

# **The Atlanta Sit-Ins**

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A Reacting Game in Development

The Atlanta Sit-Ins

By Robert Baker, Marni Davis, Curtis Jackson, Amani Marshall, Jared Poley, and Jeffrey Young

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## Lonnie King

Co-Chair, COAHR  
Morehouse student  
24 years old

You were born in southwest Georgia, to a family so poor that you weren't even at the bottom, as you describe it: you were "looking up at the bottom." Your mother moved to Atlanta, where she worked as a maid in white folks' homes for five dollars a day. You stayed behind until you were eight, to be raised by your grandfather, a man of powerful work ethic and deep religious faith. He sharecropped his whole life; you doubt he ever broke even. But he taught you how to be a good and honest person.

When he passed, you moved to Atlanta to stay with your mother. She was in the choir at Ebenezer Baptist Church, on Auburn Avenue. You joined the church, too, and soon you founded the Ebenezer Youth Organization. Your mother also steered you to the Butler Street YMCA, to make sure you were staying out of trouble while she worked long hours. Sometimes referred to as Atlanta's "Black City Hall," the Butler Street Y was a center of political and social life in the neighborhood. You were there so much that the manager eventually hired you for fifty cents a day, to help out and clean up. It gave you the opportunity to meet many of black Atlanta's movers and shakers. By the time you were a teenager, you knew the city's Negro leaders well, and they knew and liked you.

You graduated from David T. Howard High School, where you served as student body president, and went on to Morehouse. But poverty had followed your family from south Georgia to Atlanta; you couldn't afford to continue after your freshman year. So you joined the Navy in 1954. It was in the U.S. military that you first encountered virulent institutional racism, face to face. Despite the fact that you'd received the highest standardized test scores in your division, your commanding officers regularly assigned you to menial and janitorial tasks. It took a lot of pushing – and some help from one or two white officers who realized you'd been treated unfairly – but by 1957 you'd been promoted to staff sergeant.

Once your stint in the Navy was up, you returned to Morehouse. You joined the football team, playing first-string quarterback. An older student, a veteran, and a football star ... you were one of the most popular students in the Atlanta University schools. So when you read in the newspaper about the Greensboro Four, you knew you were in an excellent position to organize something similar here. Black students knew you, and the community's religious and political leaders knew you as well. You knew you needed a good writer to help lead this movement, so you and your friend Joseph Pierce tracked down a younger Morehouse student, Julian Bond. He came from an academic, intellectual home, and had worked as an intern at Time Magazine.

After your first student meeting – about twenty students showed up, mostly your friends from Morehouse – you were called into Dr. Mays's office. How did the college president know what you'd been up to? Were you in trouble? You, Joe, and Julian arrived at the office to find not

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only Dr. Mays, but the presidents of all of the schools at Atlanta University, as well as other student government leaders. The educators tried to get you to see their position. We support your desire to fight the evils of segregation and racism, they insisted, but you need to let the lawyers of the NAACP handle this for now. Your parents sent you here to get an education, not to start a revolution. One of the college presidents – Dr. James Brawley, of Clark College – even said that if you went downtown to sit-in, he would be embarrassed! You couldn't believe that he would say such an asinine thing.

But a few of the college presidents disagreed with their colleagues; clearly, they were themselves in conflict about strategy. Dr. Clement remained convinced that you should leave most of the action to the NAACP. But then he suggested: why don't you and other AU students write a manifesto, to explain your frustrations and intentions to the general public? He also offered to help raise the money to purchase space in local newspapers.

You realized that this was a smart strategic move on his part: why don't you and your friends take some time out to write an intellectual doctrine, rather than organize a direct action? But you took him up on his offer. You and Julian gathered some AU English majors – Charles Black, Morris Dylan, and Roslyn Pope – to write it. In the end, it was mostly Roslyn's doing; everyone knew that she was the smartest member of the committee, though she was too modest to show off. You brought it back to the presidents, who approved it. With the funds raised by Dr. Clement, it was printed in the Journal, the Constitution, and the Daily World, which, to your annoyance, demanded cash up front before they'd agree to print it.

You know that you and your new Committee on Appeal for Human Rights have started something important. But gathering steam, and members, is the most important thing right now. You recognize already that Spelman students will be the backbone of this protest, especially with Hershelle Sullivan as your co-chair. But there's more to it than that: your mother had predicted that the Spelman ladies would be eager to take part in your organization, since you're a football star. She was right! Plus, you sense that some of the male students of Morehouse, Clark, and Morris Brown are a little jealous of you. But women don't mind following a man. Just like a husband is the head of the house, you are the head of the student movement.

But you know that you are leading your fellow students to a potentially dangerous place, and asking them to adhere to nonviolence as a philosophy and a tactic. Will these students stay with you, even if whites get violent and the black establishment loses its nerve? What are they willing to sacrifice for freedom and justice?

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## COAHR FACTION ADVISORY

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COAHR members advocated for the immediate desegregation of Atlanta. Like other COAHR members, you seek an immediate solution to segregation and you are willing to actively demonstrate in support of civil rights. You are willing to march, to boycott segregated businesses, to write letters to officials or to the media, to organize your fellow students, and perhaps most dangerously, to directly protest segregation by initiating sit-ins and direct actions meant to force the hand of Atlanta business owners to desegregate their establishments.

Your goals include promoting a quick change in the racial status quo in Atlanta. You seek a rapid shift in race relations and the desegregation of Atlanta businesses. You should work with other members of COAHR (as well as like-minded people or members of SNCC, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and the SCLC, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference) to achieve the desegregation of Atlanta as rapidly as possible. You need to think strategically about how to achieve this goal, build coalitions with others, and carefully coordinate actions that are most likely to lead to the desegregation of Atlanta businesses. There are, of course, risks. You may be beaten or killed; your loved ones may lose their jobs, their homes or businesses, or even their lives. But you believe that the world must be transformed, and if the older generation won't lead the way, it is up to you to take charge.

## OBJECTIVES

**Lead the Atlanta Student Movement.** You are eager to stage sit ins like the four students of North Carolina A&T. Atlanta is home to the wealthiest black community and most famous Black colleges and universities in America. You should be providing leadership for black students all over the American south. Get working!

**Plan appropriately.** What kind of a plan will you have for sit ins? Who will participate? What are the rules? What do you do when the police show up? How do you respond to insults or threats or violence? What other kinds of tactics besides sitting down at lunch counters might you employ? Come up with a good plan!

**Build support.** The more support you have amongst students and Atlanta's Black community, the better your chances of success. Not only do you need people willing to put their reputations, livelihoods, and bodies on the line, but you need to make sure that a community network stands behind the activists. Remember, you don't just need activists and protestors. You need resources. You need political capital. You have allies in the white power structure (private and public) and in the white community.

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**Stay autonomous.** You had barely begun planning sit ins before you and other leaders were summoned by the presidents of the Atlanta University Center to meet with them and other luminaries of the Atlanta community. They convinced you that it would be best to make a public declaration, and that was how the Appeal for Human Rights was born. But don't let the adults (now styling themselves SALC, or the Student-Adult-Liaison-Committee) co-opt your movement. Their support and their connections might be important, even critical, to your success. But this is your movement.

## STRATEGY SUGGESTIONS

Prior to the sessions. Make a plan! You are taking on four hundred years of racism in North America. You are taking on the entire white power structure of Atlanta, Georgia, and maybe the whole South. You need to be able to articulate your goals, your story, be in command of all the facts, and have a legitimate strategy to win the hearts and minds of your fellow students. Speaking of which, what are the hearts and minds of your fellow students? What concerns them? Use this time to learn!

Session 1: Gain support for your plan. Be wary of SALC (the Student-Adult-Liaison-Committee), as you know they don't want you to upset the status quo. But hear them out--perhaps you can reach a compromise plan for direct action?

Session 2 and beyond: Be ready to react--if the first round of action did not impact segregation significantly, or if circumstances change, then you have to be ready to act, and maybe to change course.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Speech.** You and your fellow COAHR members must give one formal speech during either session 1 or session 2. You should coordinate and devise a strategy for negotiating with SALC and convincing the students to follow your strategy. Formally, you must write and deliver a speech during one of the first two sessions of the game. (Could be an op-ed for more players).

**Op-Ed.** At the conclusion of the game, write an op-ed describing your participation in the Atlanta Student Movement, your successes and your failures. Did you achieve everything you had hoped? How much of it was in your control?

## VICTORY CONDITIONS

You win automatically if Atlanta is entirely desegregated, from its schools to its churches, hospitals, municipal buildings and lunch counters.

You may win if Atlanta's schools and public facilities are desegregated, and some progress is made toward desegregating private facilities.



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You lose if you cede leadership in the Atlanta Student Movement to either more radical or more conservative voices.

## Relationship to Core Texts:

You were on the committee that drafted the Appeal for Human Rights (although Roselyn Pope was the author of the final statement). Principles of non-violent protest, jail no-bail, religious texts?? UN Dec of HR, Brown v. Board; UN dec on genocide; WEB Du Bois Souls of Black Folk, Plessy v Ferguson; Ghandi; Bandung declaration; african liberation; Fanon, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Aime Cesaire, Senghor, Boaz, Melville Herskovitts, New South Speech, Lumumba, Nkrumah, etc.

## Relationship to Big Ideas:

You are a proponent of **direct action**. The **litigation strategy** may have won *Brown v. Board of Education*, but as far as you can tell, schools are still segregated. How much longer are you going to wait around?

## Relationships with other people:

You should collaborate closely with other students, but be aware that some are still on the fence about your plans. Not everyone is as radical as you, so plan to build consensus and to rally other students to your point of view. Find other members of COAHR and work closely with them to coordinate strategy and tactics and to refine the details of your plan.

Be wary of **A. T. Walden** and **C. A. Scott**. They are lions in the community, but they are cozy with the establishment.

## Herschelle Sullivan

Co-Chair, COAHR  
Spelman Student  
22 years old

You were born in Atlanta, but you don't have many childhood memories there. As a preschooler, your family picked up and moved to Pittsburgh, where you grew up in a nice home. Your parents were educated and professional, and they expected that you would grow up to follow in their footsteps.

For college you returned to Atlanta, to attend Spelman College, where you resolved to study political science. You proved leadership in your class early, and were elected president of your freshman class. You liked Spelman, but some things about Spelman rankled you. Your dorm rooms had chaperones. You were required to wear stockings around campus, and no curlers or blue jeans were allowed in the dining hall. All students had to be in bed by 9:00, and you couldn't leave your dorm room until you had made your bed. Leaving campus required written permission from your parents, and even then you had to sign out and provide the name and address of the person you were visiting in the city. You were required to attend formal teas and learn how to navigate eating tiny sandwiches while wearing white gloves. What was Spelman supposed to be, a finishing school for the black bourgeoisie?

In 1958, you published a short allegorical story called "A Cowering Experience," in the Spelman Spotlight (the student newspaper). The story was set in the "Kingdom of Spielmon," where nothing was really as it seemed. The government pretended to be a benevolent democracy, but really was an oligarchy. Its manicured lawns and many guards were supposed to nurture, but ended up sheltering its people. One night, a subject of "Spielmon" snuck out, evaded the night watchman, and chanced upon a cat. Intrigued, she moved to stroke its fur, but it let out a mighty roar. It was a lion! The subject scurried back to "Spielmon," having endured such a "cowering experience." You were proud of your little satirical allegory, hoping it might provoke a little response. It provoked a big one. President Albert E. Manley himself called you into his office and reprimanded you. It was humiliating.

But Spelman was more than just white gloves and social graces. You were shocked by the savvy political science and history classes that you took where professors talked frankly about justice and truth. Professor Howard Zinn marched a group of Spelman students right down the street to the state legislature and into the visitor's gallery--the white section of the visitor's gallery. The speaker of the House stopped the floor debate. "We've got segregation in the state of Georgia!" he crowed, until Zinn took his students to the colored seats, where they stood (refusing to sit down as a polite means of protest).

Despite having offended President Manley, you applied for and won the prestigious Merrill Scholarship, endowed and named after Charles E. Merrill, the son of the founder of the Wall Street Meryl Lynch brokerage house. The scholarship was designated to fund study abroad. You

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won it, and studied at the Sorbonne and the University of Grenoble in France. It was thrilling. And humbling. You had highly educated parents and a top-notch education at Spelman, but the world-class scholars you encountered in cosmopolitan Paris opened you up to new ideas, new people, and new worlds.

