

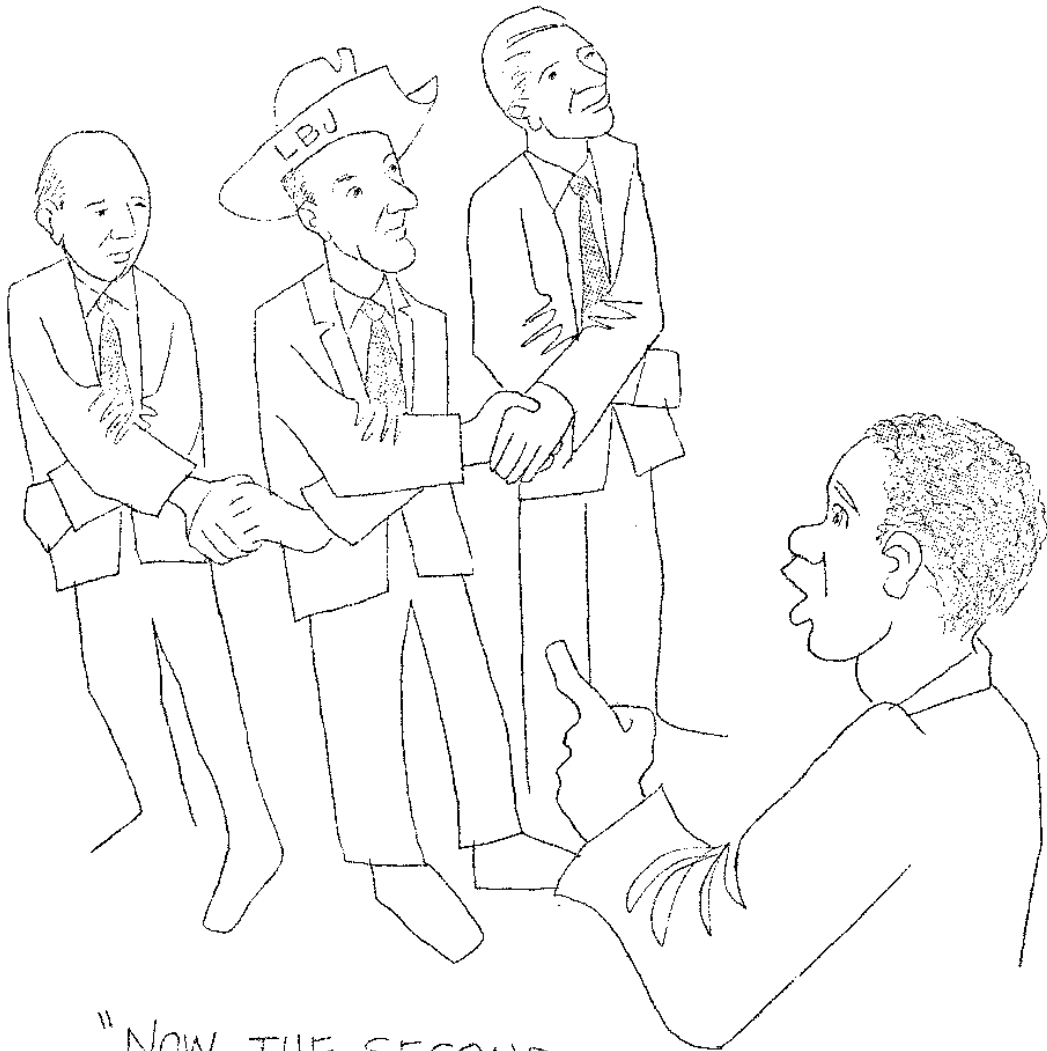
benton
county



"It's that freedom train a comin'; get on board, get on board."

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BEULAH MAE AYERS,
EDITOR



"NOW THE SECOND
VERSE GOES LIKE THIS....."

