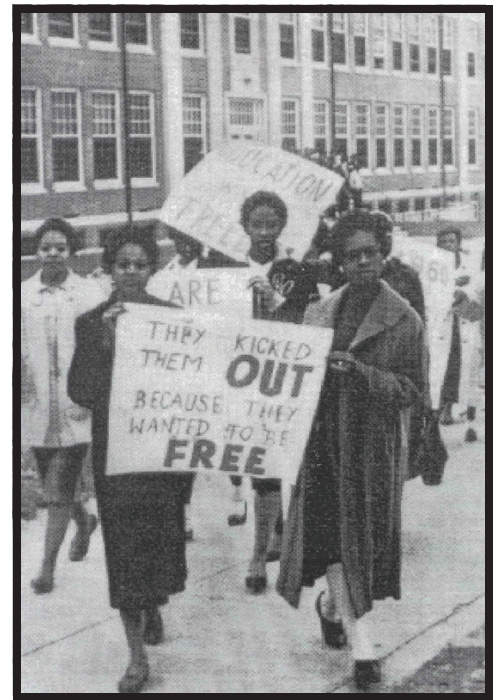
SIT-IN_{continued}

Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and his participation in the Freedom Rides from Montgomery into Jackson, Miss., in 1961. In a late morning session, noted civil rights attorney and ASU graduate Fred Gray, recounted the precedent-setting case, *St. John Dixon v. State of Alabama*, by which the State Board of Education expelled ASU Sit-In leaders.

Attorney Kendall C. Dunson, of the Beasley Allen Law Firm, moderated the discussion that included lead plaintiff, St. John Dixon. The panel also featured University of Georgia representative of the Association for Student Conduct Administration, Karen Boyd, who discussed the case's impact on university students' rights. The Dixon case ended the practice that allowed colleges and universities to act *in loco parentis*, in place of the parent, to discipline or expel students without regard for their rights. The decision still resonates as the leading ruling on due process rights for students in public higher educational institutions.

During the conference, Dr. Carlos Morrison, Assistant Professor of Communications, organized a debate that took place on campus at the Fred Shuttlesworth Dining Hall. During the conference luncheon, the student debaters argued the respective pros and cons of nonviolent direct action versus the NAACP style, a legalistic and lobbying approach to securing racial justice.

Long-time English chair, Dr. Ralph Bryson, retired ASU Vice President of Alumni Relations Charles Varner Jr., and civil rights activist Juanita Abernathy, also discussed the impact of the Sit-Ins and related protests on Alabama State University's staff, faculty, administrators, and on the larger Civil Rights Movement, in an afternoon session of the conference.



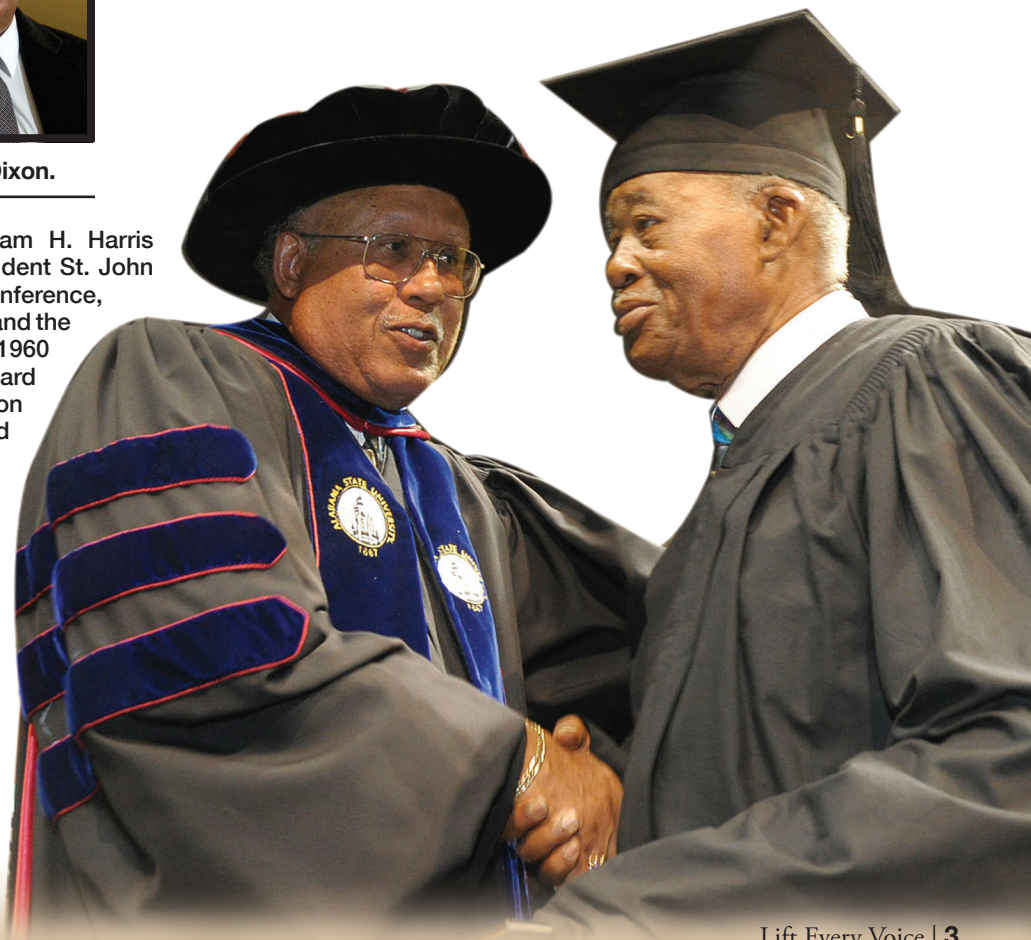
ASU Sit-in students, 1960.
John Jones Collection, ASU Archives

