***CHAPTER NINE: The Civil Rights Movement in the West***

*Most Americans typically identify the black civil rights movement of the 1960s with the states of the South. This chapter, however, will explore the movement's ramifications in the West. The first vignette,* ***Segregation in Public Schools in the West****, is actually a table that shows the extent of school integration in the region before 1954. A remarkable direct-action campaign against racial discrimination by the students of the University of New Mexico in 1947 is described in* ***An Early Civil Rights Victory in New Mexico****. The next vignette,* ***School Desegregation: The Arizona Victory, 1953****, shows the prelude to the famous Brown Case. The decision in that landmark case appears in the next vignette,* ***Brown v. Topeka Board of Education****. The sit-ins come to the West fairly early. Those efforts in Oklahoma City are outlined in* ***Sit-Ins: The Oklahoma City Campaign, 1960****,* ***The Katz Drug Store Sit In, 1958****, and* ***Charlton Heston Protests in Oklahoma City****.* ***The Sit-In Movement Comes to Houston****, and* ***The Movement in San Antonio*** *describe similar protests in Texas cities. The Watts uprising is described in the next two vignettes,* ***The End of Non-Violence: The Watts Riot*** *and* ***Marquette Frye: From Wyoming to Watts****. The rise of Black Militancy in the West is detailed in* ***Black Omaha: From Non-Violence to Black Power****,* ***The Black Panther Party****,* ***Angela Davis on Black Men and the Movement****, and* ***The University of Washington Black Student Union****. Finally,* ***Oregonians React to the Death of Martin Luther King****, shows the response in this state to the changing goals of "the movement."*

*Terms for Week Nine:*

*Phoenix Union High School Case, 1953*

*Thurgood Marshall*

*Linda Brown*

*Clara Luper, Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council.*

*Central Area Civil Rights Committee*

*Rev. John H. Adams*

*Rev. Samuel McKinney*

*Tracy Simms*

*Tom Bradley*

*Marquette Frye*

*Jackson Street Community Council*

*Ernest Chambers*

*Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party*

*Ron Karenga, US*

*Angela Davis*

*Elaine Brown*

*COINTELPRO*

*Aaron Dixon*

*Walter Hundley*

*Larry Gossett*

**SEGREGATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE WEST, 1950**

*Most students of the civil rights era assume that public school segregation was a distinctly Southern occurrence. As the table below illustrates, school segregation extended into the West as well. Indeed it was a nationwide practice before the Brown decision. The table below lists the status of school segregation in all forty-eight states. I have highlighted the states of the West to show where each stood on the question of separation of pupils solely on the basis of race.*

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*Segregation Permitted*

*Segregation Required in Various Degrees*

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Alabama ***Arizona***

Arkansas ***Wyoming***

Delaware ***Kansas***

District of Columbia ***New Mexico***

Florida

Georgia

Kentucky

Louisiana

Maryland

Mississippi

North Carolina

***Oklahoma***

South Carolina

Tennessee

***Texas***

Virginia

West Virginia

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*Segregation Prohibited No Legislation*

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***Colorado California***

Connecticut Maine

***Idaho Montana***

Illinois ***Nebraska***

Indiana ***Nevada***

Iowa New Hampshire

Massachusetts ***North Dakota***

Michigan ***Oregon***

New Jersey ***South Dakota***

New York ***Utah***

Ohio Vermont

Pennsylvania

Rhode Island

***Washington***

Wisconsin

*Source: Carl E. Jackson and Emory J. Tolbert, ed., Race and Culture in America: Readings in Racial and Ethnic Relations, (Edina, Minn., 1989), p. 106*

**ADA LOIS SIPUEL FISHER AND THE U.S. SUPREME COURT**

*The following is Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher's account of her entrance into the University of Oklahoma by order of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1949.*

It was a cold day, but one of crystalline purity. There I was, a preacher’s daughter from Little Chickasha, Oklahoma, climbing the steps of the United States Supreme Court building. My eyes caught the words “Equal Justice under Law.” Amos Hall, Thurgood Marshall, and I entered the building ahead of schedule. We walked down the wide corridor, its way marked with uniformed military personnel standing at attention at spaced intervals. Finally we came to the Court’s chamber. The awesome sight seemed a fitting end of a journey two years in the making.

The chamber had plush carpet and carved, heavily padded pews for spectators. The Court’s sergeant-at-arms sat in a high chair facing the audience. Behind him was the judge’s bar, beautifully carved and long enough to accommodate nine large, overstuffed leather chairs, one for each of the nine justices. Behind the chairs was a heavy velvet curtain. The bailiff announced the imminent appearance of the justices, and everyone stood. The judges then stepped through the nine slits in the curtain.

I was thrilled. I recognized a few of them from photos that I had seen. The real thrill came from my sense that this August body was assembled that morning because of me--to recognize and affirm my rights of citizenship...

As had been true at the state supreme court, the judges were free to interrupt counsel for either side at any point. This time, however, it was the state’s counsel that was being interrupted. Marshall carefully presented his argument with scarcely an interruption. I believed that only one decision was plausible: my immediate admission to the University of Oklahoma. That seemed the only way Oklahoma could comply with the United States Constitution.

Attorneys Hansen and Merrill had a much harder and slower go of it. The state attorneys reiterated their position concerning out-of-state tuition and my failure to give the board of regents notice of my desire to study law within the state. They also spoke of the Oklahoma law prohibiting whites and blacks from attending classes together. Various justices cut in on the arguments with rather pointed questions that seemed to indicate they were leaning in my direction. At least as important as the questions’ wording was their tone, a tone that ran all the way from incredulity to frustration with Oklahoma’s position.

Justice William O. Douglas cut in on Merrill’s and Hansen’s point about the lack of prior notification to observe that I had attempted to enroll on January 14, 1946, and filed suit almost two years ago. Douglas opined that would appear to be clear notice. He said that at the rate the state was moving I would be an old lady before I would be able to practice law. Justice Robert Jackson wanted to know why, after two years, Oklahoma had made no effort to do anything about the problem. Justice Hugo Black also specifically wanted to know whether the regents had taken any action to satisfy my effort. Hansen had no direct response, saying only that the regents had no money to set up any other law school, adding that they believed I would refuse to accept a segregated law school.

Justice Felix Frankfurter systematically explored various alternatives and asked whether the state would admit me for the term beginning in a few days if the Court mandated it to do so. Hansen answered yes, if necessary, although he added that doing so would violate the laws of Oklahoma. Frankfurter then asked if a separate course of study could be arranged within the existing law school. Hansen answered that it could. Could I be admitted temporarily pending the establishment of a separate law school? Hansen said that the Oklahoma Board of Regents for Higher Education had authority to do any or all of those things.

Justice Robert Jackson interrupted to ask if counsel really believed that a school with a single student could afford an acceptable legal education. Merrill answered yes. Justice Jackson disagreed. He said such foolishness was neither reasonable nor equitable.

Dean Merrill noted that Oklahoma was one of many states with a public policy of segregation. He reminded the Court that for decades rulings had upheld that arrangement. Now, he told the Court, plaintiff is unwilling to recognize that settled policy. He was right on that.

Justice Jackson asked why I should be required to abide by a given policy more than any other person. Should I, he asked, be required to waive my constitutional rights for the benefit of the state’s public policy?

They were good questions--great questions, it seemed to me. They were exactly the questions that every other court and public official had ignored. This time, this Court asked them.

Only four days after the hearing, the Court issued a terse one-page, unsigned unanimous order. With OU’s second semester’s enrollment to begin in exactly one week, the judgment was that I was “entitled to secure legal education afforded by a state institution.” The Court ordered that Oklahoma “provide it for her in conformity with the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and provide it as soon as it does for applicants of any other group.”...

*Source: Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, A Matter of Black and White; The Autobiography of Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher (Norman, 1996), pp. 119-122.*

**GEORGE McLAURIN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA**

*George McLaurin, who entered the graduate program at the University of Oklahoma in 1948 was the first African American student to attend the university. Here below is a brief account of his initial days at the institution.*

George McLaurin officially enrolled in four graduate education courses on October 13, 1948. At the time, the College of Education used several classrooms in the old Carnegie Building. All of McLaurin’s classes were assigned to the same one: room 104. The scheduling was no accident. The large lecture room had a little anteroom (Marshall later termed it a “broom closet”) off to its north side. Separated from the remainder of the room by columns, the anteroom allowed an occupant to peer out at a forty-five-degree angle to see the front of the room and the blackboard. Thus the choice.