Now you have returned to Atlanta, and to Spelman. You are thinking about graduate study, but also about the injustices that permeate American society. When the Greensboro Four hit the news in February, 1960, you knew you had to do something. You had heard that a young Morehouse man, Lonnie King, was trying to organize. Lonnie approached you and asked if you wanted to be part of the movement. Well, you were already organizing too. But never mind. You got to work making fliers and spreading the word. When you held your first meeting, about twenty students showed up. It was thrilling.

Then you were summoned to meet with President Albert E. Manley. It was a general summons, and you quickly learned that it was all the student leaders. You were less worried than some of your peers. After all, you had been down this road before. The meeting was larger than you expected. All of the college presidents were there. And most of them were opposed to your action. And who could be surprised? President Manley treated you like children and talked down to you like he was your father. "This is a lawyer's business," Manley said at the meeting. "And you will damage your reputations if you go trespassing and breaking laws. It's not respectable." Even worse, Dr. James Brawley of Clark College said that he would be embarrassed if Spelman women became common criminals. Embarrassed? Please.

You kept polite, but you were firm. Finally, Dr. Rufus Clement suggested that you write up a statement. "You owe it to the people of Atlanta," he said. Fine. You left the meeting, angry but proud that you had kept your position. So now you formed a new committee, the Committee on the Appeal for Human Rights. You were all supposed to write the document, but finally you handed it over to your friend Roslyn (Roz) Pope. It was printed in the Journal, the Constitution, and the Daily World. It's already making a splash.

You know that you and your new Committee on Appeal for Human Rights have started something important. But gathering steam, and members, is the most important thing right now. And you are aware that much of the organizing takes hard work, daily labor, and commitment. Men aren't great at that. They get distracted easily. Still, Lonnie is committed, and you admire his fire. Hopefully he respects your commitment and drive as well.

Now you all just have to decide: what to do next?

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## Relationship to Core Texts:

[Under Construction]

## Relationship to Big Ideas:

[Under Construction]

## Relationships with other people:

You should collaborate closely with **Julian Bond** and **Lonnie King**, but they can be a little overbearing at times. Julian is a son of privilege and Lonnie is, well, Lonnie. Don't let them drown out your voice! And don't forget the other students, the ones that you must convince to join your movement. Learn their stories. Bring them in.

The adults are mostly foreign to you. Learn about them. You are intrigued by the role **Ella Baker** has played—a powerful woman who has been so central to the movement. Try to get to know her!

## Roslyn Pope

Author, *Appeal for Human Rights*

Spelman Student

21 years old

You were born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, on Ashby Street (now Joseph E. Lowery Street), close to the Atlanta University Center. Your father worked a good job in the post office. Not many black folk worked as postal officers, and he counted himself fortunate.

Your days as a young child were carefree, in a tight-knit community. One of your first vivid memories is of your baptism. You were only four when the new pastor for Friendship Baptist Church arrived from Dallas, Texas, Maynard Jackson. Although you didn't know it at the time, he had been the first black man to run for the Dallas School Board. He lost, but his voter registration drives had made an impact in Dallas. Rev. Jackson was married to Irene Dobbs Jackson, daughter of the famous John Wesley Dobbs and professor of French at Spelman College. Rev. Jackson baptized you, but most of your fond memories are of playing with his children, mostly his son, Maynard Jackson, Jr.

Your parents cultivated your talents from the very start. You started playing the piano at age five, and by the time you were in high school, you were quite accomplished. It had been a long-time dream of yours to attend Oberlin College, with its fabled music conservatory. You were thrilled when you won a scholarship to attend, and then crestfallen when your father put his foot down and insisted you attend nearby Spelman. Dutifully, you did as told.

Spelman was warm and inviting, a good college dotted with the faces of people you had known growing up, both fellow students and faculty. You continued to study music, and you were also identified early as a leader. Your fellow classmates elected you president of the freshman class, then of the sophomore class, then the junior class. It was about this time that you were encouraged by your professors to apply for the Merrill Scholarship, endowed and named after Charles E. Merrill, the son of the founder of the Wall Street Meryl Lynch brokerage house. The scholarship was designated to fund study abroad. You won.

You designated Paris for your year abroad. To get to Paris, you boarded a passenger ship. It was exhilarating. The passengers were alternately English, French, and American, and all quite cosmopolitan. Your musical talents and impeccable manners won you instant popularity. The captain even invited you to perform at one of his cocktail parties, and many of the attendees came to you afterwards to get your mother's address, in order to write her letters of congratulations about her talented daughter.

Your year abroad was eye opening in every way. In Paris, there was no segregation. There was nobody telling you to go to the back of the bus, or denying you entry to a restaurant or music venue. Little Parisian children regularly saluted you with the respect reserved for adults. This invoked painful memories of young white children in Atlanta, sauntering into the post office and calling your father by his first name. So disrespectful.

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You adored Paris. You traveled too, to eight countries in all, taking in the sites and enjoying a country free of the daily humiliations of segregation. It was like seeing the world through a new set of glasses. Clearer, filled with possibilities.

You returned to Spelman for Fall semester, 1959, and found upon your return that you had been elected, in absentia, president of your senior class. But it wasn't until the following February, when the Greensboro Four made their splash, that you found an opportunity for leadership outside of the confines of the college. You were sitting in the campus drugstore having coffee when Lonnie King and Julian Bond approached you. They made some small talk, and you blew them off. Finally, Lonnie got around to the point: protesting segregation. "Do you want to be involved?" he asked. You looked him straight in the eye. "Yes," you replied.

Lonnie was clearly the fire in the engine. He had already been an agitator, and was already in trouble with the law when he started organizing. His efforts did not go unnoticed. The seven presidents of the colleges that made up Atlanta University summoned Lonnie, Julian, and the senior class presidents and vice-presidents of each campus, as well as another representative from each campus to meet with the presidents in late February, 1960. You were, of course, among them. It was terrifying. They talked sternly to you, telling you it was time to let the adults take over. The job of winning civil rights was a long struggle, they said. The NAACP has lawyers, and we have standing with the business community and the mayor. They reminded you that your parents sent you here for education, not for revolution. If you disrupt people's everyday lives, you will be trespassing. You will go to jail. You might be attacked. It will threaten all of our work, all of our racial progress. Think of your futures, they implored.

But some of the college presidents seemed more sympathetic. They were not all of the same mind. Finally, Dr. Rufus Clement, the president of Atlanta University, said that he wished you would leave this up to the NAACP, but if you were committed, you at least owed it to the people of Atlanta to write a manifesto, to explain your frustrations and intentions. He even offered to help raise the money to purchase space in local newspapers. You all agreed, and the meeting adjourned.

Writing anything by committee is hard, if not impossible. Finally, Lonnie King turned to you and said "You're an English major. Can you write it?" You were not, nor were you ever, an English major. But you agreed to write it. And, in the end, your draft was accepted by the Committee on the Appeal for Human Rights (COAHR) with very little revision. The presidents agreed to help disseminate it.

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You **win automatically** if Atlanta is entirely desegregated, from its schools to its churches, hospitals, municipal buildings and lunch counters.

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# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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You **lose** if you cede leadership in the Atlanta Student Movement to either more radical or more conservative voices.

## Relationship to Core Texts:

[Under Construction]

## Relationship to Big Ideas:

[Under Construction]

## Relationships with other people:

You should collaborate closely with **Julian Bond** and **Lonnie King**, but they can be a little overbearing at times. Julian is a son of privilege and Lonnie is, well, Lonnie. Don't let them drown out your voice! And don't forget the other students, the ones that you must convince to join your movement. Learn their stories. Bring them in.

The adults are mostly foreign to you. Learn about them. You are intrigued by the role **Ella Baker** has played—a powerful woman who has been so central to the movement. Try to get to know her!

## Julian Bond

COAHR Member  
Morehouse Student  
21 years old

You were born in Nashville, Tennessee on January 14, 1940. Your father had just been named president of Fort Valley State College in Georgia, but you have no real memory of ever living there. When you were five, your father became the president of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and you all moved there.

You have happy memories of your childhood, which was almost entirely spent on the Lincoln University campus. Lincoln was often called the “Black Princeton,” and you have memories of meeting Albert Einstein, and of sitting on Paul Robeson’s knee. Your next door neighbor was Joseph Hill, the university dean. You never saw him in anything other than a three-piece suit (or so you remember), and he carried with him a powerful *gravitas*. You idolized him.

It was only as you started your education that you became aware of just how different your childhood was. You went to elementary in a one-room schoolhouse, with one teacher. There were white and black students there, but you were also conscious that just down the street was another schoolhouse that had once been reserved for the black students. Your father had taken a lead role in convincing the school board to integrate, although he never bragged about his service. Your father was fond of saying that advantages come with debts, and he regarded any work he did to improve the world as dispensing with that debt. In fact, he had helped do the research on several lawsuits over integration, which would all be consolidated into *Brown v. Board of Education* and decided in 1954.

But integrated or not, the one-room schoolhouse in rural Pennsylvania was not a great education. After all, you were surrounded in the afternoons and weekends by adults with Ph.D.s, having serious discussions about physics, literature, history, and current events. And so, your parents sent you to the George School, a Quaker boarding school. Your preparation was so poor that you had to repeat your freshman year. But the school made a profound impact on you. The Quakers emphasized service. Everyone was required to work in service to the school, which meant that everyone by turns would find themselves working on the grounds, or in the kitchen. At meal times, you were regularly served by rich white students. You in turn served them. The teachers demanded moral courage, reminding students that (as the Quaker George Fox was reputed to have said) it was their duty to speak truth to power.

You were also the only black student at the school. The only other black people in the school was one teacher (you were never his student) and a couple who worked in the kitchen. The other students didn’t seem to notice, but you didn’t feel entirely welcome there.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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By the time you were ready for college, your father was fairly adamant that you go to Morehouse. You liked the idea, but were secretly terrified of going south. Every week it would seem that you were reading about some atrocity that happened in the South. You had the impression that it was like that every day. But you swallowed your fear and headed to Atlanta.

You settled in almost immediately at Morehouse. What an amazing place! It was diverse. There were students from all over the country. There were rich kids and poor kids. You were quite surprised to find young men from the rural south who were smarter than you, despite your education.

All and all, it's been an education on every front. You have been excited by your studies, you are on the varsity swim team, you founded a student literary journal called *The Pegasus*, and interned for *Time* Magazine.

Then, the Greensboro Sit Ins happened. It was all the students could talk about. Lonnie King approached you. He was a brash fellow, one with a firm sense of mission and a desire to really change things. What should we do? He said. It wasn't really a question. You started talking to people, and held a student meeting. Shortly after, you were called into Dr. Mays's office. Your heart raced. Mays is an uncompromising advocate for equality, but he's a pretty domineering man, and you do not want to be in trouble. You, Lonnie, and Lonnie's friend Joe Pierce (the original three organizers) arrived in his office to find not only Dr. Mays, but the presidents of all of the schools at Atlanta University, as well as other student government leaders. The educators tried to get you to see their position. We support your desire to fight the evils of segregation and racism, they insisted, but you need to let the lawyers of the NAACP handle this for now. Your parents sent you here to get an education, not to start a revolution. Mostly the presidents seemed concerned that directly defying the law and trespassing on private property was going to retard racial progress.

But a few of the college presidents disagreed with their colleagues; clearly, they were themselves in conflict about strategy. Dr. Clement finally suggested: why don't you and other AU students write a manifesto, to explain your frustrations and intentions to the general public? He also offered to help raise the money to purchase space in local newspapers.

Sure. Lonnie's convinced it was a delaying tactic. But you all agreed that you had more to lose by alienating the administration just to concede the point. So you put together a committee and started writing it. You brought it back to the presidents, who approved it. With the funds raised by Dr. Clement, it was printed in the *Journal*, the *Constitution*, and the *Daily World*, which, to your annoyance, demanded cash up front before they'd agree to print it.

You know that you and your new Committee on Appeal for Human Rights have started something important. But gathering steam, and members, is the most important thing right now. It's as if your whole life has prepared you for this moment. Still, you may be leading people to a potentially dangerous place. It is you that has had advantages, as your father said, so it is you that has the debt. Still, it seems that nothing will ever happen unless everyone gets together and acts.

Now you all just have to decide: what to do next?

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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## COAHR FACTION ADVISORY

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COAHR members advocated for the immediate desegregation of Atlanta. Like other COAHR members, you seek an immediate solution to segregation and you are willing to actively demonstrate in support of civil rights. You are willing to march, to boycott segregated businesses, to write letters to officials or to the media, to organize your fellow students, and perhaps most dangerously, to directly protest segregation by initiating sit-ins and direct actions meant to force the hand of Atlanta business owners to desegregate their establishments.