EXPELLED SIT-IN STUDENTS RECEIVE HONORARY DEGREES



James McFadden, Joseph Peterson, St. John Dixon.

Alabama State University president, Dr. William H. Harris brought tears to the eyes of expelled Sit-In student St. John Dixon during the February 25, 2010, Sit-In conference, when Harris promised to grant degrees to Dixon and the eight other Sit-in students who were expelled in 1960 by Governor John Patterson and the State Board of Education. News of the president's decision reverberated around the nation, as it was reported on CNN and as the story was picked up by the wire services and subsequently appeared in newspapers throughout the United States. At the University's May 8, 2010, Commencement, James McFadden, Joseph Peterson and St. John Dixon, three of the 1960 Sit-In students, accepted honorary degrees from the university, and a standing ovation as the representatives of the nine formerly expelled students. A week later ASU president William Harris was accompanied by honorees James McFadden and Joseph Peterson, as they appeared on CNN to talk about the Sit-Ins, the expulsions, and the awarding of the honorary degrees.





Naomi Tutu



Robert and Jean Graetz

GRAETZ SYMPOSIUM

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of a "Beloved Community" received considerable attention at the fourth annual Robert and Jean Graetz Symposium on Human Rights and Reconciliation, held on April 12, 2010, in the Ralph David Abernathy Auditorium. The symposium is an annual event, named for Rev. Robert and Jean Graetz. The theme for this year's event was "The Beloved Community: Yesterday a Dream; Today a Hope; Tomorrow a Reality." The keynote speaker was Ms. Naomi Tutu, daughter of South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Ms. Tutu's informative and inspiring speech was full of lessons from her youth, as well as wise sayings from the elders in her family. "A people is not a people without other people," Tutu noted. "Those who hold others in oppression are themselves less free than the oppressed." Tutu admitted having trouble applying the statement to her life until she learned a truism often espoused by Martin Luther King Jr.: "If a man is holding you down in a ditch, he has to be in the ditch with you."

The other major feature of the symposium was a panel discussion on "Searching for the Beloved Community," chaired by Dr. Howard Robinson, University Archivist.

The panel included School Superintendent Barbara Thompson, who focused on the theme as it is evident in our schools; Rev. Paul Britner, a local minister, also a panelist, discussed "The Beloved Community" and Montgomery churches.

Those taking part in the panel included Christian, Jew, and Unitarian, as well as male and female, black and white, and lay and clergy. The makeup of the panel reflected Dr. King's dream, which "envisioned a society where all people respect and accept each other with love, regardless of the differences which now divide us."

Major financial support for the event was provided by the Patrons of the National Center, as well as by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The symposium is one of a number of educational programs developed and sponsored by the National Center. All are open to the public at no charge.

-Rev. Robert Graetz



INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

Over the course of several years, the National Center has worked with the United States Department of State in hosting international delegations from various foreign countries. Recently, the National Center hosted delegations from countries in Europe, the Middle East, and South America. These groups were keenly interested in the modern Civil Rights Movement and were particularly interested in the lessons that could be drawn from the American Civil Rights Movement and how they could be applied to challenges in their own countries. In these international exchange sessions, scholars and activists affiliated with the National Center analyzed the modern Civil Rights Movement looking at its essential nature, key developments, modes of implementation, and its overall significance. Subsequent to these visits, members of the National Center were delighted to hear that Palestinian activists committed to a nonviolent philosophy, were gaining a growing number of adherents in their country.

VISITORS FROM AROUND THE NATION

During the first quarter, The Center provided tours to high school groups from St. Louis, Mo.; Dayton, Ohio; Chattanooga, Tenn.; California; Birmingham and Montgomery, Ala.

Please contact the National Center at (334) 229-4824 or e-mail: civilrightscenter@alasu.edu.