It was under such surreal and humiliating conditions that George W. McLaurin became the First African American to attend the University of Oklahoma. By the end of the year about twenty others had also enrolled. All of them were completely segregated within the university. They had designated sitting areas in the classrooms and the library. They entered the cafeteria by a side door and sat at folding tables set up in a corner away from other diners, surrounded by a heavy iron chain, and manned by an armed guard.

McLaurin, a senior citizen when he entered, left the university at the end of his second semester because of unsatisfactory grades. His age and the humiliation he suffered probably affected his performance...

*Source: Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, A Matter of Black and White; The Autobiography of Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, (Norman, 1996), pp. 144-145.*

**AN EARLY CIVIL RIGHTS VICTORY IN NEW MEXICO**

*The following vignette describes a remarkable three year direct action campaign between 1947 and 1950 by University of New Mexico students against segregated facilities near their campus. The campaign generated the first UNM anti-discrimination regulations and eventually generated the first such ordinance for Albuquerque and law for the state of New Mexico.*

The first non-violent direct action protest in the post-war West came in an unlikely place, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Black Albuquerque did not experience the enormous growth that affected African American communities on the west coast. Its population slowly expanded from 547 in 1940 to 613 in 1950 despite the city's overall population growth from 35,000 to 96,000. Nonetheless black newcomers and natives, particularly at the University of New Mexico, chafed under "traditional" racial restrictions and in the immediate post-war period they joined liberal whites and Hispanics to launch a campaign to end discrimination. The most important of those coalitions initiated a direct action campaign that predated by more than a decade the sit-in movement begun in Greensboro, North Carolina.

In September 1947, the university newspaper, *The New Mexico Lobo* published an article describing how George Long, a university student was denied service at a nearby cafe, Oklahoma Joe's. In response the Associated Students of the university, not having the power to prohibit discrimination in private establishments off campus, enacted a boycott resolution, which declared "If any student of the University is discriminated against in a business establishment on the basis of race, color or creed, I will support a student boycott of that establishment." The resolution gave the ASUNM Judiciary Committee the authority to investigate cases of discrimination and, "have the power to declare a student boycott." The boycott passed a university-wide student referendum on October 22, 1947, by a three to one margin with approximately 75% of the students casting ballots. Shortly after its enactment, students boycotted Oklahoma Joe's, forcing the management to change its policy. Three months later university students initiated a similarly successful boycott against a downtown Walgreen drug store. The widespread student support for challenging local discrimination also generated the university's first NAACP chapter with Herbert Wright as its first president.

Using as a model a Portland, Oregon anti-discrimination ordinance, Wright and George Long, now a university law student, worked for nearly two years to perfect the Albuquerque Civil Rights Ordinance and to persuade sympathetic members of the Albuquerque City Commission to introduce the measure in October, 1950. On October 21, 1950, Wright, now president of the campus NAACP, Long, and Joe Passaretti, president of the Associated Students, made speeches for the ordinance before the commission. After considerable study by Commission subcommittees, the Albuquerque Civil Rights Ordinance was passed on Lincoln's birthday, 1952. Three years later, in 1955, the state legislature enacted a similar statue, nine years before the national Civil Rights Act was passed by the U.S. Congress. Taking advantage of student opposition to discrimination, George Long and Herbert Wright had formed a remarkable coalition of students and sympathetic off campus organizations including the NAACP, several churches and Hispano organizations to enact the first civil rights ordinance in the intermountain West.

*Source: Quintard Taylor, "African Americans in the Enchanted State: Black History in New Mexico, 1529-1990," Historical introduction to the "A History of Hope: The African American Experience in New Mexico," Exhibit, The Albuquerque Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 4 to April 7, 1996. See pp. 13-14.*

**SCHOOL DESEGREGATION: THE ARIZONA VICTORY, 1953**

*Most historians characterize the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Topeka Board of Education as the death knell for de jure public school segregation. Yet a little known legal victory by school desegregation victory by the Arizona NAACP before the Arizona State Supreme Court in 1953 provided an important precedent for the ruling by the highest court in the land. Ironically the local effort began with a court ruling ending the segregation of Latino students. The Arizona NAACP's campaign is described below.*

In 1951 the NAACP's Legal Aid Division won a court suit against the Tolleson School District concerning its practice of segregating Mexican-American students. Although the court's ruling did not affect Negro students, it was a step forward. Encouraged by the Legislature's passage of the desegregation bill in 1951, the NAACP filed a suit against Phoenix Union High School, which had refused to comply with the newly enacted order... As the NAACP's suit against Phoenix Union High School moved through the court, the state's civil rights groups focused their attention upon school desegregation, labeling it as their first priority.... Everything else hinged upon complete integration of the state's school system. As one prominent Phoenix businessman put it, "As long as they [blacks] attend separate schools, I won't let them drink in my bar or sit in my theatre..."

To gain public support the NAACP sponsored a number of massive rallies at which black leaders and state officials openly voiced their opinions on the matter. To finance the case the NAACP sought donations from the state's elite. Their efforts were successful. More than a thousand state residents donated thousands of dollars to the cause, including four hundred dollars from Barry M. Goldwater.

The first major breakthrough came in the winter of 1953. Two Maricopa County Superior Court Judges ordered Phoenix Union High School to desegregate immediately. From this point the pace of desegregation quickened. During the following summer Phoenix school officials announced that henceforth Negro students could enroll in previously all-white schools. In the fall the Legislature passed another school desegregation bill which called for the immediate desegregation of all elementary and secondary schools throughout the state. The bill also provided that violators would lose all state support, including funds, unless they desegregated by December, 1954. Then in January, 1954, the bill was amended to cover the hiring of Negro teachers and other personnel on a fair and equal basis. By 1960 only a handful of the state's black teachers were working in districts which lacked Negro pupils. The majority were still teaching in schools whose enrollment was predominately black.

Desegregation of the state's school system, as it concerned student enrollment, was a success. By December, 1954 literally every school district had repealed its segregation ordinances. Even some of the all-Negro schools either were closed or integrated. Integration of schools was not accomplished without some instances of hostility, though. Jean Gossett, a Negro student, was dismayed, as were her black classmates, when, on her first day as a Phoenix Union High School student, the teacher in Jean's first class remarked, "I see that we have a few darkies with us today." Also at Phoenix Union High School, the first school dance raised the question of mixed racial dancing and dating; but with the aid of the NAACP such issues were quickly put to rest.

The success of school desegregation carried over into other areas as well. Theaters, movie houses, some restaurants and a few [previously] all-white churches immediately desegregated.

*Source: Robert Kim Nimmons, "Arizona's Forgotten Past: The Negro in Arizona, 1539-1965," (MA Thesis, Northern Arizona University, 1971), pp. 227-232*.

**BROWN V. TOPEKA BOARD OF EDUCATION**

*The 1954 Brown decision outlawing public school segregation was one of the most sweeping and controversial decisions rendered by a U.S. Supreme Court. While primarily known for its national impact on legal segregation, the decision was the culmination of a seventy year campaign by African American residents in Kansas to desegregate public schools in their state. Part of the Brown decision is reprinted below.*

Today education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship....

We come then to the question presented. Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facili­ties and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal education opportunities? We believe that it does....­To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone....

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "sepa­rate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the 14th Amendment....

*Source:  Richard Kluger, Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education, (New York: 1975), pp. 781‑782.*

**THE BROWN DECISION: ONE WOMAN REMEMBERS**

*Cheryl Brown Henderson, the sister of Linda Brown and daughter of Rev. Oliver L. Brown, the lead plaintiff in the landmark Brown v. Board of Education case, recalls the events leading up to the U.S. Supreme Court decision.*

The case that became known as *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* was one of a long line of cases that sought equal education as a tool for social equality. For many years segregated schooling was sanctioned by the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court decision in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which permitted separate-but-equal classrooms for African American children. In 1950, attorneys for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chose Topeka as one of the places in which to challenge that decision. The final documents were filed on behalf of 13 African American families for their 20 children. As fate would have it, Oliver L. Brown headed the list of plaintiffs and my family's name became forever linked to this case.