Your goals include promoting a quick change in the racial status quo in Atlanta. You seek a rapid shift in race relations and the desegregation of Atlanta businesses. You should work with other members of COAHR (as well as like-minded people or members of SNCC, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and the SCLC, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference) to achieve the desegregation of Atlanta as rapidly as possible. You need to think strategically about how to achieve this goal, build coalitions with others, and carefully coordinate actions that are most likely to lead to the desegregation of Atlanta businesses. There are, of course, risks. You may be beaten or killed; your loved ones may lose their jobs, their homes or businesses, or even their lives. But you believe that the world must be transformed, and if the older generation won't lead the way, it is up to you to take charge.

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**Lead the Atlanta Student Movement.** You are eager to stage sit ins like the four students of North Carolina A&T. Atlanta is home to the wealthiest black community and most famous Black colleges and universities in America. You should be providing leadership for black students all over the American south. Get working!

**Plan appropriately.** What kind of a plan will you have for sit ins? Who will participate? What are the rules? What do you do when the police show up? How do you respond to insults or threats or violence? What other kinds of tactics besides sitting down at lunch counters might you employ? Come up with a good plan!

**Build support.** The more support you have amongst students and Atlanta's Black community, the better your chances of success. Not only do you need people willing to put their reputations, livelihoods, and bodies on the line, but you need to make sure that a community network stands behind the activists. Remember, you don't just need activists and protestors. You need resources. You need political capital. You have allies in the white power structure (private and public) and in the white community.

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You should take the time to get to know the other students, too. What are their stories? How can you convince them to become involved? You are aware that you are regarded with suspicion by some. After all, you are from the North, and you grew up on a college campus. You have enjoyed a level of privilege and comfort that many of your classmates have not.

**Dr. Benjamin Mays** may well think of you as the most pliable of all the students. You are, after all, of a similar background. Your literary talents have earned the attentions of **C. A. Scott** as well, so be cautious, as you know he is not a fan of disrupting business in any way.



## Morris Dillard

COAHR Member  
Morehouse Student  
21 years old

You were born and raised in Luverne, Alabama, a small farming community in central Alabama. Your family was poor, but so was almost everyone else. Your earliest memories were of the backbreaking work, and the ways in which you and your friends amused yourself, hunting and fishing, exploring, and otherwise dabbling. Your playmates were black and white, but your parents let you know early on what your place was in that heavily segregated world. Your father was a model in that way. You admired, as a young boy, how everyone treated him so decently and politely. What you didn't know, was that he knew exactly how to survive in the segregated world of Alabama.

You were a good student all through your early schooling, a quick study and naturally curious. You graduated high school at the top of your class. Morehouse College recruited you with a partial scholarship, and your parents agreed to help you with the rest.

You never told anyone, but you were terrified of leaving Luverne and going to the big city. You had to take a bus to Montgomery and change to a Greyhound to get to Atlanta. Exiting the bus was bewildering. So many people, everyone in such a rush. You boarded a city bus and, not even thinking, took a seat near the front. The driver stopped the bus, turned around and cursed you out, in front of everyone. It was your first experience with the violence of segregation. It was humiliating.

Morehouse was a special place. You--all the students--felt protected there, kept away from the harsh realities of segregation that lay just outside the college walls. The classes were hard, but you continued to do well. Even more compelling was President Benjamin Mays, whose persistent and passionate demand that Morehouse men stand tall and act at all times with dignity and self-respect was transformative. Without even knowing it, or maybe just half knowing it, you had been living in a cage. President Mays wanted you all to see it clearly for what it was, and to liberate yourself from it. But President Mays was mindful of the real world. There was a cost, he reminded everyone, to confronting social injustice. You haven't forgotten that lesson.

You sought for and won the Merrill Scholarship, endowed and named after Charles E. Merrill, the son of the founder of the Wall Street Meryl Lynch brokerage house. The scholarship was designated to fund study abroad. You designated Paris for your year abroad, although you started your trip by traveling all over the continent.

But you fell in love with Paris, with its cobblestoned streets, its monuments, its grandeur. You lived with a kind French family there and made many friends. You had never felt so welcome, so free. No one told where to sit on a bus, or told you to keep your eyes down, or turned you out from a restaurant or anywhere else. You attended the University of Paris with students from Europe, the Mediterranean, and North America and were never treated any differently. Again, you excelled in your studies, and you left Paris with a certificate for having taken so many classes in literature, political science, and history, all in French.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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When you returned in the fall of 1959, you learned that Morehouse would accept the certificate and apply it to your transcript. You were almost done with your French major, which meant that you could take fewer classes your senior year. Looks like you'll have some time on your hands.

It was early February, 1960, when the Greensboro Four made headlines. There was some buzz on campus about it, but, well frankly, not a lot. You didn't think much of it, at least not until Lonnie King came to you. You and Lonnie had been friends for some time. You had had classes together, and you had connected early on. Lonnie asked you what you thought of the sit ins. You said you hadn't thought much about it at all. *This is our chance*, Lonnie said to you. Or he said something like that to you. And then it struck you. After earning your way into college, only to be yelled at by a bus driver; after spending a year free in Paris, only to return to a country that required you to behave like a second-class citizen. *This is our chance*.

You joined Lonnie's team. More joined. Your classmate Julian Bond, Spelman sisters. You worked to get more people organized. You prepared. Your efforts did not go unnoticed. The seven presidents of the colleges that made up Atlanta University summoned Lonnie, Julian, and the senior class presidents and vice-presidents of each campus, as well as another representative from each campus to meet with the presidents in late February, 1960. There they attempted to dissuade you all from organizing active sit-ins. Such disruptions, they told you, threatened racial progress. They would foment violence. *Think of your futures*, they implored.

You have to admit, that got you. Your parents risked everything to get you to Morehouse. What if you participated in a sit-in and were arrested? What if they printed your name in the paper? What if word got to Luverne? What would happen to your family? President Mays had taught you liberation, but he also counseled pragmatism. Now you are torn.

In a last-ditch attempt to smooth out potential conflicts, the president of Atlanta University, Rufus Clement, convinced the students that they at least owed it to the entire city of Atlanta to make a statement and publish it. You and the other students couldn't really disagree with it, and so you formed a committee. You decided to name the statement the "Appeal for Human Rights." Roz Pope wrote it. The presidents agreed to help disseminate it.

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**Dr. Benjamin Mays** has been a mentor to you. He has been your inspiration, especially in his unrelenting condemnation of the evils of segregation.

You don't know **A. T. Walden** personally, but you can't wait to meet him. He's a legend, and you want to learn about him.

## Rev. William Holmes Borders

Chairman, Student-Adult Liaison Committee  
Pastor, Wheat Street Baptist Church  
55 years old

You were only eight years old on the day the Lord found you. Your father was a preacher at Swift Creek Baptist Church, a deliverer of enthralling sermons and captivating stories; your mother was his fervently religious helpmeet. Your family, though grindingly poor, was a source of Christian fellowship and faith for the community you grew up in, just outside of Macon. That day, though you were just a little boy, the joyful knowledge grew in your heart that you had been called to serve God any way you could, just like your father. You would be, as you'd come to think of yourself as an adult, a "handyman for the Lord."

You've never wavered, despite the many obstacles thrown in your path. Your mother died in 1917, when you were 12; your father struggled with debilitating physical ailments that kept him from work; your rural community thinned out as farm folks moved to the city, shrinking the size of Swift Creek's congregation. To help support your family, after you graduated from high school you took a job as a substitute mail carrier at the Macon post office. Half the money you earned, you gave to your father – and you saved the other half, until you had squirreled away enough to finance two years of college.

You enrolled at Morehouse College in Atlanta, but you ran out of funds after your sophomore year. Determined to finish what you'd started, you continued to attend classes and do all of the assigned work. Dr. Samuel Archer, a dean at Morehouse and former football coach, took note of your tenacity. He convinced John Hope, Morehouse's president, to let you graduate as long as you promised to pay back your debt to the college. He also helped you apply for a scholarship to a theological seminary up north, in Chicago. There, you developed an interest in "social gospel" theology: true Christian salvation was impossible, you came to believe, without the eradication of social and economic injustice.

After you received your Master's degree in Theology from Northwestern University, Morehouse invited you to come back to teach. You were eager to return. Atlanta felt like home, and your new bride, Julia Pate, had secured a teaching job at Spelman. But then Wheat Street Baptist Church came calling. One of the oldest black congregations in Atlanta, Wheat Street's pastors had always been active in political and civic rights struggles. In 1937, you became their head pastor. You immediately undertook an outreach effort in the poor and working-class neighborhoods surrounding the church, encouraging folks to attend on Sunday regardless of the condition of their clothes. You even sought out potential new members in bars and pool halls! Some church elders disliked your community service to the disreputable, but you were committed to their salvation, too. And besides, church membership was down; new members meant more dues.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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Your unconventional methods, and your dynamic oratory, quickly gained attention. In 1940, you were offered weekly airtime on a local radio station. Every Sunday, you spoke to an audience of both blacks and whites about a range of political and social issues, including Jim Crow and voting rights. Soon, you were in direct conversation with Mayor Hartsfield, who often boasted of Atlanta's "progressive" approach to race relations.

By the mid-1950s, you had established yourself as one of Atlanta's most vital black leaders. You had helped to spearhead black voter registration efforts, and you'd led a large caravan of protesters to a small town outside of Atlanta, to publicly decry a recent lynching. You'd grown Wheat Street's membership and coffers, renovating its sanctuary space and building a new community center that offered day care for working parents, a credit union for members, and a medical clinic for all who needed care. But the battle against segregation in the South was building in strength and pressure, and there was so much more to be done. Martin King, the son of one of your rival pastors on Auburn Avenue, had taken up the fight from his pulpit in Montgomery, Alabama, helping to lead that city's black community in a boycott of their segregated public transit system. (You remember young Martin when he was a Morehouse student, sitting in your congregation and avidly watching you preach; Daddy King didn't like that at all, but you didn't mind, even when Junior emulated your style in his own preaching.)

In 1956, Montgomery's desegregation efforts won a legislative victory at the highest level: in *Browder v. Gayle*, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed a lower court decision that segregation in Alabama's public transportation system was unconstitutional. By the end of the year, 21 other southern cities had integrated their buses – but not Atlanta. So you organized the "Love, Law, and Liberation" movement, hoping to challenge Georgia's public transit segregation laws with a *Browder* test case. You and twenty fellow pastors boarded a bus, claimed seats in the "whites only" section, and refused to move. Governor Marvin Griffin, a committed segregationist, blamed "out of state agitators" for your action. Little did he know that you had planned this all with Mayor Hartsfield, who regarded integration of the buses as inevitable but hoped to avoid the disorder and bad press that Montgomery had suffered. Once your test case had been set in motion, you discouraged other Atlanta Negroes from following suit; we must comply with the current law, you insisted, until the courts have ruled. It wasn't until 1959 that the courts ruled that Atlanta could not segregate city buses without violating riders' constitutional rights.

Though it took two years, you are confident that your strategy was right: take measured, strategic action; leverage alliances within the biracial coalition; adhere to non-violent tactics; and maintain black solidarity. But today's Negro youth are increasingly impatient, though with good reason. You've read their "Appeal for Human Rights," and you admire it deeply. In fact, you penned a manifesto of support, titled "An Endorsement in Support of Human Dignity" and signed by yourself and more than a dozen other black pastors, businessmen, and political leaders. "We join the students," you wrote, in asking that the city respect the actions of citizens "who peacefully assert their rights." You know, however, that some of these students will want to move faster, and might lose patience with the process. They are not thrilled about the creation of the Student-Adult Liaison Committee, which you lead; they know that it represents the concerns of the city's black elders, more than it does their own.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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If you try to hold them back, they might stop listening to you; but if you let them go at their own speed, they might rupture the biracial coalition that is so crucial to the cause. How can solidarity be maintained, and progress be made, under these circumstances?

## SALC FACTION ADVISORY:

The Student-Adult Liaison Committee (SALC) was an informal group that attempted to mediate between the old guard leadership and the student leadership in 1960. As a group, you are committed to desegregation. You are, however, alarmed by the aggressive nature of direct confrontation. The students in Greensboro, North Carolina may have won a quick victory, but you know that things are not going to go so well in, for instance, Birmingham, Alabama.

And Atlanta is different. This has been the epicenter of black cultural life in the American South for a half century. It has also been a model for race relations. Yes, the city is still segregated. But it is also home to the wealthiest black community in the world. Black people vote in Atlanta. They have the ear of the mayor. The white community is committed to peace and prosperity, and anything that will keep business moving, and so are you. Your community needs jobs, housing, and municipal services. The Atlanta Way is to do things bi-racially and peacefully. You will want to preserve that.