-Rolundus Rice

WINNIE MADIKIZELA-MANDELA VISITS NATIONAL CENTER

The National Center had the great pleasure of hosting Winnie Madikizela-Mandela in March 2010. Mandela, often referred to as the “Mother of South Africa,” used both a personal and scholarly tone as she addressed ASU faculty, staff, and students, in addition to students from local schools and persons from the community. Her address focused on the theme: “The Global Struggle for Civil Rights.” Mandela, former wife of South African President Nelson Mandela, African National Congress (ANC) Executive Committee member, and ANC Women’s League head, delivered a memorable speech squarely focused on the parallels between the South African struggle and the struggle of Blacks in the American South. Both movements, said Mandela, fought to secure the inalienable rights of liberty, justice and equality. She pointed out how these respective struggles were eerily similar, with Blacks in South Africa fighting to overcome apartheid and African Americans battling to defeat White supremacy. Mandela reminded the attentive audience that “It is imperative that we do not forget who we are or where we come from,” as an oppressed but not a defeated people.



SOLICITATIONS

The Archives at Alabama State University is actively pursuing important collections of family, church, and other kinds of documents and artifacts. Recently, the Archives brought on Ms. Frazine Taylor to help along these lines. Taylor comes to ASU after twenty-three years at the Alabama Department of Archives and History. She has enhanced the Archives’ ability to process donated materials in a timely fashion, thereby helping to make these collections available to students, professors, researchers, and layperson alike.

The archival staff at the University also welcomes our most diligent and dependable volunteer to date. After thirty-two years, Elvin Lang retired from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management as the Environmental Justice Coordinator. Lang brings to the Archives several practical skills, including an interest in photography and a deep appreciation for history. Mr. Lang enjoys processing collections and sometimes gets lost among the historic materials. He is also president of the Black Belt Genealogical Historical Society.

The ASU Archives is redoubling its efforts to secure papers and artifacts that shed light on Alabama State University, the Civil Rights Movement, and African-American culture. The ASU Archives offers individuals and organizations the opportunity to have their papers organized, preserved and made accessible. Through this process we can ensure that the ASU legacy lives on, as we assist future generations in understanding the African-American past through donations of photographs, audio and visual recordings, memorabilia, newspapers, journals, pamphlets, posters, flyers, correspondences and other materials. These are the items each one of us collects over a lifetime, and these are the collections that ASU seeks in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of our collective past.

To learn more, visit our contributions page:
<http://www.lib.alasu.edu/natctr/about/contributions.html>



Frazine Taylor



Elvin Lang



Dr. Colvin

CURRENT ART EVENTS

"Culture" as expressed through the arts comprises an important part of the programming at the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture. Retired ASU art professor and former chair of ASU's Department of Art, Dr. William Colvin has shouldered much of the responsibility for arranging the Center's impressive regularly scheduled art shows. Dr. Colvin serves as a liaison between the National Center and the world of visual arts. Through his intimate knowledge of the art world, Alabama State University has hosted some of the region's up-and-coming, as well as well-established artists. At Dr. Colvin's urging, the National Center has established and maintains a close working relationship with the National Alliance of Artists of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (NAAHBCU). Each year the Dr. and Mrs. Colvin National Center provides NAAHBCU artists with a theme for one of the Center's annual art exhibits. The 2010 theme, "Reflections of a Movement," allowed participating artists to create works dealing with the 55th anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the 50th Anniversary of the student Sit-In Movement, and the 45th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery March. The artists' interpretation of these events was truly "Harriet Tubman" by stunning, colorful, and Fred Ajanogha thought-provoking. Regarding civil rights, Dr. Colvin says, "The possibility of criticism . . . exists because social and political developments create feelings of anxiety as well as success." For Colvin, "Life itself is tragic, and a profound piece of art always begins with this realization." Yet according to Dr. Colvin, "NAAHBCU artists' have always, basically, addressed their audience in a traditional language of symbolic form." "Reflections of a Movement" was exhibited at the National Center Annex, 1345 Carter Hill Road, Montgomery, Ala., from Feb. to May 31, 2010.

-Dr. Howard Robinson

CURRENT & UPCOMING PROGRAMS

"Civil Rights & Social Justice"
Art Exhibition
Nov. 14-Jan. 28

National Education Week
Program: "Making Bricks
Without Straw: A Look
Back at Black Educators
in the Jim Crow Era"
Nov. 17

December Marks the
55th Anniversary of
the Bus Boycott

Dedication of Historic Marker
at Posey's Parking Lot
Dec. 1 • 10 a.m.

Symposium: "The Montgomery
Bus Boycott & the Women
Who Started It"
Dec. 2

- Tribute to Women's Political Council (9 a.m. - noon)
- Program on *Browder v. Gayle* Plaintiffs (afternoon)

Mass Meeting Program,
Speaker: Harry Belafonte
Dec. 5 • 7 p.m.
First Baptist Church