BOYCOTT OFF TEMPORARILY

At a special meeting Friday night, the section captains of the Citizens Club decided to temporarily suspend the boycott and request that parents send their children to school on Monday (tomorrow) as a way of testing the "good faith" of the white community.

During the week, many individual members of the Citizens Club were approached by lawyers from Ashland, and were told that if the Negroes sent their children back to school, they would get everything they wanted in terms of their demands about Old Salem.

At first, many parents felt that this was a bluff to get the children back to school. But at the section captains' meeting on Friday, it was felt that we will have to learn to live together with the white people and that we would be willing to take the "first" step by sending our children back to school. We shall then see if the white community will hold to its promises by giving in to the demands of the Citizens Club for Old Salem Attendance Center.

If, on the other hand, the demands continue to go unanswered, the boycott will be resumed. On Tuesday night, there will be a Citizens Club meeting at Hardaway where this will be discussed. The school committee hopes to have seen the Board of Education by this time, and they will report on what progress has been made.

At the Friday meeting, student representatives were present. They were opposed to stopping the boycott, but agreed to go along with the decision for the present, and then they will see what happens when the committee again meets with the board.

Hamer Speaks

On Sunday, March 14, Mr. Hamer McKenzie spoke at Samuels Chapel about the boycott and about "race relations" in Benton County. He said he was interested in tearing down the "iron curtain" that existed between the races and in keeping Benton County from becoming like Selma, Alabama.

Mr. McKenzie urged the parents to stop the boycott. He was asked whether or not the Board would give into their demands. He said that he did not know. He went on to say that a bi-racial committee had to be formed before the demands could be settled. He was then asked if a bi-racial committee ran the Ashland school (white). He said no.

Mr. McKenzie was asked if it was true that the school committee had been told to stay out of the white factory, cafes, and schools. He said, "They were never told to stay away from the factory."

He also said that students at Old Salem had a better opportunity than he had when he was going to a little old country school when he was a boy. He had to travel there by horseback. Sonny Reaves pointed out that his father didn't even have a horse to ride when he was going to school.

Mr. McKenzie was courteous to everyone. A good time was had by almost all.

Hamer Sues

Hamer McKenzie is suing Mrs. Burne Alexander, Miss Beulah Mae Ayers, and Miss Aviva Futorian for \$500,000. It is a libel suit.

FREEDOM SCHOOL REPORT

The second week of Freedom schools ended successfully with an additional school in operation and one ready to open if the boycott resumes.

The new school was opened at Harris Chapel by Mr. George Thompson and supervised by Miss Beulah Mae Ayers. Hebron was ready by Friday to open its doors, with Clay Batts serving as supervisor.

Freedom school enrollment reached to over 300 students during the week, as the boycott at Old Salem was between 75 and 90% effective.

Classes were often held outdoors except for Thursday and Friday when the weather turned cold. Students were given a variety of classes which included their regular school work, Negro history, civil rights, painting, clay modeling, and poetry writing. The fifth grade science class at Mt. Zion made a barometer out of an old coffee can. Many students were given text books that were sent down from the North.

The school with the highest enrollment was Hardaway with a daily attendance of from 90 to 115. The smallest school was Harris with 25 students.

Many thanks to the following parents for helping out with food or teaching classes: Mrs. Jim Perry, Mrs. Lucille Rooks, Mrs. Richards (Bruno's mother), Mrs. Nelma Tipler, Mrs. A. Z. Smith, Mrs. Laura Foster, Mrs. Francis Baird, Mr. Sutton Richards, Mrs. Flora Murdock, Mrs. Bernice Rose, Mr. Clardy, Mrs. Rebecca Dorse, Mrs. Sarah Robinson, Mrs. White (Edie Mae's mother), Mrs. Theris Rutherford, Mrs. Dessie White, Mrs. Leola White, Mrs. Earlene Reaves, Mrs. Clea Anna Tipler, Sis Strickland's aunt, Mr. Jack Yancey, Miss Crawford, Mrs. Estella Terry, Mrs.