The students think differently, but they are young. They have no idea what the South was like before World War II (some of them weren't even born when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor!) and how far things have come. The students say you are going to slow, but you know what direct action can achieve if used judiciously. After all, you were among the generation that bravely cast the first votes, picketed to integrated the Atlanta Police Force, and won housing concessions from Mayor Hartsfield. You may need to remind the students of the gains you have brought the city.

You are also concerned that some of the students are just plain ambitious. Reckless sit-ins and picketing carries risks. Student demonstrators may be beaten or killed. The white business community may abandon the Atlanta Way under pressure from virulent white supremacists. The Ku Klux Klan may attack the black community as a whole. The students seem blithely unaware of the potential consequences. Perhaps they should spend more time studying, and less time stirring up trouble.

## OBJECTIVES

**Preserve the Atlanta Way.** You hate segregation. You have fought against segregation your whole life. But you also remember when there were no black cops, the KKK had free reign, and no one could get an audience in City Hall. There has been progress. Real progress. You had to take to the streets and march when it was necessary, but you were smart. You built relationships with white business and political leaders, and the result is a wealthy, well-



# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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educated, and respectable black community. You must remind students that direct confrontation may imperil the gains you have made.

**Desegregate the schools!** You are very close to making Atlanta the national model for peaceful school desegregation--a testament to the power of the "Atlanta Way." You know that Mayor Hartsfield, and the president of the Chamber of Commerce, Ivan Allen, Jr., desperately want this too. Use your skill and power to broker a deal so that direct action doesn't imperil school desegregation!

**Support a litigation strategy.** When you were in college, every political and judicial officer in the country believed that segregation was natural and lawful and perfectly in concert with the Fourteenth Amendment. The NAACP went to court to point out the contradictions of this policy, and in 1954, they convinced the Supreme Court of the United States that segregation violated the Fourteenth Amendment. This is a proven strategy. Convince the students to use litigation to target "state action" segregation.

**Protect the students.** You admire the fire of young students, but you cannot forget that their parents have entrusted the college administration with their safety. By engaging in direct action, they are not just imperiling the Atlanta Way, they may also be unwittingly putting themselves in jeopardy. Use all of your powers to broker deals and convince them to avoid provoking a violent or destructive response.

## STRATEGY SUGGESTIONS

**Prior to the sessions.** Coordinate with your fellow members of SALC, so that you can firm up your arguments. Prepare a plan to present to the students that will satisfy their desire for stronger action, but will follow the traditional tactics of the NAACP.

**Session 1:** Moderate the radicals amongst the students. You already know that you can't stop direct action, but you can channel it. Come up with a plan for the students that will help them express their righteous anger but will also keep them safe.

**Session 2:** Show the students that they are having an impact and keep them on the right path!

## SPECIAL POWERS

**Direct Line to Hartsfield.** You have a direct line to the mayor, who can help you negotiate with the white power structure of Atlanta. He can also help you get students out of jail, or arrange for police protection...if he is willing.

**Publish.** You are something of a celebrity. You hosted a regular radio show back in 1940 that was widely listened to in both the white and black communities. If you want to author an op-ed piece for wide distribution, there is a very strong chance that it will be syndicated in many papers.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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## ASSIGNMENTS

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**Op-Ed.** At the conclusion of the game, write an op-ed describing the course of the Sit ins from your perspective. How did the protests play out? Did intervening events change the course of history? Were you able to exert some leadership? How much of the Atlanta Student Movement were you able to influence?

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## Relationship to Core Texts:

[Under Construction]

## Relationship to Big Ideas:

[Under Construction]

## Relationships to Other People:

## Albert E. Manley

President, Spelman College  
52 years old

You have been an educator of young Negroes for three decades, and the president of Spelman College, the nation's most prestigious center of higher education for Negro girls, since 1953. Your academic credentials include a Master's degree from Columbia University, and a Ph.D. from Stanford University's School of Education. You are committed to the education of these young women, and to their development as socially responsible citizens. But the actions of a few of your students strike you as irresponsible, even dangerous, despite their honorable intentions.

Your parents were as committed to your education as you are to that of your young charges. Migrants from their native Jamaica to Honduras before you were born, they sent you abroad for your schooling. You graduated from high school in Asheville, North Carolina in 1926, and went on to a black liberal arts college in Charlotte, where you majored in physics and math. You then returned to Asheville, where you became an English teacher – and soon the principal – at the only high school for blacks in all of western North Carolina. You left the South for graduate work, but North Carolina pulled you back again. Between 1946 and 1953, you served as the Inspector of Colored Schools in the state's Department of Public Instruction, and as the Dean of Arts and Sciences at North Carolina College for Negroes.

You came to Atlanta, and to Spelman, in 1953. All of the presidents of Spelman preceding you were white and female; as a black man, you represent a new era at the college. Upon arrival, you restructured the administration and revised the processes for granting tenure to faculty. Today, the college is organized more like other liberal arts colleges, and offers programs like Study Abroad, which you instituted. You have also established excellent working relationships with the leadership of Atlanta's other Negro colleges, and you regularly speak from the pulpit at the churches along Auburn Avenue. You are all in the fight against segregation and Jim Crow together.

But you know that the battle against white supremacy will require patience and careful strategy. Thanks to the legal tactics of the NAACP, the Supreme Court has already begun to open economic and educational opportunities to black southerners, though intransigent whites are working hard to obstruct these efforts. The worst thing Atlanta's Negroes could do, you believe, is to behave in ways that exacerbate this conflict and close off potential lines of communication between Negroes seeking justice and whites of good will. Your mission is to educate reasonable young people, whose actions are motivated by the pursuit of truth and Christian principles. They also must be measured and respectable in their actions – a necessity, especially, for young black women. You recognize that in a society that devalues them, the consequences can be dire, and life-ruining, if they deviate from respectable ladylike behavior.

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So you are alarmed by recent inklings that some of your students are chafing against Spelman's strict rules of conduct. A few years ago, Herchelle Sullivan, one of the college's star students, wrote an allegorical fable about the land of "Spielmon" in the student newspaper. This "anachronistic kingdom," as she described it, oppressed all of its subjects. It so angered you when you read it that you summoned her to your office to scold her for her negative attitude. But now others, too, are pushing back against Spelman's standards, especially when it comes to political action. They're talking about sit-ins! You are proud of them for seeking justice, and you want them to be a part of the fight against segregation; but their primary purpose at Spelman is to get an education, and you fear that political activism will take them away from their studies. (You are especially annoyed with Howard Zinn, the historian you hired a few years ago ... turns out he's rather lead his students into the political fray than teach them history. Even worse, you think he might be a Communist.)

On this, you and your fellow college presidents agree: these sit-ins can only do more harm than good. They're rebellious, they're dangerous, and they threaten to further alienate whites from the cause of racial justice. You have a responsibility to your students' parents to protect their daughters from harm – and a responsibility to all American Negroes to help the movement for civil rights keep its steady course to victory.

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## SPECIAL POWERS

**Discipline!** You have the power to discipline students from your university who do not conduct themselves appropriately on campus or in public. You can put individual students on probation, suspend, or expel them. These are extreme remedies, however, and you run the risk of a backlash if you use them. Keep in mind that students ought to have fair warning, so it is best to announce a disciplinary policy regarding public behavior prior to disciplining individual students.

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## Relationship to Core Texts:

[Under Construction]

## Relationship to Big Ideas:

[Under Construction]

## Relationships to Other People:

## Donald Lee Hollowell

Attorney  
43 years old

You were not born a child of the South. You were born in Wichita, Kansas, in 1917, the third of four children. Your parents were college educated and savvy. They moved you frequently while looking for opportunity in the midwest. You attended integrated schools and, for the most part, was shielded from the worst of Jim Crow America. Your first experience with the painful realities of segregation came when your integrated high school basketball team was returning from a game in Fredonia, Kansas. Your team stopped for dinner at the Greenwood Hotel and ate in the dining room. All except you. You were served at the chopping block in the kitchen. The humiliation still burns you.

But then again, you always had a fierce sense of right and wrong. You hated punishment, even by your parents' hands, if you felt it unjust. When your father told you to quit your senior year of high school to take a job and help support the family, you were angry, but understood his reasons (it was 1935, the height of the Great Depression). You joined the Army and sent your paychecks home. In 1938 you received an honorable discharge and were accepted to Lane College, Tennessee, on a football scholarship.

Lane College was a revelation. You were the starting quarterback on the football team, editor of the student newspaper, a star on the track and basketball teams, and president of your freshman, sophomore, and junior class. But for all the glories at Lane, the realities of the Jim Crow south overwhelmed you. Segregation was a daily exercise in the kind of humiliation that you had only occasionally tasted in Kansas.

You rejoined the Army before you finished college, completing officer training and starting a European tour during World War II as a second lieutenant. You rather liked the officer training (leadership had always come naturally to you) but disliked the segregated Army facilities in Georgia, where you completed your training. There were, at least, other black soldiers there, and at a social mixer at Fort Benning, you met Louise Thornton. She was a smart and exciting woman who managed the Apex Beauty School in Atlanta. You were married before you left for Europe.

After you returned to the United States in 1946, you returned to Lane College and finished your college education. That year, you represented Lane College at the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC). SNYC had been founded a decade earlier by black intellectuals and activists like W. E. B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, and Benjamin E. Mays. It was electrifying. It was also a call to action. You came out absolutely determined to fight segregation any way possible.

After graduating magna cum laude from Lane, you enrolled in Loyola Law School in Chicago. You worked your way through, first by taking a job at the postal office. It was there where you learned that you had been investigated by the FBI as a subversive, largely because of your



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attendance at SNYC in 1946. The thought burned you: how could your government question your patriotism after you had risked your life in Europe?

You graduated law school and moved to Georgia, where you were immediately recruited to work with the NAACP field office and were called to the Georgia Bar in 1952. You found a great mentor in A. T. Walden, one of Auburn Avenue's most prominent attorneys, and a real legend in the struggle for political and civil rights.

You made your mark on the legal community in 1954 with your defense of Willie Nash, a poor black man charged with the capital crime of murdering a white man and raping a white woman. It was precisely the kind of accusation that had caused hundreds of men to be lynched in Georgia (and thousands in the South) between 1880 and 1950.

But you were determined to save him. You prepared meticulously, and were ready when the prosecutor brought what he believed would be an easy conviction to the jury. When the prosecutor referred to one of his own witnesses using a racial slur, you rose immediately and demanded a mistrial. After your eloquent argument, the presiding judge ruled that "the law is zealous of not injecting the race question, especially when a man is on trial for his life," and declared a mistrial. The prosecutor was stunned. The case was retried, but you cornered the prosecution's witnesses, pointing out the contradictions in their testimony and revealing the entire case to be flimsy. In the end, an all-white jury found Willie Nash not guilty.

The Willie Nash case made you a star. You took over the cases challenging segregation at the University of Georgia. When the state of Georgia instituted a sham proceeding against the NAACP designed to get its membership list, you defended the organization before the racist (the notoriously racist) Fulton County Municipal judge Durwood T. Pye. Judge Pye threatened you with contempt for your defense, but you held firm. It infuriated the racist judge and, at least based on the gossip in the legal community, humiliated him. That makes you smile.

In the wake of Brown v. Board of Education (1954), you have also taken on the case challenging segregation in Atlanta schools. That case is pending right now, but it looks like you are on the road to victory. Granted, the events in Little Rock, Arkansas are enough to fill you with dread. Desegregation may be the goal, but you'd rather not have to do it at bayonet-point.

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## SPECIAL POWERS

**Legal help.** If students are arrested, you can represent them in court. You could be the difference between their simply being arrested and having a criminal record. Students may well seek you out for this service without you offering it.

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[Under Construction]

## Relationship to Big Ideas:

[Under Construction]

## Relationships to Other People:

## Mr. A. T. (Austin Thomas) Walden, Esq.

Lawyer  
76 years old

You were born on April 12, 1885 in Fort Valley, Georgia. Your earliest memories are of picking cotton in the fields, and of being sick. A lot. It was, actually, the fact that you were so frail that led you to have any formal education (school was where they sent kids who couldn't work). But school hooked you from the first day. Everything fascinated you, from mathematics to literature to history. Even the white folks admired your abilities, remarking on how exceptional you were.

By the age of 15, you announced to your father that you wanted to become a lawyer. Your father's white friends discouraged it, telling him that white folks would never let a black man practice law in the state of Georgia. Silently (you knew better than to make such sentiments public) you vowed to prove them wrong. Your academic talents won you a scholarship to Atlanta University. There, you studied with the great black intellectual and Harvard-trained historian, W. E. B. DuBois. He made a powerful impression.