The circumstances for each of the families in the case were similar. My father agreed to participate because my oldest sister, Linda, and the other African American children in our integrated neighborhood had to walk through a railroad switching yard, cross a busy boulevard, and await a rickety school bus--sometimes for an hour in all types of weather--to travel nearly two miles to Monroe School. This was despite the fact that we lived only four blocks from Sumner Elementary School, which served the neighborhood's white children. During the case, much was made of the fact that the board of education provided bus service for African American children and not for white children. But that was so much window dressing since white children almost always lived within walking distance of their neighborhood schools.

In August 1951, a three-judge federal panel found against my father and the other plaintiffs. The decision acknowledged that segregation had a detrimental effect on Topeka's African American children, but found that it was not illegal since school facilities and programs were equal to that of white students. The NAACP appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, where the Kansas case was joined with similar cases from Delaware, the District of Columbia, Virginia, and South Carolina. Because *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* was first on the list, all of the cases eventually became associated with its name.

It was an important case because it was not from a southern state and because it delineated the issue so well. It was acknowledged that in most ways Topeka's white and African American schools were equal. To overturn the lower court's decision the Supreme Court would have to strike down the separate-but-equal doctrine. On May 17, 1954, at 12:52 p.m., the Supreme Court announced its decision that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." The decision effectively denied the legal basis for segregation in Kansas and 20 other states which segregated classrooms and would forever change race relations in this country.

Ironically, the decision came too late to affect the children of some of the case's plaintiffs, including my sister, Linda. That fall these children would enter junior high school, and since only elementary school had been segregated in Kansas, they were already scheduled to begin their first integrated schooling. In 1959 our family left Topeka because our father had accepted a new parish. Two years later, my father died at the age of 42. My family returned to our old Topeka neighborhood, where, in the fall of 1961, I enrolled at the by-then integrated Sumner Elementary School. Each day, with the other African American children in our neighborhood, I would walk those short four blocks to the school my sister had not been able to attend a decade before...

*Source: Cheryl Brown Henderson, "Landmark Decision: Remembering the Struggle for Equal Education," Land and People 6:1 (Spring 1994):2-5.*

**THE FIRST SIT-IN: WICHITA, KANSAS, 1958**

*Although the Greensboro, North Carolina sit-ins in 1960 are generally credited with initiating a spontaneous movement that soon swept across the South, the first sit-ins actually occurred in Wichita, Kansas in July, 1958, followed closely by similar demonstrations in Oklahoma City in September. The following is a personal recollection of the Wichita demonstrations by Professor Ronald Walters who now teaches Political Science at Howard University.*

Forget the tales of John Brown and the Kansas that bled to keep slavery out of the state--that was the 1850s. IN the 1950s, Wichita, Kansas, was a midsize city of more than 150,000 people, of whom only 10,000 were black. Agribusiness and defense industries were its economic base; farmers and defense workers, its social foundation. Isolated in the middle of the country, with an ascetic religious heritage and a tradition of individual farming, its people were genuinely and deeply conservative. Kansas, the family home of war hero and president Dwight Eisenhower, was the most Republican state in the nation...

Social and economic progress in those years were exceedingly difficulty for Wichita's small, closely knit black community, a product of turn-of-the-century migration. We faced an implacably cold, dominant white culture. Blacks in the '50s attended segregated schools up to high school and were excluded from mixing with whites at movie theaters, restaurants, nightclubs and other places of public accommodation, except for some common sports events. Even though the signs "black" and "white" were not publicly visible as in the South, we lived in separate worlds, just as blacks and whites did in the Southern states... In the spring of 1958, I started a new job without a car, which anchored me to the downtown area for lunch. I remember going to F. W. Woolworth one day for lunch and standing in a line with other blacks behind a 2-foot board at one end of a long lunch counter. Looking at the whites seated at the counter, some staring up at us, I suddenly felt the humiliation and shame that others must have felt many times in this unspoken dialogue abut their power and our humanity. Excluded from the simple dignity of sitting on those stools, blacks had to take their lunch out in bags and eat elsewhere...

No flash of insight led me to confront this humiliation. It was, like other defining moments in that era, the growing political consciousness within the black community, born of discrete acts of oppression and resistance. That consciousness told me that my situation was not tolerable, that it was time at last to do something... As head of the local NAACP Youth Council and a freshman college student, I knew a range of youths who might become involved in a protest against lunch counter segregation... We targeted Dockum drugstore, part of the Rexall chain, located on Wichita's main street, Douglas Avenue. Because any action here would swiftly attract attention, we tried to anticipate what we might encounter. In the basement of [St. Peter Claver] Catholic Church we simulated the environment of the lunch counter and went through the drill of sitting and role-playing what might happen. We took turns playing the white folks with laughter, dishing out the embarrassment that might come our way. In response to their taunts, we would be well-dressed and courteous, but determined, and we would give the proprietors no reason to refuse us service, except that we were black.

We were motivated by the actions of other people in struggle, especially by the pictures of people in Little Rock and King's Montgomery bus boycott... Like others who would come after us, we held a firm belief that we would be successful simply because we were right; but our confidence was devoid of both the deep religious basis of the Southern movement and the presence of a charismatic leader...

\* \* \*

Ten of us began the sit-in on Saturday morning at 10 a.m., July 19, 1958. We decided to take the vacant seats one by one, until we occupied them all, and then to just sit until whatever happened, happened. It was the prospect of being taken to jail--or worse--that led some parents to prohibit their sons and daughters from taking part in the protest... The sit-in went as planned. We entered the store and took our seats. After we were settled, the waitress come over and spoke to all of us, saying, "I can't serve you here. You'll have to leave." Prepared for this response, I said that we had come to be served like everyone else and that we intended to say until that happened. After a few hours, the waitress placed a sign on the counter that read, "This Fountain Temporarily Closed," and only opened the fountain to accommodate white customers. This was what we were hoping for--a shut-off of the flow of dollars into this operation.

By the second week of the protest, we felt that we were winning because we were being allowed to sit on the stools for long periods. Surely the store was losing money. As we sat, we seldom spoke to each other, but many things crossed my mind. How would I react if my white classmates came in? How would they react? Would my career in college be affected, and would I be able to get another job? What did my family think about what I was doing? How would it all turn out? I am sure that the others were thinking the same things, but they never wavered. I was proud of our group...

Despite the fact that some whites spat at us and used racist taunts, we kept the pressure on as the movement grew. It became a popular movement among youth, especially from Wichita University, and at least two white students came down to participate. What had begun as a two-day-a-week demonstration escalated into several days a week. Just as we were realizing our success in generating a mobilization, I began to worry because school was approaching, and it would be difficulty to maintain the pressure with school becoming the main priority. Then suddenly, on a Saturday afternoon, into the fourth week of the protest, a man in his 30s came into the store, stopped, looked back at the manager in the rear, and said, "Serve the. I'm losing too much money." This was the conclusion of the sit-in--at once dramatic and anticlimactic.

What happened in the aftermath of our sit-in was completely typical: blacks and whites were served without incident, giving the lie to the basic reason for our exclusion--that whites would cease to patronize the establishment... Not wanting to rest on our laurels, we targeted another drugstore lunch counter, across form East High School on Douglas Avenue and there segregation was even more quickly ended. Other lunch counters in the city followed suit...

The Dockum sit-in was followed in a few days by the beginning of a much longer campaign of sit-ins in Oklahoma City. This protest was also initiated by the NAACP Youth Council, under the leadership of the courageous 16-year-old Barbara Posey... The link between the Midwest actions and the Greensboro sit-in was more than mere sequence. Ezell Blair and Joseph McNeil, tow of the four originators of the Greensboro protest, were officers in Greensboro's NAACP Youth Council. It is highly unlikely that they were unfamiliar with the sit-ins elsewhere in the country led by their organizational peers. Indeed, at the 51st Conference of the NAACP held in 1960, the national office recognized its local youth councils for the work they were doing in breaking down lunch counter segregation. In his speech at that conference, Robert C. Weaver, the Unites States's first black cabinet official, said, "NAACP youth units in Wichita, Kansas, and Oklahoma City started these demonstrations in 1958 and succeeded in desegregating scores of lunch counters in Kansas and Oklahoma." NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins paid tribute to the sit-in movements as "giving fresh impetus to an old struggle," and "electrifying the adult Negro community..."

