

  
Bishop College  
Marshall, Texas  
April 18, 1960

From: Students of Bishop College

Re: Marshall "Sit-ins"

Dear Friends:

First we should like to acknowledge our gratitude to you for the deep concern and support you have given to us as we struggle for that which is rightfully ours. In spite of the mental strain and sacrifices that we have made and must continue to make, we feel assured that the cause that we are striving to promote transcends by far the sacrifices that any one of us can make. As American citizens we have a responsibility to make democracy practical and real. We cannot allow our country to be weakened or possibly destroyed by a few enemies of democracy who desire to use their prejudices to preserve selfish interests and a dying undemocratic practice.

We consider the "sit-ins" as a significant role that God has called us (the students of this day) to play. This is another battle that must be fought and won, by peaceful non-violent means, for the realization and perfection of the true ideals and ideas of our democracy. Such ideals and ideas are based on the worth, dignity and equality of all human beings regardless of race, creed or color. This, the students of Bishop and Wiley Colleges, and other colleges in the South, firmly believe. Thus, we shall struggle to uphold democratic principles and affirm our belief in these principles despite the difficulties that we encounter in so doing.

We are convinced that God is at work in the minds and hearts of American citizens, so that they can no longer stand silently by and see our democratic ideals and ideas exploited and our Christian principles remain simply a theory. We felt more assured of this as we received letters and telegrams from student leaders and Christian and democratic organizations throughout the country in support of our efforts to insure equality and freedom for all. All Americans, whether they be in opposition to or support of this movement for equality, must realize that the ideologies of Christianity and democracy are too powerful to be continually taught without some of all kinds of people believing in such ideologies, even to the extent that they are willing to sacrifice greatly for their promotion.

Again we are grateful to God for the concern and support that we have received from you and we shall continue praying and looking to God for love, power and direction as we move through another painful stage of the birth of a new order which will make Christianity and democracy a reality.

Many have written asking where they might send contributions to aid in this struggle. You may send these contributions to: National Student Christian Federation Legal and Scholarship Fund, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, N. Y.,

Enclosed is an information bulletin regarding our Marshall situation.

May God bless you!

BULLETIN

Marshall, Texas

Wednesday, March 9, 1960 - The students of Bishop College unanimously decided to discontinue attending the segregated movie theater in Marshall, in a silent protest against racial inequality in this city.

Two weeks later, students from Wiley College joined this silent protest thereby making a concerted, more effective effort.

Saturday, March 26, 1960 - Through the coordinated efforts of students from Bishop and Wiley colleges, the first "sit-in" demonstrations took place at the F.W. Woolworth store of this city. At 10 o'clock a.m., ten students, (five from both schools), sat for thirty minutes without receiving service. The counters were closed immediately and after another attempt at 10:30 a.m., the store was closed.

Later the same day, "sit-ins" were staged at the Fry-Hodge Rexall Drug Store and at the Continental Bus Terminal Cafe, but without success. None of the students were arrested.

Monday, March 28, 1960 - At 10 a.m., ten students entered each of the three above mentioned places, but all were refused service. No arrests were made. Several of the students were lectured and finger-printed. One of the students was "roughed up" by a local policeman.

Wednesday, March 30, 1960 - At 12:30 p.m., eight students entered and sat at the counter of Woolworth's; six at Fry-Hodge's Drugs; and six at the bus terminal cafe. By 12:35, all had been arrested.

They were taken first to the County Court House, then to the City Hall, and back again to the Court House. Due to inadequate facilities and personnel, the twenty students had not been "processed" by 4:30 p.m.

At 3:30 p.m., groups of the same number (8 and 6) entered Woolworth's and Fry-Hodge's, respectively. Six other students attempted to enter the bus terminal cafe but were turned away by the manager at gun point. All these students were arrested and taken to the Court House to join those arrested previously.

It became apparent after a while that the authorities were not sure of the charges, nor were they certain of the final settlement of the matter.

During the "long wait" in the court room (as the authorities busied themselves outside), the students read biblical passages aloud, passing the Bible from one to the other. Upon the heated demand of the Senior Police Officer, the students ceased to read, but immediately began singing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Afterwards, the students stood and sang the "National Anthem." It would have been a fitting gesture for the police officers in the court room to have stood also, to sing along with the students, but they remained seated.

About 4:30 p.m., to the surprise of everyone, more than six hundred students from both colleges, filled the court room and the square, singing patriotic songs as they marched. Spontaneous though it was, it was done peacefully and in the spirit of non-violence.

When the court room was filled (standing-room only), the District Attorney, Mr. Allen, requested all students to leave, except those who had been arrested (who numbered 57 by this time).

The students refused to leave the court room, at which time the D.A. indicated that he would "clear the court room one way or the other." He referred to the fifty "armed" policemen and rangers who were "standing by, ready to move" at his command. Still the students refused to leave.

Finally, the D.A. and his assistants were asked to "please leave the court room" in order for the students to decide their course of action among themselves. Their decision was to remain quietly in the court room, as long as the 57 were held. The D.A. re-entered the court room. After a brief preliminary, all the students were permitted to return to their campuses. The D.A. warned, however, that if any further demonstrations occurred, the 57 on whom charges were pending would be arrested, in addition to the arrest and charge of those who demonstrated later.

It was at this point that water hose were turned on the students who waited outside the court house. According to many, the situation did not call for the use of water hose to disperse the students. Ironic was it also that white teenagers were permitted to assist the firemen in their use of the water hose.

Nevertheless, all the students (the wet and the dry) returned to their respective campuses.

Friday, April 1, 1960

- Further "sit-in" demonstrations occurred, with the arrests of the student participants. On the same evening at 6:30, the 57 students who were released on Wednesday with "charges pending" were arrested and taken to the County Jail. This number included 28 women and 29 men.

*Las was also escaping and the jailer refused to do anything about it. 2 meals were served during this time.*

The 28 women students shared two beds and a cement floor for 26 hours. The 29 men students (along with five other inmates -- totalling 34) shared four mattresses in a cell intended to accommodate only 14.

The "kind" officers in charge, as they drank, offered beer to the women students on the lower floor, in an attempt to be as "hospitable" as possible.

All these were new and trying experiences for the students but they never lost sight of their common purpose: freedom, equality, and human dignity.

By Saturday, April 2, at 11 p.m., all students had been released from jail, the bonds of \$500 each having been provided by the deeply concerned citizens of the Marshall community.

Both city and county charges were filed against some students. In all the city cases, which have now been completed, the students were convicted and fined. The fines ranged from \$50 to \$200 each. The cases have been appealed.

The county cases are scheduled to begin Tuesday, April 19, 1960.

In the opinion of many, the Dallas Morning News and the Marshall News Messenger have not been fair in their treatment of the story. They have attempted to discredit the movement by implicating persons not directly involved. Moreover, their distorted views have placed the future of Bishop College in jeopardy.