In 1907 you graduated from Atlanta University and applied for admission to the University of Michigan law school. (Southern law schools were segregated and refused to admit blacks during this time--it has only been in the last decade, the 1950s, that southern schools have been forced to desegregate.) Michigan was a rigorous law school that promoted the scientific study of law. It was so rigorous that many in your class failed out. But not you. You worked your way through as a waiter in a white fraternity house and hotel, won prizes for your oratory, and finished near the top of your class in 1911.

You returned to Georgia to build a law practice from the ground up. America's entrance into the First World War delayed you somewhat, although your decorated service (you achieved the rank of captain) never did you any harm. Given that you were the only black lawyer in Georgia, your services were in demand. You were legal counsel to the Atlanta Life Insurance Company and the Citizens' Trust Company, the two wealthiest black-owned businesses in the south. But you also represented poor blacks in criminal and civil matters, most times at a financial loss to yourself. It was an important way to get your name out. And it was the right thing to do. In fact, improving the daily lives of your people is first and foremost in your mind.

You can organize your people politically, too. In 1944, you were one of five black leaders to publicly attempt to vote in the state's primary election, despite a warning from Governor Eugene Talmadge that "blood would run through the streets of Atlanta" if blacks tried to vote in the traditionally all-white primary. You were turned away, but the lawsuit that resulted from those actions (King v. Chapman) held that it was unconstitutional for the state of Georgia to prevent black people from voting in primary elections.

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Despite threats from the KKK (at one point, a white man came up to you on the street and warned you that your days were numbered), you helped to register your community, increasing black voting power tenfold from 1940-1950. In 1949 you (a Democrat) founded the Atlanta Negro Voters League (ANVL) with prominent Republican John Wesley Dobbs. With the promise of delivering up to 25,000 votes, ANVL's recommendation became a political force. Indeed, both candidates for mayor of Atlanta in 1950 sought ANVL's endorsement. You chose William B. Hartsfield, who went on to win a close race. ANVL's votes provided the margin of victory, and Hartsfield himself extended a public "thanks to the officers and members of the Atlanta Negro Voters' League."

By 1950, you were known as one of the most powerful men on Auburn Avenue. And you continued to fight for your people, filing (for instance) a wide-ranging lawsuit challenging discrimination against black railroad workers. But you remained cautious. You have friends in city hall, in the Atlanta Police Department, and in the statehouse. They won't remain your friends if you espouse radical causes, or (God forbid) cavort with communists. Or, frankly, if you push for too much too fast. You openly opposed the NAACP's push to integrate neighborhoods through litigation in the early 1950s and refused to lead such lawsuits in Atlanta. As a result, the NAACP pushed you aside as their Atlanta legal counsel in 1956 in favor of Donald Lee Hollowell.

But so be it. You aren't an idealist or a radical. You never have been. Ideals don't put food on the table or clothes on your back. You are a pragmatist, and that means that you want real results for your people, as much as you can get while maintaining civic peace.

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this too. Use your skill and power to broker a deal so that direct action doesn't imperil school desegregation!

**Support a litigation strategy.** When you were in college, every political and judicial officer in the country believed that segregation was natural and lawful and perfectly in concert with the Fourteenth Amendment. The NAACP went to court to point out the contradictions of this policy, and in 1954, they convinced the Supreme Court of the United States that segregation violated the Fourteenth Amendment. This is a proven strategy. Convince the students to use litigation to target "state action" segregation.

**Protect the students.** You admire the fire of young students, but you cannot forget that their parents have entrusted the college administration with their safety. By engaging in direct action, they are not just imperiling the Atlanta Way, they may also be unwittingly putting themselves in jeopardy. Use all of your powers to broker deals and convince them to avoid provoking a violent or destructive response.

## STRATEGY SUGGESTIONS

**Prior to the sessions.** Coordinate with your fellow members of SALC, so that you can firm up your arguments. Prepare a plan to present to the students that will satisfy their desire for stronger action, but will follow the traditional tactics of the NAACP.

**Session 1:** Moderate the radicals amongst the students. You already know that you can't stop direct action, but you can channel it. Come up with a plan for the students that will help them express their righteous anger but will also keep them safe.

**Session 2 and beyond:** Show the students that they are having an impact and keep them on the right path!

## SPECIAL POWERS

**Direct Line to Hartsfield.** You have a direct line to the mayor, who can help you negotiate with the white power structure of Atlanta. He can also help you get students out of jail, or arrange for police protection...if he is willing.

**Legal help.** If students are arrested, you can represent them in court. You could be the difference between their simply being arrested and having a criminal record. Students may well seek you out for this service without you offering it. But it can be a powerful bargaining chip when you are proposing actions for the students.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Speech.** You and your fellow SALC members must give one formal speech during either session 1 or session 2. You should coordinate and devise a strategy for negotiating with COAHR and



# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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convincing the other students that your strategy will be the best one. Formally, you must write and deliver a speech during one of the first two sessions of the game.

**Op-Ed.** At the conclusion of the game, write an op-ed describing the course of the Sit ins from your perspective. How did the protests play out? Did intervening events change the course of history? Were you able to exert some leadership? How much of the Atlanta Student Movement were you able to influence?

## VICTORY CONDITIONS

You **win** automatically if the students follow your leadership and stick to the litigation strategy, keeping protest out of the streets and in the courtroom.

You **may win** if direct action protests are nonviolent, limited, and do not tarnish Atlanta's image.

You **lose** if direct action protests lead to serious violence, or if the Atlanta schools are not desegregated or are closed.

## Relationship to Core Texts:

[Under Construction]

## Relationship to Big Ideas:

[Under Construction]

## Relationships to Other People:

## Howard Zinn

History Professor, Spelman College  
38 years old

You were born and raised in Brooklyn, to Russian-Jewish immigrant parents. You attended New York University in downtown Manhattan as an undergraduate, then went uptown to Columbia University for graduate school. You're a New Yorker, down to your bones. So you were as surprised as anyone when Spelman's president, Albert Manley, offered you the chairmanship of the History and Social Sciences department at his college.

It was 1956, and you were just finishing your doctoral dissertation in American history at Columbia. The idea of living in the South, or teaching at a "Negro college," hadn't been on your radar. But you recognized that Manley's job offer presented you with a wonderful opportunity: a prestigious position at an excellent school, in a city full of flowering trees, where life happens at a slower pace.

You, your wife, and your two young children have been in Atlanta for four years now. All of your students are black, as are most of your colleagues. You learn more each passing semester about the crushing humiliations and daily indignities of their lives in the Jim Crow South. You've found your students to be unfailingly modest and proper young ladies; they seem to accept the gendered expectations placed upon them by the adults of Spelman. But when you've asked them to write about their memories of racial prejudice, their rage and frustration bubble to the surface. They are acutely aware of the injustices they suffer, and they're committed to educating themselves so that they can overcome bigotry.

Still, Spelman students are encouraged to cultivate a demure and "respectable" character; radical politics are frowned upon. You, on the other hand, have been politically radical since high school. You don't adhere to any specific ideology, but your studies, and your work as a labor organizer, have led you to the firm belief that the American power structure is fundamentally "rotten at the root." The government is not on the side of the American people; you learned that as a teenager, when a non-violent political protest you attended was set upon by club-swinging mounted police. The economic system rewards the wealthy, and exploits the working class; you learned that watching your hardworking parents struggle to eke out a living during the Great Depression.

Your class consciousness has developed out of your own experience, as well. After graduating high school, you spent three years working in a shipyard, assembling the steel frame for a naval battleship. It was grueling, dangerous work. In 1943, you enlisted in the army, hoping to participate in the fight against fascism. You trained as a bombardier, then spent a year dropping bombs (and an early version of napalm) on Nazi-occupied European cities. At the time, you believed that the U.S. was fighting a moral war, a "good war" ... but by now, you have grown

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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skeptical of American military power. John Hersey's book Hiroshima forced you to consider the suffering of civilians during wartime, and you are no longer proud of this part of your past. Nevertheless, your military service, and the G.I. Bill, gave you access to college and graduate school – an education, and now a career as an educator, that you could never have achieved otherwise.

You continue to think, teach, and write about class struggle. But here at Spelman, you are increasingly conscious of the struggle against racism. You have long been sympathetic to black Americans' fight for civil rights – but as a spectator, not a participant. Now, you want to confront racism head-on – both inside and outside the classroom. In 1957, you took a group of your students to the legislature. You all took your seats, and it caused an uproar. The representatives hooted and jeered. The speaker of the Assembly stopped businesses and demanded that you move to the colored section. You were furious, but you complied. When you returned the next year, you were ready. Again the speaker of the Assembly demanded that you move to the colored section. Again you complied. But this time, you and the students refused to sit down.

Last year, as faculty adviser to Spelman's Social Science Club, you suggested to your students that they undertake a project that organized for social change. Their inaugural project: the desegregation of the whites-only downtown branch of the Atlanta library. It was a direct-action non-violent onslaught: one after another, the students would ask the librarian on duty about borrowing John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, or the Declaration of Independence. The librarians always responded that they would send the copy "to your Negro branch." As the students kept up their efforts, the interracial Atlanta Council on Human Relations lobbied the Library Board of Trustees, and faculty from Atlanta University began to prepare a federal lawsuit. After several months, the Board announced their decision to integrate the entire Atlanta public library system.

Energized by this victory, your students are eager to do more, especially in light of February's sit-in protests in Greensboro. You know that many older members of the black establishment will seek to dissuade the students from taking up "aggressive" direct action protests. They, too, want integration, but they are gradualists, and they urge patience. But these young people have grown impatient. They want change, and they're willing to put themselves in harm's way to achieve it. Roslyn Pope – a former student, and now a family friend – recently arrived at your home, asking to use your typewriter; she left with a draft of "An Appeal for Human Rights," a statement demanding an end to racial discrimination in Atlanta.

Your students and their comrades are going to transform the world through non-violent direct action – and you want to help them any way you can.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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## SALC FACTION ADVISORY:

The Student-Adult Liaison Committee (SALC) was an informal group that attempted to mediate between the old guard leadership and the student leadership in 1960. As a group, you are committed to desegregation. You are, however, alarmed by the aggressive nature of direct confrontation. The students in Greensboro, North Carolina may have won a quick victory, but you know that things are not going to go so well in, for instance, Birmingham, Alabama.

And Atlanta is different. This has been the epicenter of black cultural life in the American South for a half century. It has also been a model for race relations. Yes, the city is still segregated. But it is also home to the wealthiest black community in the world. Black people vote in Atlanta. They have the ear of the mayor. The white community is committed to peace and prosperity, and anything that will keep business moving, and so are you. Your community needs jobs, housing, and municipal services. The Atlanta Way is to do things bi-racially and peacefully. You will want to preserve that.

The students think differently, but they are young. They have no idea what the South was like before World War II (some of them weren't even born when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor!) and how far things have come. The students say you are going to slow, but you know what direct action can achieve if used judiciously. After all, you were among the generation that bravely cast the first votes, picketed to integrated the Atlanta Police Force, and won housing concessions from Mayor Hartsfield. You may need to remind the students of the gains you have brought the city.

You are also concerned that some of the students are just plain ambitious. Reckless sit-ins and picketing carries risks. Student demonstrators may be beaten or killed. The white business community may abandon the Atlanta Way under pressure from virulent white supremacists. The Ku Klux Klan may attack the black community as a whole. The students seem blithely unaware of the potential consequences. Perhaps they should spend more time studying, and less time stirring up trouble.

## OBJECTIVES

**Preserve the Atlanta Way?** You are a newcomer to Atlanta, and you are still learning your way around the Black community. You are not committed to the Atlanta Way, but you still want to be respectful of the great sacrifices that civil rights leaders have made. But this is the students' time, right?

**Desegregate the schools!** Keep your eyes on the prize. Direct protest at restaurants is one thing, but segregation is bigger than lunch counters.

**Protect the students.** You have to remember that the students are putting everything on the line. This is their time. The stakes are high, and you are all too aware that violence might be the end of this. Think about your duty to help the students express themselves in a way that won't get them hurt or killed.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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## STRATEGY SUGGESTIONS

**Prior to the sessions.** Coordinate with your fellow members of SALC, so that you can firm up your arguments. Prepare a plan to present to the students that will satisfy the students' desire for direct action but will temper anything that might turn too radical, or violent.

**Session 1:** Monitor the SALC discussions carefully. Are the adults stifling the students? Are they respectful of the students' demands? If not, you might want to think about jumping ship.

**Session 2 and beyond:** If you are still with SALC, it should be because SALC is showing great respect for the students' leadership. If you have joined a student faction (COAHR or otherwise), then you should lend a hand and offer to be present at protests, if they want you there.