By summer 1960, the NAACP Youth Council-inspired protests had occurred in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, West Virginia, Tennessee, Texas, Kentucky and Mississippi. There was one ironic historical twist:" On July 21, 1960, the Woolworth Company in Greensboro began to serve everyone without regard to color, nearly two years to the day after the beginning of the "first" sit-in in Wichita.

*Source: Ronald Walters, "Standing Up in America's Heartland: Sitting in Before Greensboro," American Visions 8:1 (February 1993):20-23.*

**SIT-INS: THE OKLAHOMA CITY CAMPAIGN, 1958**

*In the following vignette historian Jimmie Lewis Franklin describes the sit-in movement in Oklahoma City and the crucial leadership provided by a local schoolteacher turned civil rights activist, Clara Luper. The first Oklahoma City sit-in occurred in September 1958, two months after the Wichita demonstrations but two years before the more well-known direct action demonstration in Greensboro, North Carolina.*

Three years after [Martin Luther] King led the movement again the city of Montgomery's segregated buses, young blacks in Oklahoma City employed nonviolent tactics against segregated public accommodations. Cities of the Sooner State, in common with may other places in America, had sanctioned by custom separate public and private facilities. Signs reading "For Whites Only" were found in Oklahoma as they were in other southern states. Determined to change old patters, blacks in Oklahoma City began a sit-in campaign to overthrow segregation. Oklahoma's capital city was a logical target for black activists: it had the state's largest black population and a respectable leadership: it was the political center of power; and it had a history of persistent agitation. Black leaders also realized that a victory in Oklahoma City would have a strategic importance and that it would take on both real and symbolic significance in other parts of the state...

The dynamic engineer of the sit-in was a forceful black woman named Clara Luper, Director of the Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council. A public school teacher with a special interest in social studies, Luper had been involved in civil rights for many years before the attack on public accommodations. Born in Okfuskee County, she attended Langston University after graduation from high school in Grayson. She later earned a Master's degree at the University of Oklahoma. A woman of intense zeal and self-assurance, Luper viewed segregation as a personal affront and an undemocratic practice that degraded black people. Inspired by the work of Martin Luther King, Jr., she argued the immorality of segregation, and she called upon the churches to take a stand against racism. A legal attack alone, the Oklahoma City teacher concluded, would not topple Jim Crow in public accommodations; thus she moved toward peaceful demonstrations...

The initial "sit and wait" demonstration took place at Katz Drug Store on one of those hot days in August that Oklahomans have grown to tolerate. Whites were shocked when thirteen black children between the ages of six and sixteen...quietly moved into the establishment in defiance of past custom. Traditionally, the Katz store, like so many other businesses, had sold blacks food "to go," but the children inside the store demanded the same service on the premises that whites received, and they refused to remove themselves from the counter where they sat quietly. Whites grumbled, but after days of demonstrations, the Katz store capitulated. A few other stores soon followed. The S.H. Kress Company, [now K-Mart] however took out the stools at its food counter and offered blacks service on a "stand up" basis, but this half measure did not appeal to them and the demonstrations continued. In time, Kress, too, gave in.

Following the youth-inspired demonstrations in Oklahoma City, the sit-in movement spread to other cities in the state but attention remained focused upon Oklahoma City... Success did not come easily even with appeals for desegregation from some white church groups. The General Board of the Oklahoma Council of Churches bluntly condemned segregation as undemocratic and inhumane, and it threw its support behind the removal of all racial barriers in eating establishments. Total victory for Luper and her children's crusade would not be achieved until the mid-sixties....

*Source: Jimmie Lewis Franklin, Journey Toward Hope: A History of Blacks in Oklahoma (Norman, 1982), pp. 187-190.*

**THE KATZ DRUG STORE SIT-IN, 1958**

*In the following account Clara Luper, the leader of many Oklahoma City civil rights demonstrations between 1958 and 1964, describes the first sit-in at the city's Katz Drug Store in 1958.*

Katz Drug Store was located in the Southwestern corner of Main and Robinson in downtown Oklahoma City. It was a center of activity with its first class pharmacy department, unique gifts, toys and lunch counter. Blacks were permitted to shop freely in all parts of the store. They could order sandwiches and drinks to go. Orders were placed in a paper sack and were to be eaten in the streets...

As I was thinking about what should have been done, Lana Pogue, the six-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Louis J. Pogue, grabbed my hand; and, we moved toward the counter. All of my life, I had wanted to sit at those counters and drink a Coke or a Seven-Up. It really didn't matter which, but I had been taught that those seats were for "whites only." Blacks were to sweep around the seats, and keep them clean so whites could sit down. It didn't make any difference what kind of white person it was, thief, rapist, murderer, uneducated; the only requirement was that he or she be white. Unbathed, unshaven--it just didn't make any difference. Nor did it make any difference what kind of black you were, B.A. Degree black, Dr. Black, Attorney black, Rev. Black, old Black, pretty Black, ugly Black; you were not to sit down at any lunch counter to eat. We were all seated now in the "for whites only territory." The waitress suffered a quick psychological stroke and one said in a mean tone, "What do you all want?"

Barbara Posey spoke, "We'd like thirteen Cokes please."

"You may have them to go,' the waitress nervously said.

"We'll drink them here," Barbara said as she placed a five dollar bill on the counter. The waitress nervously called for additional help.

Mr. Masoner, the red, frightened-faced manager, rushed over to me as if he were going to slap me and said, "Mrs. Luper, you know better than this. You know we don't serve colored folks at the counter."

I remained silent and looked him straight in the eyes as he nervously continued. "I don't see what's wrong with you colored folks--Mrs. Luper, you take these children out of here--this moment! This moment, I say." He yelled, "Did you hear me?"

"Thirteen Cokes please," I said.

"Mrs. Luper, if you don't move these colored children, what do you think my white customers will say? You know better, Clara. I don't blame the children! I blame you. You are just a trouble maker."

He turned and rushed to the telephone and called the police. In a matter of minutes, we were surrounded by policemen of all sizes, with all kinds of facial expressions. The sergeant and the manager had a conference; additional conferences were called as different ranks of policemen entered. Their faces portrayed their feelings of resentment. The press arrived and I recognized Leonard Hanstein of Channel 9 with his camera and I sat silently as they threw him out and a whole crew of cameramen.

The whites that were seated at the counter got up, leaving their food unfinished on the table and emptied their hate terms into the air. Things such as "Niggers go home, who do they think they are? The nerve!" One man walked straight up to me and said, "Move, you black S.O.B." Others bent to cough in my face and in the faces of the children. Linda Pogue was knocked off a seat, she smiled and sat back on the stool. Profanity flowed evenly and forcefully from the crowd. One elderly lady rushed over to me a fast as she could with her walking cane in her hand and yelled, "The nerve of the niggers trying to eat in our places. Who does Clara Luper think she is? She is nothing but a damned fool, the black thing."

I started to walk over and tell her that I was one of God's children and He had made me in His own image and if she didn't like how I looked, she was filing her complaint in the wrong department. She'd have to file it with the Creator. I'm the end product of His Creation and not the maker. Then, I realized her intellectual limitations and continued to watch the puzzled policemen and the frightened manager.

Tensions were building up as racial slurs continued to be thrown at us. Hamburgers, Cokes, malts, etc., remained in place as pushing, cursing, and "nigger," became the "order of the day."

As the news media attempted to interview us, the hostile crowd increased in number. Never before had I seen so many hostile, hard, hate-filled white faces. Lana, the six-year-old, said, "Why do they look so mean?"

I said, "Lana, their faces are as cold as Alaskan icicles."

As I sat quietly there that night, I prayed and remembered our non-violent philosophy. I pulled out what we called Martin Luther King's Non-Violent Plans and read them over and over...

As I folded the paper, I looked up and saw a big burly policeman walking toward me. When he got within two feet of me, another officer called him to the telephone. I wondered why the policeman had to stand over us. We had no weapons and the only thing that we wanted was 13 Cokes that we had the money to pay for.

Amid the cursing, I remembered the words of Professor Watkins, my elementary principal and teacher in Hoffman, Oklahoma. He told us to "consider, always, consider the source..."

My daughter, Marilyn, walked over and pointed out a big, fat, mean-looking, white man, who walked over to me and said, "I can't understand it. You all didn't use to act this way; you all use to be so nice."