Earlene Howery, Mrs. Henry Bostick, Mrs. Lorsie Jones, and Mrs. Sarah Washington. Many more helped, but we are unable to remember all their names.

What Next?

At the section captain's meeting Friday night, many things were discussed concerning the boycott and the future of the county.

It was decided that the Negroes should not elect a bi-racial committee until the Old Salem demands are settled. It was also felt that the Ashland school should be integrated as the most effective way that Negroes and whites will learn to live together.

Some felt that things will get worse before they get better. They pointed out that many Negro parents had been threatened with being kicked off their land if they did not put their children back in school. And many were told that they would be cut off welfare. Because of this kind of intimidation, the possibility of setting up a tent city in case of emergency was discussed. Some felt that York, Pennsylvania might help with this type of project if it became necessary.

And, of course, the biggest plans for the future concern voting rights--it is expected that Negroes will be voting by the next county elections: for school board, superintendent, sheriff, etc.

ASC News

by L. B. Paige

Deadline for signing up in the cotton domestic program, feed grain program, and release or request for cotton allotment is March 26. Go to the ASCS office.

How Did You Like Freedom School ?

I have learned something at freedom school that teachers don't teach at Old Salem. Willie B. Watkins is a very nice young man. He teaches us to spell and have arithmetic. Mr. Terrie gave us a test Friday. I believe I like freedom school better than Old Salem. It is not so hot and crowded. Every evening before we go home, we sing freedom songs and sweep the church.

Bettie Ruth Hunt

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I like what they teach us in freedom school. I am tired of doing what the white man says. I am ready to stand up for my rights and I am tired of saying yessir and nosir to the white man. I want my freedom. I think I will like going to freedom school very much.

Lue Ethel Bryson

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I am a teacher at Mt. Zion, and I teach the first grade. My students act as if they really want to learn. When I am trying to explain their lesson to them, they sit very quiet and listen, as if they are really interested in the lesson. I am trying to do the best of my ability in helping them all I can.

Minnie Washington

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Friday we had a lesson about brave people. I like freedom school. I like to read about brave people. I wish I never had to go back to Old Salem. My freedom school teacher's name is Freddie Mae Washington. Freedom school is very good. I learned about Greenland.

Imogene Reaves

* * * *

I like to go to freedom school. I hope to continue until Foster leaves Old Salem. I just realized how he disgraces our school. I wanted to quit Old Salem a long time ago, but now I have a chance to stay away a while, and I am so glad, because I don't see Foster and his wife up and down the hall. I like my freedom teacher. White people think we are not going to get what we want. We ARE going to get our freedom if it costs our lives.

Anice Murdock

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A better principal, better teachers, better attention--it's time to consider what we need. We need someone to teach us. And if we don't get Foster and his gang away from Old Salem we will be digging ditches all our lives. I am so glad Old Salem is boycotted, I don't know what to do. I have a chance to go to freedom school. I don't want to leave until we can get a better education at Old Salem.

Richard Murdock, Jr.

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When Lawrence James tells us to go in the back of the shop to work, he walks out and looks for us boys to do his work. I am in electricity and he doesn't explain to us like the teacher at freedom school. I am glad they are getting rid of that man.

Albert Jackson

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I like freedom school because we have more classes and study harder. My teacher is very understanding and I like my freedom teacher. At Old Salem we don't have as many classes. I like everything at freedom school.

Jenette Dorse

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When I Finish High School.....

I want to go around the world to see things and places. I don't want to stay in one place all the time. Why? Well, if I stay in one place all the time, I won't get a chance to see any of the world. My teacher asked me where would I live. I told him wherever I park my car.

By the way, I am going to get me a '59 volkwagon and have me plenty of women, but I'm not going to get married to no woman. I don't care how pretty she is. I am going to be a single man all my life so I can keep my money in my pocket.

And another thing: I am going to be a cigarette smoker and a beer drinker. But don't worry--I won't get drunk.