## SPECIAL POWERS

**Jump Ship.** You can change factions, but only after Round 1. Approach COAHR (or any other student group) and offer to join. You can lend them some adult support and you bring prestige and potentially contacts to broaden the movement.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Speech.** You and your fellow SALC members must give one formal speech during either session 1 or session 2. You should coordinate and devise a strategy for negotiating with COAHR and convincing the other students that your strategy will be the best one. Formally, you must write and deliver a speech during one of the first two sessions of the game.

**Op-Ed.** At the conclusion of the game, write an op-ed describing the course of the Sit ins from your perspective. How did the protests play out? Did intervening events change the course of history? Were you able to exert some leadership? How much of the Atlanta Student Movement were you able to influence?

## VICTORY CONDITIONS

You **win** automatically if the students follow your leadership and stick to the litigation strategy, keeping protest out of the streets and in the courtroom.

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You **lose** if direct action protests lead to serious violence, or if the Atlanta schools are not desegregated or are closed.

## Relationship to Core Texts:

[Under Construction]

# **The Atlanta Sit-Ins**

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Relationship to Big Ideas:

[Under Construction]

Relationships to Other People:

[Under Construction]

# **The Atlanta Sit-Ins**

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A Reacting Game in Development

The Atlanta Sit-Ins

By Robert Baker, Marni Davis, Curtis Jackson, Amani Marshall, Jared Poley, and Jeffrey Young

## Ashley Colkin

Spelman Student  
20 years old

Born and raised in south Atlanta, your life was mostly uneventful, until you lost both of your parents in an automobile accident after they were given poor medical attention at Grady Hospital, which is segregated. Since then, you have lived with your uncle. He is your only relative in Atlanta; the rest dispersed throughout the rust belt in the the North seeking job opportunities. Despite the fact that your uncle works a low paying job at the downtown Rich's department store, he is able to keep a roof over your head, and food on the table. You are forever grateful to him for his hard work and sacrifice. You made a promise to yourself that regardless of what happens, you will focus on your studies so that you can return the favor to your uncle. This is a hard promise to keep, as frequently encounter the daily injustice and humiliation of Jim Crow -- the same institution that is responsible for the death of your parents. You feel that you must do something to turn the tide of racism and segregation and build a better world, but you also understand that your actions may cost more than your own personal freedom: they may directly impact your uncle's livelihood.

Through your hard work, you are able to secure a scholarship to Atlanta University. Here, you gain an education about racial politics both in the classroom, and outside of it through your contact with African anti-imperial, and Black American desegregation activists. These teachings reinforce your feeling of resentment towards the Jim Crow system and provide you with an understanding of what must be done next: the status quo must be challenged.

One night, after reading about the events in Greensboro, North Carolina, you and a group of friends decide to try to desegregate Leeb's Restaurant. The police are called, you are arrested, and your name and school affiliation are published in the Atlanta Constitution. Your uncle uses his savings to bail you out of jail, and the University places you on disciplinary probation. If you are arrested again, you will be expelled, and your uncle will likely lose his job.

Despite all of this, your heart cries for freedom, and you begin to consider how to fight for desegregation while protecting your uncle and education.



# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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## “Indeterminate” FACTION ADVISORY

“Faction” is just another name for a loose group of like minded people. You don’t have one! You know that some of the students are committed to action, and they have formed the Committee on the Appeal for Human Rights (COAHR). You also know that there is a Student-Adult Liaison Committee (SALC). More than likely, these different groups will begin by presenting you with some plans and asking what you think. Your support will be critical to their success!

You might also be approached by students who have formed their own faction, who have alternative plans. Whether they have a cool name or not, you might choose to join their plans. Or you might stay on the sidelines. The choice is yours.

But who says they get to be the leaders? Why not you? Nothing prevents you from starting your own group, or taking charge of any faction.

## OBJECTIVES

**Choose the best plan.** Given your unique circumstances, you must choose the best plan for desegregation. You can choose to follow the conservative “old guard” of Civil Rights, and pursue a litigious strategy, or you may choose to continue a direct action approach with the understanding of its risks. Your choice must consider the outcome for you AND your family.

**Desegregate the schools!** While school desegregation was “won” a few years prior, Atlanta is dragging its feet on its implementation. You feel that a win here can create a “domino effect” which will culminate in desegregation in general, or the desegregation of hospitals in the very least.

**Graduate.** You made a promise to yourself that you will graduate, and help your uncle who has sacrificed to provide for you. As such, you will protect your academic career at all costs.

**Protect your Uncle’s job at Rich’s.** You recognize that any action you make may have an impact on your uncle’s livelihood. This, like your education, is a key factor in your decision-making process.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

**Prior to the sessions:** Find out what is motivating the different participants. Introduce yourself at the mixer to as many people as you can. Make a note afterwards of any people who really impressed you, and why. You will have to turn this list in to your instructor, so make sure that you keep it!

**Session 1 participation:** During the first Public Meeting, you will listen to a plan for taking action against segregation. There may only be one plan presented, or different factions may put forward different plans. You should write down the particulars, and ask at least three questions about the plans.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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**Session 1 voting:** You will be asked to vote. Make sure you are clear what plan you are voting on! There may be more than one. Remember that you hold influence over 100 students. You can indicate your support for the plan by pledging 0-100 students (in multiples of ten, please!).

**Session 2 & beyond:** You will continue to participate and vote in public meetings throughout the sessions.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Speech:** In session two you will deliver a persuasive speech that will come from your life experience and primary sources and should slant to the side you have chosen to support in an effort to build the following of your chosen faction. Should you change your opinion between sessions, a subsequent speech must be made denouncing your previous alliances -- explain why that side is wrong, and persuade your peers on why your new chosen path is the best option.

**Letter home to your parents.** Write a 750-1000 word letter defending your decision to support or not to support protests against segregation, and connecting your role to the history of Black protest. Your letter should explain clearly both the plan you accepted and why it was the best possible choice.

## VICTORY CONDITIONS

You **win automatically** if Atlanta is entirely desegregated, from its schools to its churches, hospitals, municipal buildings and lunch counters.

You **may win** if Atlanta's schools are desegregated, and public facilities are desegregated, even if private facilities remain segregated.

You **lose** if you are expelled from school, or you are arrested, charged, and convicted of a crime, if you are killed or seriously injured during a protest, or if your uncle loses his job at Rich's Department Store.

## Ralph Williams

Morehouse Student  
21 years old

You were born and raised here in Atlanta, Georgia, where your father is a haberdasher. The oldest child of three, you enjoy a wide circle of cousins who attend the frequent family gatherings hosted by your parents.

Growing up you were particularly excited to spend time with your mother's older sister, Dolores. Your aunt had a reputation for being somewhat wild when she was younger, but her buoyancy and infectious generosity endeared her to you. She is, in short, your favorite of your parent's siblings, a confidante and partner in mischief. You even like her husband. But she is also childless, a regrettable condition because of her obvious delight in being around young people.

While you had overheard whispered conversations between your parents that suggested Dolores's husband suffered from the debilitating effects of "bad blood," you were unclear what was meant by the term until you arrived at Morehouse, determined to study medicine and to become a physician. Even though penicillin was understood to be an effective treatment for syphilis since the late 1940s, it remained unclear when and if Dolores's husband had ever been tested for the disease and treated for it. What if he had transmitted his "bad blood" to her? If they were sick with the disease, why had neither of them received the appropriate treatment by the white doctors in their town of Tuskegee?

Are there any areas of American life that aren't saturated with racism? Even one's doctor perpetuates racist ideologies, and the segregated qualities of American medicine have helped ensure that race affected the relationships between doctors and patients. You are keenly aware of the personal toll that racism has on the lives and livelihoods of your loved ones, but is protest the answer? Desegregating Atlanta is maybe the first step to desegregating other areas of American life, but it might be better to simply study hard, earn a medical degree, and work from inside to change the medical conditions of black America. Getting arrested will do little to achieve that goal.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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## “Indeterminate” FACTION ADVISORY

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You might also be approached by students who have formed their own faction, who have alternative plans. Whether they have a cool name or not, you might choose to join their plans. Or you might stay on the sidelines. The choice is yours.

But who says they get to be the leaders? Why not you? Nothing prevents you from starting your own group, or taking charge of any faction.

## OBJECTIVES

**Choose the best plan.** You despise segregation. Your parents despise segregation. You are eager to defeat it and you want to help. But what is the best way? Your parents are contributors to the NAACP, and speak reverently of the work of Charles Hamilton Houston, Thurgood Marshall, and the Legal Defense Fund. At the same time, you were electrified by the actions of the students in Greensboro, North Carolina. During session 1, you should listen carefully to the arguments, and throw your support behind the plan that you believe will best advance the cause.

**Desegregate the schools!** You know that the first goal of the movement is to fulfill the promise of Brown v. Board of Education and make sure that Atlanta’s schools are desegregated. Don’t jeopardize school desegregation!

**Graduate.** You want to start a family. You want to follow in your father’s footsteps and become a doctor. While you feel morally drawn to this movement and want to play a role in ending segregation, you don’t want to jeopardize your college record or your future career by ending up with a jail sentence or being expelled from school.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

**Prior to the sessions:** mix and mingle. Find the leaders of the Committee on the Appeal for Human Rights and quiz them about the history of Black protest. See if they are really serious about what they are doing. This is also a good opportunity for you to meet Rev. William Holmes Borders, A. T. Walden, and other luminaries of Auburn Avenue. What do they think about the white business community? There is a lot of talk about the “Atlanta Way” and pride in peaceful race relations. Is it really true? Make a note afterwards of any people who really impressed you, and why. You will have to turn this list in to your instructor, so make sure that you keep it!

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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**Session 1 participation:** During the first Public Meeting, you will listen to a plan for taking action against segregation. There may only be one plan presented, or different factions may put forward different plans. You should write down the particulars, and ask at least three questions about the plans.

**Session 1 voting:** You will be asked to vote. Make sure you are clear what plan you are voting on! There may be more than one. Remember that you hold influence over 100 students. You can indicate your support for the plan by pledging 0-100 students (in multiples of ten, please!).

**Session 2 & beyond:** You will continue to participate and vote in public meetings throughout the sessions.

**Session 1:** Listen carefully to the arguments. Take notes. Ask questions. Do the plans look like they will succeed? How much risk is there in participating in sit-ins? Or marches? Or boycotts? How long do the conservatives want you to wait around? Don't hesitate to make your opinion known, either at the lectern, or in private to any of the people presenting plans. Make an informed vote for a plan, and an informed vote about whether you should participate.

**Session 2:** Assess how well things went. Whether you were on the winning side or not, the question now is where you go from here.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Speech, or letter to the editor.** You must complete at least one public statement, which you can complete either by speaking at one of the sessions or writing a letter to the editor.

**Letter home to your parents.** Write a 750-1000 word letter defending your decision to support or not to support protests against segregation, and connecting your role to the history of Black protest. Your letter should explain clearly both the plan you accepted and why it was the best possible choice.

## VICTORY CONDITIONS

You **win automatically** if Atlanta is entirely desegregated, from its schools to its churches, hospitals, municipal buildings and lunch counters.

You **may win** if Atlanta's schools are desegregated, and public facilities are desegregated, even if private facilities remain segregated.

You **may win** even if segregation continues to be fought in the courts, successfully.

You **lose** if you are expelled from school, or you are arrested, charged, and convicted of a crime, or if you are killed or seriously injured during a protest.

## Relationship to Major Texts:

[under construction]

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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Relationship to Big Ideas:

[under construction]

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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## Alice Dukes

Spelman Student  
20 years old

You were born and raised outside of Jackson, Mississippi. Your mother is a nurse, and your father is employed at nearby Tougaloo College. The youngest child of three, you enjoy a wide circle of cousins who attend the frequent family gatherings hosted by your parents.

Growing up you were particularly excited to spend time with your mother's younger sister, Adelia. Your aunt had a reputation for being somewhat wild when she was young, but her buoyancy and infectious generosity endeared her to you. She is, in short, your favorite of your parent's siblings, a confidante and partner in mischief. You even like her husband. But she is also childless, a regrettable condition because of her obvious delight in being around young people.

While you had overheard whispered conversations between your parents that suggested Adelia had experienced a "Mississippi appendectomy" as a young woman, you were unclear what was meant by the term until you arrived at Spelman. Shocked to learn that black women were subjected to sterilization by white doctors -- often under misleading circumstances -- you began to explore how ideas like eugenics were put into practice in your home state.