We remained silent and as he bumped into me, the police officers told him that he had to move on. An old white woman walked up to me and said, "If you don't get those little old poor ugly-looking children out of here, we are going to have a race riot. You just want to start some trouble." I remained silent. "Don't you know about the Tulsa race riots?" the woman asked.

I moved down to the south end of the counter, then back to the other end. This was repeated over and over. As I passed by Alma Faye Posey she burst out laughing and when I continued to look at her, she put her hands on the counter and pointed to a picture of a banana split.

It had been a long evening. Barbara, Gwen and I had a quick conference and we decided to leave without cracking a dent in the wall. Mr. Portwood Williams, Mrs. Lillian Oliver and Mrs. Mary Pogue were waiting. We loaded in our cars and left the hecklers, heckling.

We passed our first test. They...called us niggers and did everything, the group said.

"Look at me, I'm really a non-violent man," Richard Brown yelled. "Look at me. I can't believe it myself..."

*Source: Clara Luper, Behold the Walls, (Oklahoma City, 1979), pp. 8-10, 11-12.*

**CHARLTON HESTON MARCHES IN OKLAHOMA CITY**

*Today Charlton Heston is known primarily for the politically conservative causes and candidates he publicly supports. However in 1961 Heston was one of the first Hollywood celebrities to join the picket line established by Clara Luper to protest racial discrimination. Here is a brief description of his presence in Oklahoma City.*

It was the last Saturday in May 1961, and Charlton Heston, Hollywood's Oscar-winning Biblical actor, was on his way to Oklahoma City where he, Dr. Jolly West, nationally-known psychiatrist, and Dr. Chester M. Pierce, black scientist on the staff of the Veterans' Administration Hospital, were scheduled to lead a protest march against Segregation in public accommodations in Oklahoma City.

The news had spread like wild fire and large crowds had assembled on Main Street to get a quick glimpse of the star.

Charlton Heston was met by the NAACP Youth Officers led by the president and about one-hundred black and white demonstrators, six policemen, a number of newsmen and Trudy, the black dog that took part in all the marches.

I was stationed with a large crowd of NAACP workers, friends, well-wishers and people of all ages, creeds and colors.

I have never seen anything more dramatic, more historical as those three handsome, dignified, successful men walking down the streets carrying signs that they had prepared themselves. The blue and black sign that Charlton Heston carried said, "All men are created equal--Jefferson" on the front and "Racial discrimination is Un-American" on the back.

The crowd was caught up in the unbelievable realities of the moment and when the trio reached our group, wild applause went up in the air. Oklahomans sounded like they do when the Big Red football scores against Texas or Nebraska. We waved flags, sang songs and in a military sounding voice, Dr. West issued a command. The trio marched with the crowd following. Charlton Heston stopped, shook hands, talked and marched.

A few hecklers yelled, "Go back to Hollywood, you Jew!!" "West, you are no psychiatrist, you're a damn fool!"

But the march continued. We marched slowly by the John A. Brown' Department Store, Anna Maude's Cafeteria and Bishop's Restaurant--the three strongholds of Segregation. There was no violence.

Elliott Tyler, Jerry Nutt and John Fast carried anti-Heston signs which read, "Is Beverly Hills integrated?"

Charlton Heston's face was lighted with love and understanding of an oppressed people. He told the group that he sincerely believed that most Americans agreed with Thomas Jefferson.

This was his first demonstration. He said that a great many of us have only paid lip service to the equality of man and this is a very bitter thing for me to do.

Every step that Heston, West and Pierce took was adding tons of Freedom vitamins to our tired bodies that had been protesting for three years.

Heston took pictures with NAACPers, car hops, and the three got into a waiting automobile after the hour's march and went to Calvary Baptist Church where a large crowd was waiting. There he told the crowd, "I was very pleased with the march and I was prepared for some hostility at the start of the march. I'm used to taking part in marches and chariot races only when they're fixed, but today I didn't have a script!" he said, smiling.

He explained that as far as he knew Beverly Hills was integrated, however, he had been in Spain making a movie... The audience went wild and Charlton Heston looked as if he was enjoying every moment...

*Source: Clara Luper, Behold the Walls, (Oklahoma City, 1979), pp. 134-136.*

**THE SIT-IN MOVEMENT COMES TO HOUSTON**

*The following is an account of the sit-in movement in Houston in 1960 by historian F. Kenneth Jensen.*

The momentary lull in the national civil rights struggle was dramatically ended in February of 1960 when black students at Greensboro, North Carolina, sat down at a segregated, all-white lunch counter; they requested service and continued to sit and wait after they had been refused. This sin-down/sit-in tactic immediately caught on. Throughout the South similar demonstrations soon took place... In Houston, students at predominately black Texas Southern University paid close attention to the dramatic actions of black student in other parts of the South. They were angered when U.S. Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson of Texas remarked the black students in the Lone Star State were too complacent to engage in public protests. This remark, in combination with the momentum created by student activists across the South, inspired T.S.U. students to begin sit-in demonstrations in the Bayou City.

Houston's first sit-in occurred on March 4, 1960, at Weingarten's Store... Thirteen T.S.U. students marched from the....campus to the store. By the time they arrived at the store their numbers had quadrupled. They immediately occupied the thirty lunch counter stools and requested service. "We filled the counter," Holly Hogrobrooks recalls... The store manager quickly closed the counter, after which nobody really know what to do. "Many stood around," Hogrobrooks recalls. "....Within fifteen minutes the law enforcement officers got here, and they stood around. Everybody stood around!" The students occupied the lunch counter for almost four hours before leaving the store unmolested.

The students resumed their sit-in at Weingarten's the next day and also sent a detachment to integrate Mading's drugstore a few blocks away. A brawl between whites and blacks in Weingarten's parking lot left one black, James Gates, with a knife wound in the back. None of the sit-in students, however, were involved in the incident. The manager of the store was persuaded to close it for the remainder of the day to avoid further trouble. Nevertheless, the actions of the students dominated the attention of the local news media--attention that the Weingarten family deeply regretted. "We weren't anxious to be the spearhead in this movement," Jack Weingarten recalls, adding that his family's greatest desire at the time was "to get out of the spotlight."

The rapid growth of the sit-in Movement in Houston did, in fact, soon dilute the pressure on the Weingarten family. The following Monday sit-in activists appeared at the Henke and Pillot supermarket... There twenty-five blacks, almost half of them women, demonstrated. Sit-ins resumed at Mading's but Weingarten's lunch counter was kept closed. On Tuesday a fourth store, Walgreen's drugstore.... was struck. Although one white youth was arrested on the scene for brandishing a razor blade, no actual violence ensued. Mading's management followed the Weingarten example and closed its lunch counter. At Henke and Pillot, the entire lunch counter was torn out and replaced with a display of carpets. When students turned their attention on Wednesday to Woolworth's...management quickly closed the lunch counter for "remodeling."

The sit-in blitzkrieg caught Houston unprepared. Support from the black community, however, was evident from the very beginning. Holly Hogrobrooks, who participated in the original Weingarten's sit-in, recalls that black patrons spontaneously abandoned their grocery carts in the check out line, closed their purses, and left the store. As the sit-ins spread, support in the black community grow. "It had become kind of a military thing," Hogrobrooks recalls. She likened community supporters to soldiers and supply sergeants who lined up to provide gasoline as well as automobiles and other necessities to the activists.... The effectiveness of black economic and political solidarity [Otis] King remembers, "taught us a valuable lesson of just how powerful the black community was, and how effective our actions could be by withholding our economic support of businesses that did not treat us fairly."

