

INSIDE THE SITDOWNER

"I Believe that it is my God - Given right to be treated like any other American in places of public accommodation in America. Until I can enjoy that right, I will Sit-in protest. When I can't sit, I will walk. I'm willing to walk morning, noon and night. If necessary, I will walk through the bitter cold of winter, or the scorching heat of summer. I am willing to endure indignities, including arrest and jail. But I won't quit until I can sit...with complete equality." - A Sitdowner.

WHAT IS A SIT-DOWNER? What has he done? How has he done it? Why has he done it? There have been others, but today, by far he is a young, intelligent and determined college or high school student. There is but one goal-equality under one law. During his study of American life this teaching has hit with a lasting impact:

"ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL.
THEY ARE ENDOWED WITH IN-
ALIENABLE RIGHTS, AMONG
WHICH ARE LIFE, LIBERTY
AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPI-
NESS"

He firmly believes these teachings. However, upon close examination of his surroundings, he found that practice falls far short of the teaching. So he dedicated himself to setting right this conflict between what is and what should be. Thus was born the Sit-downer.

So forceful has been his impact on the established social order that his deeds have become subjects of conversations on local, national and international levels. In the recently concluded national conventions of the two major political parties in America, the presence of the sitdowner was obvious. So obvious, in fact, that he earned recognition and support of both candidates for the presidency of these United States. He has indeed brought to our time a new era. Here is a brief look at the Baltimore Sit-downer, which typifies those across the land.

The Baltimore Sitdowner, as a member of the current nation-wide crusade, was born on a bitter, cold night in March. Since his coming, a brief five months ago, colored Baltimoreans now can buy and eat a meal in most places of public accommodation, without fear of embarrassment or insults. Among his other deeds on the local scene, the Sitdowner has nudged the City Council to pass civil rights legislation.

At The moment, he is working in cooperation with the NAACP, churches and others in getting eligible voters on the books. The Sitdowner has displayed dogged determination, courage, wisdom, integrity and perseverance. Thus, he has drawn unstinted support from many areas of his community.

When faced with a situation which offered him a chance to compromise or face arrest and jail, he chose the latter. He asked no quarter and gave none. Although his concern of protest contained a sort of historicity, he knew he had to maintain his scholastic standing. Many nights he has returned from all-day and half the night demonstrations to burn the midnight oil, getting out homework. He often willingly passed up parties, dances, movies etc. Instead, he spent countless hours planning demonstrations, and attending negotiation meetings.

His horizon was soon to expand. Previously, his knowledge of police officers had been confined to the officer on the neighborhood beat. However, he was soon to learn how it felt to be arrested, booked, and jailed. He gained complete knowledge. And no wonder. During his five months in Baltimore, the sitdowner has stood at the bar of justice no less than 34 times. Charges included assault, obstructing free passage and trespassing. Three times he has been acquitted on charges of simple assault. He has also been dismissed on three "free passage charges" while five "trespassing on private property" counts have been dropped. Still pending are 23 trespassing cases. In each, the sitdowner requested a jury trial because "he intends to raise certain constitutional questions (which) can best be raised before a jury."

Among other factors that greatly aided the sitdowner during his brief stay in Baltimore include: His desire and ability to recognize and reject offers of help from glory seekers and selfish exploiters. The sitdowner developed a technique of detecting and shunting aside the exploiters. The sitdowner also conditioned himself to insults and disappointments. He had a deaf ear for the hecklers. Many times he found himself wondering if it's worth it. But he has remained convinced. His conscience and the urgency of the times tell Him: "You can't quit, until you sit. . . with complete equality."

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