Are there any areas of American life that aren't saturated with racism? Even one's doctor might perpetuate racist ideologies, and the segregated qualities of American medicine have helped ensure that discredited practices like eugenics -- the "self direction of human evolution" -- remain embedded in African-American life. You are keenly aware of the personal toll that racism has taken on the lives and livelihoods of your loved ones, and therefore you lean towards supporting protests. Desegregating Atlanta is maybe the first step to desegregating other areas of American life, but you also know that if racism has seeped even into the private space of the patient-doctor relationship, nowhere is safe.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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## “Indeterminate” FACTION ADVISORY

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You might also be approached by students who have formed their own faction, who have alternative plans. Whether they have a cool name or not, you might choose to join their plans. Or you might stay on the sidelines. The choice is yours.

But who says they get to be the leaders? Why not you? Nothing prevents you from starting your own group, or taking charge of any faction.

## OBJECTIVES

**Desegregate!** You are electrified by the Greensboro sit ins. You will want to help participate in anything that asserts your dignity and the dignity of your people. If that means sitting down, or if that means picketing, then that’s what that means!

**Graduate.** You want to start a family. You want to be a respected professional. Perhaps a teacher. Yes, you want to picket and sit in and participate, but you are a little concerned about being arrested, especially if being arrested means that you will be suspended or (God forbid!) be expelled from school.

**You can’t wait forever.** If the strategy you backed in session 1 is not getting the job done, you can change your mind and pursue a different strategy in session 2 or after.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

**Prior to the sessions:** Find out what is motivating the different participants. Introduce yourself at the mixer to as many people as you can. You should seek out your Spelman sisters Herschelle Sullivan and Roz Pope. Do they really have leadership positions? Make a note afterwards of any people who really impressed you, and why. You will have to turn this list in to your instructor, so make sure that you keep it!

**Session 1 participation:** During the first Public Meeting, you will listen to a plan for taking action against segregation. There may only be one plan presented, or different factions may put forward different plans. You should write down the particulars, and ask at least three questions about the plans.

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# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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**Session 2 & beyond:** You will continue to participate and vote in public meetings throughout the sessions.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Speech, or letter to the editor.** You must complete at least one public statement, which you can complete either by speaking at one of the sessions or writing a letter to the editor.

**Letter home to your parents.** Write a 750-1000 word letter defending your decision to support or not to support protests against segregation, and connecting your role to the history of Black protest. Your letter should explain clearly both the plan you accepted and why it was the best possible choice.

## VICTORY CONDITIONS

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## Relationship to Major Texts:

[under construction]

## Relationship to Big Ideas:

[under construction]

## Jacqueline Foster

Spelman Student  
19 years old

You were born in Los Angeles, California but grew up in Memphis, Tennessee after your family moved there in 1955. The decision to return to the segregated South was a difficult one for your parents. While Los Angeles was a vibrant center of African-American life it was also a dangerously segregated city, and your father's repeated run-ins with Chief Parker's LAPD lent a sinister air to the sunshine. The decision to leave was made easier after your father was arrested and then brutally beaten in the 77th St Police Station in the course of an interrogation. After that event, your parents decided that Memphis was a safer bet.

Your father is a truck driver, a skill he perfected in the US army. The middle child of three, you enjoy a wide circle of cousins who frequently gather at your house after church on Sundays.

Your uncle is missing from these gatherings, however. Like your father, your uncle enlisted in the US army, serving in Korea in the 24th infantry regiment. His unit -- originally one of the famed Buffalo Soldier regiments -- saw heavy fighting in the Korean war, and your uncle lost his life in the battle of the Pusan Perimeter in 1950. The 24th was a black regiment, a legacy of the segregated nature of the US military.

The segregated nature of the US military began to change, however, when President Truman issued executive order 9981 in July 1948. The order ended the official policy of segregation: "It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale." Even though Truman's order was issued in 1948, units like the 24th infantry remained segregated throughout the Korean War. Even worse, Black soldiers from his unit who lost their lives -- even those who had been awarded the Medal of Honor for their brave actions under fire -- were not buried in Arlington National Cemetery but in segregated cemeteries in other states. Neither your aunt -- your uncle's widow -- nor your father have been able to overcome the humiliation.

The federal government has no real interest in forcing desegregation. The executive order is just empty words, and while you hope that change will happen, you realize that protests are unlikely to make a real difference. If the US military can't desegregate even after a presidential order -- and decorated war heroes are still forbidden burial at Arlington National Cemetery -- what hope is there that a handful of college students can force white America to change? You need to decide whether protests matter or have a chance to succeed, and if not, then to decide what other mechanisms exist to force change.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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**Graduate.** You want to start a family. You want to be a respected professional. Perhaps a teacher. Yes, you want to picket and sit in and participate, but you are a little concerned about being arrested, especially if being arrested means that you will be suspended or (God forbid!) be expelled from school.

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# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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## Relationship to Major Texts:

[under construction]

## Relationship to Big Ideas:

[under construction]

## Ruby Doris Smith

Spelman Student  
19 years old

You were born in 1942 in Atlanta, to parents who had moved to the city when they were about as old as you are now. Alice, your mother, came from a sharecropping family outside Macon; along with her older sister, she left grinding poverty and rural isolation to find more people, more opportunity. She graduated from Booker T. Washington High School – at the time, the only high school for African Americans in Atlanta – and completed a course at Apex Beauty School as well. Soon she met John (J.T.) Smith, a fellow migrant from rural Georgia. Independent-minded, entrepreneurial, and ambitious, J.T. owned a series of small businesses, and eventually served as a minister to a local Baptist church.

You grew up in Summerhill, one of Atlanta's oldest African-American neighborhoods, a close-knit community where middle-class, working-class, and poor people lived side by side. You and your six brothers and sisters were raised in the home your parents bought when they married, which was attached to Alice's beauty shop and J.T.'s small grocery store. Your family didn't have a lot of money, but your parents were determined to spare you and your siblings the impoverished childhoods they had suffered. They were also driven to build economic self-sufficiency, for themselves and their community, on their own terms, without relying on the support or patronage of white people.

Your parents' racial consciousness and insistence on self-reliance had a profound effect on you. From an early age, you were alert to racial injustice. You saw the Ku Klux Klan marching through your neighborhood, under the protection of police escort. (It was an open secret that some of Atlanta's police officers were themselves Klan members.) You recognized the constant humiliations, both large and small, of life under Jim Crow. But even as a child, you pushed back. Once, when you and your younger sister Catherine went to a nearby drugstore to buy ice cream cones, you saw that the white woman behind the counter was holding the cone you had ordered with her bare hand. You knew that she always handled the cone with a tissue when serving white customers. When it was time to pay, you refused. "Oh, you can keep that one," you declared; "you're not going to put your hands on my cone."

Success at school has come fairly easily for you. You regularly (and seemingly effortlessly) made honor roll at Luther J. Price High School, in addition to participating in lots of extracurricular activities: yearbook, basketball, choir, student government ... and still you had time to be a drum majorette and a debutante! But it was in your high school classes where you learned the history of black people in the United States. Your teachers made sure that you and your classmates knew about the emerging civil rights movement. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, the murder of young Emmett Till, the desegregation of Little Rock High School by nine brave teenagers: these events stirred your political consciousness. By the time you graduated from high school, you were determined to participate in this era of momentous change. "I know

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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what my life and mission is," you told your sister Catherine. "It's to set the black people free. I will never rest until it happens. I will die for that cause."

Now you are a sophomore at Spelman College in Atlanta, one of the most prestigious HBCUs in the country. You've been eager for intellectual challenge and for collegiate life, even including Spelman's insistence that its students comport themselves according to ideals of proper ladyhood. You're doing well at Spelman ... but your mind is not entirely on your schoolwork these days. You recently saw a television news report on the sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina. You immediately thought of Atlanta's segregated lunch counters, at Woolworth's on Forsyth Street and in Rich's Department Store. You thought of the Georgia State Capitol building -- its glistening gold dome visible from your Summerhill neighborhood -- and seethed at the thought that your community was excluded from participating in state governance. Why shouldn't there be a sit-in movement in Atlanta, too? But you feel a little inexperienced, like you aren't quite ready to organize a local protest yourself.

Then your older sister Mary Ann, who attends Morris Brown College, told you that students from several local universities had collaborated on a protest statement, titled "An Appeal for Human Rights." She had signed the document, and was now part of the student committee organizing non-violent direct action protests against racial discrimination and segregation in Atlanta. You told her: "sign me up."

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## OBJECTIVES

**Desegregate!** You are electrified by the Greensboro sit ins. You will want to help participate in anything that asserts your dignity and the dignity of your people. If that means sitting down, or if that means picketing, then that’s what that means!

**Graduate.** You want to start a family. You want to be a respected professional. Perhaps a teacher. Yes, you want to picket and sit in and participate, but you are a little concerned about being arrested, especially if being arrested means that you will be suspended or (God forbid!) be expelled from school.

**You can’t wait forever.** If the strategy you backed in session 1 is not getting the job done, you can change your mind and pursue a different strategy in session 2 or after.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

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# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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## Relationship to Major Texts:

[under construction]

## Relationship to Big Ideas:

[under construction]



## Willie Paul Berrien, Jr.

Morehouse Student  
19 years old

You are the child of Caribbean immigrants who moved to the United States during the Depression. While they moved to escape crushing poverty in the Caribbean, they were dismayed to find that the United States offered only poverty on a greater scale. They quickly learned that they could not venture far from New York, where they ported, nor even out of Harlem, the black ghetto in New York City.

Your first memories in Harlem are of streetball, and of the shifty men who hung around your building, talking a little too loud and doing, well, something. Your parents warned you to stay away from them. They also demanded that you work hard in school and get out of Harlem. You obliged them. You were always a natural student. Learning came easy to you. Blessed with a good memory and an agile mind, you enjoyed debate.

You attended the New York public high school system, and it was there where you became exposed to a larger intellectual world. Several of your white classmates were leftists, and some of them were really militant. You became friends with several of them, one of whom had parents who were card-carrying members of the American Communist Party! Inspired by these meetings, your high school extracurricular activities were political in nature; you spent a majority of your time volunteering and organizing for youth socialist organizations.

Understanding that your interest in politics would require additional education, in 1958 you moved to Washington D.C. to attend Howard University, a historically black college. There, you learned about the African struggle for independence after a long period of European imperial rule and exploitation. The African independence movement clicked with you. It was, of course, a populist uprising against capitalist imperialism. But it was also a Black liberation movement. Your white leftist friends insisted on talking about African liberation in class terms (the revolution of the proletariat), but you were not so sure. This seemed more a racial liberation than anything else.

In the Fall of 1959 you transferred to Morehouse College, in part because they offered you a scholarship that would make college more affordable. Transferring as a sophomore was hard. You didn't have a cohort, so you didn't know anybody. The students seemed more button-down than the students at Howard. You spent much of the first semester homesick for the Northeast, and the more freewheeling, robust debates of your youth.

Then the Greensboro Four started their sit-ins in February, 1960. You recalled immediately the African struggle for freedom, and recognized in a flash that it must be connected to the struggle for freedom at home. As such, you recognized that now is the time--now more than ever--to do something to bring about an end to segregation in the United States. Moreover, you want to promote the idea of a strong black community, defined by equal access to political and economic power, which you believe is the only solution to America's race problem.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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But your main problem right now is that you don't know anyone. You are a newcomer in this environment, and you have to learn your way around.

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## OBJECTIVES

**Establish a Black Consciousness group.** In order for your goals to come to fruition, you will need to surround yourself with supportive like-minded individuals who will help take the fight for civil rights to a new level. It will be impossible to achieve your goals without this. During the game, you must persuade your colleagues that your methods and goals will lead to a greater end, than the slow methods proposed by conservatives, or the "weaker" strategies proposed by moderate activists.

**Desegregate, all or nothing.** You get that changes take work and compromise, but justice doesn't sell by the half-loaf. If you can't get your rights today, or in the morning, then they aren't rights. You will have to fight for them.

**Lead a movement.** If, by session 2, things aren't going in the right direction, then think about working with your black consciousness group to launch a separate movement.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

**Prior to the sessions:** Ask around, get to know people. Find at least three students who might want to join your Black Consciousness group. Suggest some readings and have a discussion!

**Session 1 participation:** Remember, you are new here. Ask a few questions during the first Public Meeting, but it isn't time to be too aggressive. You don't want to alienate the student leaders.

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## Relationship to Major Texts:

[under construction]

## Relationship to Big Ideas:

[under construction]

## Charles Hardin

Morehouse Student  
19 years old

You were born in Detroit, Michigan but grew up in Columbia, South Carolina after your family moved there in 1952. The decision to return to the segregated South was a difficult one, but your parents decided that they needed to be closer to their parents, supporting them as they aged (there are no old-age homes for African-Americans, unlike those supported by the white churches in Columbia). Your father is a mechanic, a skill he learned in the US army. The oldest of four children, you enjoy a wide circle of cousins who frequently gather at your house after church on Sundays.