*Source: F. Kenneth Jensen, "The Houston Sit-In Movement of 1960-61," in Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz, eds., Black Dixie: Afro-Texan History and Culture in Houston (College Station, 1992), pp. 213-215.*

**THE MOVEMENT IN SAN ANTONIO**

*The vignette below, part of an article by historian Robert Goldberg, suggests, that "massive resistance" was not the standard response of all Southwestern cities to the civil rights thrust of black and white activists in the 1950s and 1960s.*

San Antonio, Texas, with a population in 1960 of almost 588,000, was the third largest city in Texas... Only 41,605 blacks resided in the city, constituting 7% of the population. The number of blacks in San Antonio had increased by 12,876 since 1950, but they had barely maintained their percentage of the population. It was estimated that [Mexican Americans] formed approximately 40% of the city's inhabitants. San Antonio...followed the color line. The city had never passed a segregation ordinance, but custom and the Police Department enforced a racial separation that proved as binding. Blacks and whites patronized their respective municipal parks and playgrounds, rest rooms, drinking fountains, hotels, restaurants, and schools. Where segregation proved unwieldy, as in public transportation or motion picture theaters, blacks were expected to retreat to the back of the bus or to [the balcony]. Housing in most of San Antonio was unavailable to blacks, and they were restricted to an overcrowded and decaying east side neighborhood. Blacks were economically depressed, with nearly 70% employed in semiskilled, unskilled or domestic service jobs.

Blacks in San Antonio opposed racial segregation and inequality, but the moderate racial climate tempered their opposition. Harry Burns, a leader of the local NAACP characterized San Antonio as "heaven on earth" when compared to other southern cities. Joseph Scott, a black schoolteacher agreed: "San Antonio was not a city that dictated a Martin Luther King. San Antonio was a mildly discriminatory city... It was not Birmingham."

A variety of factors combined to moderate the racial atmosphere in San Antonio. Most obviously, the black community was quite small... Whites did not perceive blacks as having the numerical base, and thus the potential power, to mount an effective challenge to their political, economic, social, or racial status... A significant Mexican American population also obscured the dividing line of color. The Mexican Americans were considered nonwhite and were subjected to social and economic discrimination. Yet, they enjoyed civil rights, had access to public accommodations, and were recognized as a legitimate constituency by the local political structure. Mexican Americans, then, blurred the "us-them" perception of racial conflict, weakened a strict segregationist orientation based upon color inferiority, and deflected prejudice and attention away from blacks. The five military bases located in and around San Antonio also lessened the noxiousness of segregation. During the 1950s, the military integrated its units, on-base schools, stores, and recreational facilities, and provided working models of an interracial society. Finally, though most religious leaders remained silent about the racial situation in the 1950s...the Catholic church under the leadership of Archbishop Robert Emmet Lucey condemned color prejudice and acted to remove barriers between parishioners of the different races. Before the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Archbishop Lucey announced on April 5, 1954, that all of San Antonio's parochial schools and the two Catholic colleges would be integrated... A small but vocal group of liberal Protestant ministers also stressed that true Christians were color blind.

Thus, while much of the South delayed or resisted the civil rights movement, San Antonio pursued a policy of gradual progress and boosted itself as "the most liberal city in the region." In 1954, prodded by a lawsuit by the NAACP, the City Council passed an ordinance desegregating municipal parks, golf courses, and tennis courts but maintaining the racial barrier in swimming pools. In 1956, again with NAACP prompting, the city desegregated its swimming pools, buses, railroad stations, and all activities in municipal buildings. Unlike many Southern communities, San Antonio accepted the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision calmly... The junior colleges were integrated as well. This gradual approach effectively eliminated *de jure* segregation by 1960.

*Source: Robert A. Goldberg, "Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960-1965," Journal of Southern History 49:3 (August 1983):350-354.*

**THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND BLACK CIVIL RIGHTS PROTEST**

*The following assessment of the pivotal role of the U.S. government in assisting, supporting and inspiring the non-violent direct action protests comes from an account of the sit-in campaign in Oklahoma City in the early 1960s. However much of the discussion applies to the rest of the nation as well.*

Non-violent direct action protest was effectively supplemented by federal enactments in effecting desegregation. For a decade, beginning in the late 1950s, the federal government stimulated local action, directly and indirectly. Negroes in Oklahoma City, as elsewhere, derived encouragement from the knowledge that the federal government was generally in agreement with their desires, as evidenced by the many pieces of legislation and executive orders enacted during this time span. The enactments of this period reinforced local protest actions not only by encouraging the protest leadership, but also by enabling white leaders to repeatedly cite, as they often did, the fact that they had no other recourse but to obey national laws. Further, these desegregation laws, covering housing, federal disbursement of funds, voting, public accommodations and other areas created a standard of uniform desegregation that helped dissipate economic fears of desegregation. Overall, the pattern and pace of race relations changes was significantly affected by federal government action.

However, the local protest movement fully understood that the moves toward desegregation generated by federal fiat could not be effectively utilized until Negroes possessed adequate schooling, jobs, money and political power. The local Negro protest was encouraged by federal enactments and they utilized them fully; but they were aware that a locally segregated society could only be effectively dismantled at the local level. With this in mind, the local protest pursued its activities.

By the end of 1963 most of Oklahoma City's eating establishments had been desegregated or were in the process of doing so. The sit-in had been effectively utilized for over four years; the NAACP Youth Council had constructed untold variations upon the original sit-in theme. For the next few years, segregated laundries, amusement parks, swimming pools, and funeral homes operating in the public sector would be challenged by "look-ins," "walk-ins," "swim-ins," "wash-ins," and other novels forms of protest action. Usually, shortly after the initial confrontation, the segregated facility announced its willingness to admit Negro patrons.

*Source: Allan Saxe, "Protest and Reform: The Desegregation of Oklahoma City," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1969), pp. 174-176.*

**A NATIVE AMERICAN NEWSPAPER ASSESSES THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

*In the following piece titled, “Problems of Negro and Indian Differ: Indian Resists ‘Forced Assimilation,’” The Voice of Brotherhood, the newspaper for the Alaska Native Brotherhood, reprints an editorial which originally appeared in the newspaper Indian Progress. The editorial suggests that the stated goals of the black civil rights movement then prominent in the national debate were irrelevant to most Indian people.*

Since the public’s attention is being turned toward civil rights, may people are equating the struggle of the American Indian with that of the American Negro. Actually, their situations are almost exactly opposite. The Negroes are striving to attain assimilation with the dominant white society, while the Indians are striving to resist this forced assimilation with the rest of society.

The Negro at the present time, unlike the Indians, has nothing to preserve in the way of land, culture, language or traditional arts and crafts. He is an uprooted people who is concentrating his struggle in legal rights. The Indians already have full citizenship rights and so their legal struggle is to retain rather than attain.

The Negro seems to look toward the white figure at the top of society as a desirable goal, while the Indian views the white man as a threat to their very position. This explains why many Indians view the Negro as part of the institutionalized urbanized what of life that they are now forced to accept.

Once senses a certain frenzy in the Negro’s desire to “become just like everyone else” and yet this frenzy is admittedly justifiable. Perhaps they have learned through years of bitter suffering that “to be right in American you gotta be white.” One would hope that this is not the case and yet everywhere one senses a certain weary adherence to the average, the normal and the “white.” As civil rights measures gain support we might well ask ourselves what we are really protecting. Yes, we are protecting and promoting individual rights and freedoms, but it does not necessarily follow that we are protecting and promoting individuality in America. For the Negro rights that we are promo9ting are our own rights and we quickly concur that Negroes should be “just like us.”

On a different scale, one notices the apparent lack of support that the Indians have obtained both from the public and the American government. Yet if one has ever lived among Indian people or seen their dances or listened to their songs, one is aware of a great cultural richness.

Everywhere lip service has been given by churchmen and government officials alike that the great Indian heritage ought to be preserved. And everywhere there is the same support of measures which lead to the destruction of Indian culture. All the educational relocation bills have been aimed at getting the Indian off the reservation and into the city.

“Yes, but some tribes have voted to terminate, you say?” This is correct, but in every case there has been pressure applied. The Klamath tribe in Oregon and the Menominee tribe in Wisconsin were reluctant to terminate. This reluctance was met by a flat refusal to allow them access to their own funds unless they would signify such consent.

Are we willing to protect and promote individual rights when they are not similar to our own? The answer seems to be “no,” and the Indian tribes who are receiving this “no” may well have a right to scoff at the so-called individuality in America.