Richard Murdock, Jr

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When I finish high school I would like to go to college in California. After I finish college, I would like to get a job teaching. If I don't get a job teaching, I would like to be in the WAGs.

I don't want to go to college in Mississippi because I don't like the county. I've wanted to leave Mississippi for a long, long time. Now I think if I study hard, I will make it.

Leatrice Steward.

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After I finish high school, I'd like to go to college. I'd like to be a teacher--a very good teacher to all children in school. If I can't be a teacher, I'd like to be a nurse.

Hattie Pearl Jones

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Silly Billy

by Sylvia Elliott

Once there was a little boy. His name was Billy. His mother and father called him Silly Billy. One day Billy's father gave him a bag of popcorn, but Billy did not eat the popcorn. He planted the popcorn in the garden. His mother asked him why he planted the popcorn. Billy said, "I am planting popcorn so we will have plenty of popcorn--we will have bags and bags of popcorn."

What Will We Do?

by Jo Ann Dorse

What will we do--the Negro race of Benton County? The white man doesn't want us in their schools, cafes, or factories. We Negroes are tired of slavery. We've been under slavery for hundreds of years.

When a white boy or girl reaches the age of 16, they want you to call them Mr. and Miss.

The northern whites eat and go to school with Negroes, but southern whites don't know any better, because if they knew better, they would certainly do better.

The white man can't keep the Negro race down too muh longer. We are tired of being doormats for the white race.

Who needs Whom?

by Glossie Clardy

Some Negroes are afraid because the boss might make them move and they don't have any place to stay. But don't let them scare you--they need us to work their land, while we can make a living without picking and chopping cotton.

The Story Behind the March

by Ken Scudder, Rust College faculty

On Saturday, March 13, over 500 Negroes and whites marches and sang their way to the city hall of Holly Springs, where they read a militant 12 point petition to the mayor, demanding immediate and complete social, political, and economic justice. It was the first demonstration in the one hundred and twenty-eight year history of this small cotton town.

A committee of concerned citizens, led by Rev. Morlin Conoway, and by several faculty and staff members of Rust College, had for years been asking the city board of aldermen for a Negro representative on the school board and for traffic lights at the busy intersection next to the college. The aldermen heard their proposals but no action taken.

Rust students, led by Howard Spencer, in February integrated several local restaurants and produced the Council of Campus Organizations (COJO) at Rust, a student movement which invited participation from the more hesitant students at state-controlled Mississippi Industrial College and from Sims and St. Mary's, the two Negro high schools.

At about the same time, conversations around the stove at one of the local restaurants began to shift from local gossip to the subject of jobs. Caldwell Davis, a Negro businessman, pointed out that, although Marshall County was 70% Negro, most of these Negroes who had jobs could work only in Memphis. They formed the Holly Springs Improvement Association which began to send small groups of applicants out to the plants. They quickly became frustrated when they were continually referred back to the city employment agency, which, in turn, claimed that the applications were at the plant and shuttled them back to Metalcraft. It was an obvious run-around.

Rev. Conoway's group had been back to the city aldermen in February, and at that time had been given a "gentlemen's" agreement that a Negro would be appointed to the school board before the next term began. A month later they heard that they had been double-crossed: a "vacancy" on the board had been filled by a white man.

The shock and outrage produced by the Black Sunday in Selma led at first to despair. Then, as the nationwide wave of protest demonstrations grew, a few young people began to speak and plan openly the march on the city hall of Holly Springs.

Friday night, Asbury Church was overflowing with students, professors, ministers, farmers, GOFO workers, and the men of the Improvement Committee. All made clear their common dedication to freedom and to support the demonstration the next day.

When the demonstration was over, hundreds of exhausted, overjoyed marchers streamed back to Asbury. They had put aside their differences in age, background, and interests to express a common faith in human dignity. The tear gas and whips of Selma had not been a defeat. They had instead provided the spark which united Holly Springs and hundreds of other communities across the nation for the final push towards the inevitable victory over white racism.