*Source: Indian Progress, reprinted in The Voice of Brotherhood, Juneau, Alaska, August 1964, p. 2.*

**THE END OF NON-VIOLENCE: THE WATTS RIOT**

*The four days of rioting that swept the Watts section of Los Angeles in August, 1965 proved a turning point in the Civil Rights struggle. The nation's attention, which had previously been focused on the rural South now shifted to the ghettos of the North and West as African Americans demonstrated their anger with the prevailing political and economic status quo. The passage below describes the death of Charles Patrick Fizer, one of the 34 people killed during the riot.*

Charles Patrick Fizer, born in Shreveport Louisiana, sang because he loved to--and for money. People paid to hear Charles Fizer sing. For a brief time, he made it big. Most of the Fizer family migrated to California during World War II to take jobs in the buzzing Los Angeles area aircraft plants and shipyards. In 1944, when he was only three, Charles Fizer was taken there by his grandparents. He lived with them for a time. Then, when he was seven, he moved to Watts with his mother.

The Fizer family was a religious one. Charles attended the Sweet Home Baptist Church and became an enthusiastic choir member. He had a good voice. By the time he was fifteen, he was singing in night clubs....He became part of a successful group of entertainers. He broke in singing second lead with the Olympics, as the group was known....Came the Olympics' recording of "Hully Gully," and Charles Fizer was something to be reckoned with as an entertainer. The record sold nearly a million copies. The Olympics won television guest shots. Charles came up with a snaky dance to fit the "Hully Gully" music. Other hit songs followed, and it seemed nothing could stop Charles Fizer from reaching the top. [But] Charles became restless. With his fellow performers, he became impatient. His testy attitude and souring views cost him his job with the singing group. He and another entertainer formed a night-club duo, but it flopped. The summer of the Los Angeles riot, he hit bottom. He served six months at hard labor on a county prison farm after being arrested with illegal barbiturates.

He was released Thursday, August 12. The riot already was in progress. Even as the violence spread in Los Angeles, Charles Fizer wakened early Friday, went job-hunting and found work as a busboy....But there would be no work Saturday─the restaurant manager decided to close until peace was restored in the city... But that night Charles Fizer drove through Watts after the curfew hour. In the center of the fire-blackened community, he stopped short of a National Guard roadblock at 102nd and Beach Streets. Inexplicably, he backed the Buick away from the barricade. Suddenly, he turned on the car's headlights and shifted into forward gear. What compelled him to jam the accelerator to the floor only he could say─and soon he was past explaining. Too many white faces challenging him? Perhaps. A white man giving him an order? Perhaps. In any event, he pointed the car straight for the roadblock. Guardsmen cried to him to halt and fired warning shots into the air. Then came the roar of M-1 carbines. The Buick spun crazily and rammed a curb. Charles Fizer never realized his resolve to make a new life. Inside the car he lay dead, a bullet in his left temple. The time was 9:15 P.M.

*Source:  Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy, Burn, Baby, Burn: The Los Angeles Race Riot August, 1965, (New York, 1966), pp. 211-213.*

**MARQUETTE FRYE: FROM WYOMING TO WATTS**

*Most students of the Watts Riot have assumed incorrectly that the background of Marquette Frye, whose arrest triggered the confrontation, was a typical South Central youth--born in the South and migrated with parents to the city during or immediately after World War II. The following account describes his background and suggests the role it played in propelling him toward the incident that changed both his life and the city of Los Angeles.*

Marquette Frye had lived in Los Angeles for eight years, but he was still a stranger in the city. He had grown up in the coal-mining town of Hanna, Wyoming, where every one of the 625 residents was a neighbor to everyone else, and he had a sense of belonging. Not here. Here he didn't know what he was.... He had no plans, because it seem to him as if he had been dumped into a dead end--a dead end with but one exit: an exit that both frightened and repelled him....

Hanna sits astride the Continental Divide just south of what had been the Overland Trail up the Platte and down the Sweetwater River; and the high, rolling land retains much of the flavor that had greeted the settlers. The population of Carbon County, an areas about the size of Vermont, still is less than 15,000, 9,000 of whom are crowded into the city of Rawlins. For the first thirteen years of his life Marquette had the great all-American boyhood of romantic legend. The fact that he was a Negro had made no impact upon him. There was a large Greek community, and they had a Mediterranean tolerance for dark-skinned people. Most of the neighbors were white. His friends were white. He would go over to their houses for dinner, and they would come and spend the night with him....

Then, in the mid-1950s, the....coal mine in Hanna, like that of many small mines from Kentucky to Washington, had begun to peter out. Wallace Frye, an Oklahoma cotton farmer who had been recruited by the United Mine Workers in 1944 when there had been a shortage of miners, had to start thinking about moving. Nor was it only a question of moving. Wallace Frye had two skills; cotton farming and coal mining. Technological changes had made a manpower surplus in both. Now, in middle age, he was cast out to become part of that vast minority army, jobless and with no real prospect of ever again being able to gain anything but marginal employment. Having relatives in Los Angeles, he decided to transport his second wife Rena, his stepson Marquette, and the other children to Southern California.

The Fryes arrived in Los Angeles in 1957. From a truly integrated community they were plunged into the heart of a ghetto.... Wallace Frye went from job to job--service station attendant, paper-factory worker, parking lot attendant. Rena supplemented his income by working as a domestic. The children, who hardly knew what a policeman was [in Wyoming] were picked up on their very first day in the city. They had gone out to get some ice cream, when they were spotted by a truant officer. He took them home, and, when it was explained to him that they were not in school because they had just arrived, he tried to give the family an insight into the area. He warned the children that they would have to work at staying out of trouble--there was an element in the community that would do its best to draw them into it.

For no one was the transition so difficult as it was for Marquette. A thin, intelligent 13-year-old who had all of his life lived as part of a white community, he was suddenly dropped like a character from a Jules Verne balloon, into a new environment where almost all the faces he saw were colored. In them he could see himself--yet he felt no identity with them. He felt different. He was different. And his problems began.

"Hey! How come you talks funny like that? You from Mars or sometin'?" the other kids in the junior high school, the majority of whom had migrated from the South or had parents who came from the South, challenged his English. It was not difficult for them to sense that he did not feel himself part of them. They retaliated by ostracizing him. "White boy, what happened to you? You fall in a puddle of ink and come up black?" He was an outsider...his motivation dropped off... In his senior year at Fremont High School he became a dropout....

*Source: Robert Conot, Rivers of Blood, Years of Darkness (New York, 1968), 3-5.*

**BLACK OMAHA: FROM NON-VIOLENCE TO BLACK POWER**

*The year, 1966, proved pivotal for African Americans nationally as they reached a crossroads between continued support of the non-violent protest tactics utilized in the first years of the decade, and the growing calls by other blacks for violent confrontation with the "power structure." Omaha in 1966 was typical of this change in the West and the nation. The account below profiles the transition.*

Omaha never had a formal segregation system; denial of rights took subtle forms. The vast majority of Omaha blacks lived in a jammed-in district on the Near North Side. Few black youth went to college or for that matter finished high school. Job opportunities had not improved measurably since the Great Depression... Militancy spread among blacks in Omaha. Ernest Chambers, a Creighton [University] graduate, barber shop owner, and emerging black leader, gained a following and received media coverage for his anti-establishment views. He headed a committee of the Near North Side Police-Community Relations Council which presented to city officials a long list of complaints against Omaha police practices. All this was somewhat puzzling to whites, used to having the Omaha Urban League and the local chapter of the NAACP claim to speak for blacks at large.

Mayor A.V. Sorensen said that he felt that blacks would make more rapid progress if they got together and agreed upon what they wanted... He indicated his respect for several Omaha black leaders including Lawrence W.M. McVoy, president of the NAACP, and Douglas Stewart, Urban League executive director. Sorensen said he had met with Chambers, "although he has heaped a lot of abuse on me." The mayor indicate that he would "be perfectly glad" to call a top level conference to discuss minority complaints against policemen. This was in March 1966, eight months after the bloody Watts civil disorder in Los Angeles had focused national attention on the plight of urban blacks. Few whites in Omaha envisioned such a thing happening in their city. After all, Nebraska was not California and unusual things always seemed to happen on the West Coast. Omaha blacks were reasonable, so whites thought when Sorensen claimed his administration was "maintaining communication" on race matters. It turned out that was not enough.

The first of two disturbance that broke out in Omaha in the summer of 1966 occurred during an early July heat wave. For three straight nights there were confrontations between black teenagers and the police. Trouble developed after youth gathered late at night in food store parking lots; as one observer said, they were the places to go, in lieu of recreational facilities. Rioters threw rocks and bottles, smashed windows, and looted several stores... The police made sixty arrests, concentrating on containing the mobs and holding down violence. On the third night the police had trouble with a milling and rock-throwing crowd of around 150 people and authorities called in a small contingent of steel-helmeted Nebraska National Guardsmen to restore order. They cleared the streets without violence as those involved quickly dispersed. It was one thing to taunt the police and another to face troops carrying guns and bayonets...

Chambers who met with Mayor Sorensen on the last day of the disorders attacked the police response, giving no specific reasons beyond suggesting that arrests during the first two nights inflamed the crowd. In addition, they complained about unemployment and a lack of recreational opportunities...

The Omaha black ghetto exploded again for three nights in a row in early August. The outbreak was in may ways similar to that of the previous month... Rocks were thrown and there were several arrests... Several places hit during the July rioting were targets a second time.... Taking a hard line [Mayor] Sorensen indicated "We simply are not going to tolerate this lawlessness, whether it is teenagers or young adults." Urging black parents to keep closer track of their children, he warned, "Many whites wish to help the Negro achieve first-class citizenship, but this lawlessness stiffens attitudes and makes it difficult to help." The vandalism ended and conditions on the Near North Side returned to normal.

*Source: Lawrence H. Larsen and Barbara J. Cottrell, The Gate City: A History of Omaha (Boulder, 1982), pp. 272-274.*

**THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY**

*By 1967 the black nationalist movement dominated earlier by Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam, had divided into two major factions. One group, the cultural nationalists, led by Imamu Amiri Baraka and Ron Karenga, argued that blacks must "liberate their minds" before embarking on the inevitable armed revolu­tionary struggle. The Black Panther Party, founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, however, called for revolutionary nationalism, claiming that the armed struggle and mental liberation must occur simultaneously and immediately. Huey Newton explains the Panther Party philosophy, and particularly the party's relationship with revolutionary whites, in a 1968 interview, part of which is reprinted below.*

The imperialistic or capitalistic system occupies areas. It occupies Vietnam now. It occupies areas by sending soldiers there, by sending police­men there. The policemen or soldiers are only a gun in the establishment's hand, making the racist secure in his racism, the establishment secure in its exploitation. The first problem, it seems, is to remove the gun from the establishment's hand. Until lately, the white radical has seen no reason to come into conflict with the policeman in his own community. I said "until recently," because there is friction now in the mother country between the young revolutionaries and the police; because now the white revolutionaries are attempting to put some of their ideas into action, and there's the rub. We say that it should be a permanent thing.

Black people are being oppressed in the colony by white policemen, by white racists. We are saying they must withdraw.

As far as I'm concerned, the only reasonable conclusion would be to first realize the enemy, realize the plan, and then when something happens in the black colony‑‑when we're attacked and ambushed in the black colony‑‑ then the white revolutionary students and intellectuals and all the other whites who support the colony should respond by defending us, by attacking the enemy in their community.

The Black Panther Party is an all black party, because we feel, as Malcolm X felt, that there can be no black‑white unity until there first is black unity. We have a problem in the black colony that is particular to the colony, but we're willing to accept aid from the mother country as long as the mother country radicals realize that we have, as Eldridge Cleaver says in Soul on Ice, a mind of our own. We've regained our mind that was taken away from us and we will decide the political, as well as the practical, stand that we'll take. We'll make the theory and we'll carry out the practice. It's the duty of the white revolutionary to aid us in this.

*Source:  Thomas R. Frazier, Afro‑American History: Primary Sources, (Chicago, 1988), pp. 400‑401.*

**ANGELA DAVIS ON BLACK MEN AND THE MOVEMENT**

*In the account below Angela Davis provides a candid look at the stereotypical assumptions of black male leadership and the impact those assumptions on black political organizations in the 1960s.*

I ran headlong into a situation which was to become a constant problem in my political life. I was criticized very heavily, especially by male members of [Ron] Karenga's [US] organization, for doing a "man's job." Women should not play leadership roles, they insisted. A woman was to "inspire" her man and educate his children. The irony of their complaint was that much of what I was doing had fallen to me by default.

A year later [I] confronted similar problems in the newly organized Los Angeles chapter of SNCC. On the original central staff were six men and three women [one of whom was Davis]. However.... two of the men and all of the women were doing a disproportionate share of the work. Some of the brothers came around only for staff meetings (sometimes), and whenever we women were involved in something important, they began to talk about "women taking over the organization"--calling it a matriarchal coup d'etat. All the myths about Black women surfaced. (We) were too domineering; we were trying to control everything, including the men--which meant by extension that we wanted to rob them of their manhood. By playing such a leading role in the organization, some of them insisted, we were aiding and abetting the enemy, who wanted to see Black men weak and unable to hold their own.

. . . If I suggested [proposals], the suggestion might be rejected; if they were suggested by a man the suggestion would be implemented. It seemed throughout the history of my working with the [Black Panther] Party, I always had to struggle with this.... The suggestion itself was never viewed objectively. The fact that the suggestion came from a woman gave it some lesser value. And it seemed that it had something to do with the egos of the men involved. I know that the first demonstration that we had at the courthouse for Huey Newton which I was very instrumental in organizing, the first time we met out on the soundtracks, I was on the soundtracks, the first leaflet we put out, I wrote, the first demonstration, I made up the pamphlets. And the members of that demonstration for the most part were women. I've noticed that throughout my dealings in the Black movement in the United States, that the most anxious, the most quick to understand the problem and quick to move are women.

*Source: Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (New York, 1984), pp. 316-317.*

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON BLACK STUDENT UNION**

*By 1968 Black Student Unions had emerged on virtually every major university campus in the United States including the University of Washington. The vignettes below provide rare glimpses into the campus mood which generated the UW BSU.*

In March [1968] the U of W Athletic department was jolted by charges of racism and discrimination made by some 13 black athletes. Among the 13 was basketball player Dave Carr, who later spoke .... about the feelings of the Negroes on campus. “Except for some talk of ‘niggers,’ racism is not so noticeable these days,” says Carr. “White students just look at us like, ‘What are you doing on our campus.’ Or we’re considered exceptional Negroes. Hell, I’m not exceptional, I’m just lucky. So many of us are now hungry to compete and *able* to compete if we get the chance.”

“There’s other aspects,” he continued. “Like not being able to find a place to live in the U. District. But you know the single thing that bothers me most? Nobody will talk to me about anything except basketball. ‘You keepin’ in shape? You goin’ to play pro ball?’ I’m supposed to be a dumb black athlete who can’t do anything else. I *like* basketball but I’m also taking a degree in business, and ultimately, I intend to go into personnel work. But no one’sinterested in *that.*”

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Hidden away in a far corner in the basement of the UW HUB is Room 92. Though nothing on the door proclaims it, Room 92 houses the UW Black Students’ Union (BSU). Little more than a cubby hole, the room is jammed with furnishings, and on one recent afternoon, a half dozen BSU members. Among those present are E. J. Brisker, BSU vice-president; Jesse Crowder, the BSU’s sole Mexican American; Richard Brown, one of the four young men who had been charged with firebombing; and Larry Gossett, one of those involved in the Franklin High sit-in. The conversations are a mixed bag of self-kidding, Whitey put-ons, and serious discussions; Brown and Gossett do most of the talking.

“The Black Student Union is for anything that advances the cause of black people,” says Gossett. “For example, we’re in full support of the Olympic Games boycott. This country has been using its black athletes far too long, showing them off in foreign lands to convince people that racism doesn’t exist in America--when we know it does.” Adds Brown, “Yeah, a black athlete is *Mister* when he goes overseas, but he is nothing when he gets home--can’t find housing, can’t get a job.”

Gossett wears black-frame glasses and a big Afro; he gestures as he speaks, and he has a habit of gnawing his lower lip. “In general,” he explains, ”the Black Students’ Union is a political organization set up to serve the wants and needs of black students on white campuses. The educational system is geared for white, middle class kids, so it’s never served black students. We’re educated to fit into some non-existent slot in white society, rather than be responsible to the needs of our own brothers in the ghetto. To combat this, one thing we want to do is establish courses in Afro-American culture and history.” On Richard Brown’s lapel is a button which displays a leaping black panther. “No black person will be free,” he says, ending the conversation, “until all blacks are free.”

*Source: Ed Leimbacher, “Voices from the Ghetto,” Seattle Magazine 5:51 (June 1968), 41-44.*