Your uncle is missing from these gatherings, however. Like your father, your uncle enlisted in the US army, serving in Korea in the 24th infantry regiment. His unit -- originally one of the famed Buffalo Soldier regiments -- saw heavy fighting in the Korean war, and your uncle lost his life in the battle of the Pusan Perimeter in 1950. The 24th was a black regiment, a legacy of the segregated nature of the US military.

The segregated nature of the US military began to change, however, when President Truman issued executive order 9981 in July 1948. The order ended the official policy of segregation: "It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale." Even though Truman's order was issued in 1948, units like the 24th infantry remained segregated throughout the Korean War. Even worse, Black soldiers from his unit who lost their lives -- even those who had been awarded the Medal of Honor for their brave actions under fire -- were not buried in Arlington National Cemetery but in segregated cemeteries in other states. Neither your aunt -- your uncle's widow -- nor your father have been able to overcome the humiliation.

The federal government has enormous power to enact change, but those changes come slowly. It is your duty to keep pushing for change from the ground up. The sacrifices your uncle made for his country mean that you need to keep that flame alive...but the slow pace of desegregation in the military shows you that change will be incremental unless forced to happen by the actions of normal people. As a result you lean towards supporting protests, but you also consider the vast power of the federal government to be a useful tool.

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[under construction]

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[under construction]

## Althea Miriam Jones

Spelman Student  
20 years old

You were born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in a predominantly white neighborhood. As the third of four children, your upbringing was religious, spiritual, and socially conscientious. Your father, Rev. Garrett Jones was a pastor at a local small Pentecostal Baptist church where he preached the social gospel. During the week, you attended an integrated school and excelled in your studies. On Saturdays, you helped your family run a food pantry for the poor and engaged in other charitable activities. Every Sunday after reading the funnies in the Pittsburgh Courier, you were in the pews of your father's church. Between pestering your mother for butterscotch candies and singing hymns, you listened attentively to your father's impassioned sermons. He implored the congregation to use their faith to fight against poverty, greed, racism and the corruption of the souls of individuals that harm society. For your father, the gospel and the political were integrated; political salvation could only come through living by the word of God. At the end of every sermon, he reminded the congregation that God wants everyone to be free from these oppressive evils made by man, and that faith in Him will provide followers with the power to bring Heaven on Earth. Inspired by the faith in your teenage years, you often joined your father behind the pulpit to deliver sermons of your own.

Charity is one way to put the gospel into practice for the betterment of mankind -- at least that is how your parents raised you. Through your charity work with your family, you witnessed extreme poverty in inner city Philadelphia, which tempered your resolve to bring about a more just world. However, during much of your childhood, you had not personally experienced racism. And while your father taught you black history daily, for the most part, the neighborhood you grew up in did not expose you to racism, and your family was very protective. That changed on your fifteenth birthday, when your mother planned to take you and your sisters to your aunt's wedding in Norfolk.

The day before the trip, your mother took you downtown Philadelphia to go shopping for the perfect Sunday hat at Ellis' Millinery, one of the finest hat shops in town. As part of a continuity between African and African-American traditions, the Sunday hat signified a right of passage into adulthood, and you were eager to participate. Before entering, your mother reminded you to be on your best behavior, and to not touch anything without permission. When you entered, you were overwhelmed by the myriad of colors, textures, and designs of the hats to the point that you did not notice the strange looks the other shoppers were giving your shopping party. Your mother left your side to talk to the shops' owner. You didn't notice her absences since you were transfixed on the hats. The owner escorted you and your mother to the back room, away from the other customers. The owner, an older white woman, explained to you in the back room, "I want to sell to you...I really do, but I can not have you trying on hats in the showroom. If I do, none of my white customers who see you will shop here again. Come back later after I close the shop, and I will let you try on hats in the back room." Humiliated, you left the store,

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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never to return. You began to wonder what they saw in you that you could not simply buy a hat like the others. This was the beginning of your understanding of the daily indignities of racism.

By the time you were ready to graduate highschool, many in the congregation thought you were one of the best teen preachers in the city. You dedicated your middle teen years to the faith and to your studies. After all, your father and mother always stressed the importance of speaking well and learning from all the world has to offer. Your father always reminded you to “never let the fact that you are a woman be an excuse for not being the best you could be.” Despite your successes and strong faith, your inability to effect change immediately bothered you.

That racist incident years ago opened your eyes to the daily struggle of black people in America, and as you got older your encounters with these daily injustices grew. These experiences awakened your curiosity about why this sad state of relations exists in the first place. You were eighteen when you read about four black college students bravely sitting at the Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro. The example these students set inspired you and put your path forward into sharp focus.

The struggle, you thought, was something your faith and further study could help. You recognized that in order to spread the faith -- to bring about change in the world -- you would need to continue your studies away from Philadelphia. You wanted to dedicate your life to the struggle. Strong in your convictions, you decided to pursue a degree in sociology at Spelman College.

While there, you continued to give sermons on campus and you encountered other like-minded students, who all wanted to fight against segregation. Others taught you about similar struggles in Asia, Africa, and India. You realized that your current struggle for freedom is part of a larger global fight against white supremacy, and that your faith, conviction, and inquisitive nature will help guide you and your compatriots to the promised land. It is almost as if you were raised to be a soldier in this fight in Atlanta -- the struggle is your life’s path.



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[under construction]

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[under construction]

## Raymond Weber

Morehouse Student  
20 years old

You were born and raised near Dothan, Alabama, a city of about 30,000 people near the Florida panhandle. Your father is a school teacher, and wishing to ensure you a better life he demanded hard work and study which has paid off in the form of admission to Morehouse. In short, education provided you a path out of Dothan, but the stakes are high, and any number of issues could derail your father's plans for your future.

Your parents may be especially sensitive to potential pitfalls because of the experiences of your father's brother. After leaving Dothan for Birmingham, your uncle -- your father's oldest brother -- joined the Alabama Sharecropper's Union, which had started in 1928 with support from the Communist Party. The Union advocated for black independence, self-direction, and autonomy. During the Great Depression, members supported poor Blacks by restoring water and electricity after they had been cut off for non payment, and threatened landlords with arson if they attempted to evict renters from their properties. The group's slogan -- "The Workers are Watching You" -- remained an effective threat until the 1940s. He was also active in subsequent groups such as the Southern Negro Youth Congress, which sought to dismantle segregation but still recieved support from the Communist Party. After Bull Connor was elected Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety, the group was hounded by the police and driven out of existence. Your uncle was publicly targeted, attracting the attention of the Connor's police, who brutally beat him in 1948.

Your uncle's connections with the Sharecropper's Union and the Southern Negro Youth Congress -- like his avowed support for Communism -- drew the ire of other members of your family. Who could say what was more dangerous: communism, or the attempt to desegregate the South? Even whites who supported the goals of these groups were under threat of lynching, and your uncle's position threatened the safety of your entire family, an argument your father constantly repeated.

Your uncle's affiliation with communism was shameful and dangerous. Even if desegregation and amelioration of poverty were worthwhile goals, the suppression of the movement by Bull Connor indicates that it was far better to keep your head down and work towards self-improvement rather than challenging the social conditions of Jim Crow and segregation. You are keenly aware of the personal toll that protest can take on the lives and livelihoods of people, and therefore you lean towards taking a more conservative -- and less direct -- approach to change.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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## “Indeterminate” FACTION ADVISORY

“Faction” is just another name for a loose group of like minded people. You don’t have one! You know that some of the students are committed to action, and they have formed the Committee on the Appeal for Human Rights (COAHR). You also know that there is a Student-Adult Liaison Committee (SALC). More than likely, these different groups will begin by presenting you with some plans and asking what you think. Your support will be critical to their success!

You might also be approached by students who have formed their own faction, who have alternative plans. Whether they have a cool name or not, you might choose to join their plans. Or you might stay on the sidelines. The choice is yours.

But who says they get to be the leaders? Why not you? Nothing prevents you from starting your own group, or taking charge of any faction.

## OBJECTIVES

**Choose the best plan.** Given your unique circumstances, you must choose the best plan for desegregation. You can choose to follow the conservative “old guard” of Civil Rights, and pursue a litigious strategy, or you may choose to continue a direct action approach with the understanding of its risks. Your choice must consider the outcome for you AND your family.

**Desegregate the schools!** While school desegregation was “won” a few years prior, Atlanta is dragging its feet on its implementation. You feel that a win here can create a “domino effect” which will culminate in desegregation in general, or the desegregation of hospitals in the very least.

**Graduate.** You made a promise to yourself that you will graduate, and help your uncle who has sacrificed to provide for you. As such, you will protect your academic career at all costs.

**Protect your parents.** You recognize that any action you make may have an impact on your parent’s livelihood. What if your name is published in the paper? This, like your education, is a key factor in your decision-making process.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

**Prior to the sessions:** Find out what is motivating the different participants. Introduce yourself at the mixer to as many people as you can. Make a note afterwards of any people who really impressed you, and why. You will have to turn this list in to your instructor, so make sure that you keep it!

**Session 1 participation:** During the first Public Meeting, you will listen to a plan for taking action against segregation. There may only be one plan presented, or different factions may put forward different plans. You should write down the particulars, and ask at least three questions about the plans.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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**Session 1 voting:** You will be asked to vote. Make sure you are clear what plan you are voting on! There may be more than one. Remember that you hold influence over 100 students. You can indicate your support for the plan by pledging 0-100 students (in multiples of ten, please!).

**Session 2 & beyond:** You will continue to participate and vote in public meetings throughout the sessions.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Speech:** In session two you will deliver a persuasive speech that will come from your life experience and primary sources and should slant to the side you have chosen to support in an effort to build the following of your chosen faction. Should you change your opinion between sessions, a subsequent speech must be made denouncing your previous alliances -- explain why that side is wrong, and persuade your peers on why your new chosen path is the best option.

**Letter home to your parents.** Write a 750-1000 word letter defending your decision to support or not to support protests against segregation, and connecting your role to the history of Black protest. Your letter should explain clearly both the plan you accepted and why it was the best possible choice.

## VICTORY CONDITIONS

You **win automatically** if Atlanta is entirely desegregated, from its schools to its churches, hospitals, municipal buildings and lunch counters.

You **may win** if Atlanta's schools are desegregated, and public facilities are desegregated, even if private facilities remain segregated.

You **lose** if you are expelled from school, or you are arrested, charged, and convicted of a crime, if you are killed or seriously injured during a protest, or if your name is published as a protestor and it affects your parents negatively.

## Ruth Freeman

Spelman Student  
21 years old

You were born and raised near Birmingham, Alabama. Your father is a school teacher, and wishing to ensure you a better life he demanded hard work and study which has paid off in the form of admission to Spelman. In short, education provided you a path to a prosperity, but the stakes are high, and any number of issues could derail your father's plans for your future.

Your parents may be especially sensitive to potential pitfalls because of the experiences of your mother's brother. Your uncle -- your mother's middle brother -- joined the Alabama Sharecropper's Union, which had started in 1928 with support from the Communist Party. The Union advocated for black independence, self-direction, and autonomy. During the Great Depression, members supported poor Blacks by restoring water and electricity after they had been cut off for non payment, and threatened landlords with arson if they attempted to evict renters from their properties. The group's slogan -- "The Workers are Watching You" -- remained an effective threat until the 1940s. He was also active in subsequent groups such as the Southern Negro Youth Congress, which sought to dismantle segregation but still recieved support from the Communist Party. After Bull Connor was elected Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety, the group was hounded by the police and driven out of existence. Your uncle was publicly targeted, and he attracted the attention of the Connor's police. His reputation was such that he never enjoyed steady employment, and he was constantly harassed by the police.

Your uncle's connections with the Sharecropper's Union and the Southern Negro Youth Congress -- like his avowed support for Communism -- drew the ire of other members of your family. Who could say what was more dangerous: communism, or the attempt to desegregate the South? Even whites who supported the goals of these groups were under threat of lynching, and your uncle's position threatened the safety of your entire family.

You feel that your uncle's position was entirely legitimate, and his example is one you find worthy. While communism is a dangerous ideology, the emphasis that the Sharecropper's Union placed on civil rights and collective action is an inspiration. Jim Crow and segregation were -- and are -- wrong. The only way to make the world a better place is to challenge racists and their policies head on. While you lean towards supporting protest, you remain keenly aware of the personal toll that protest can take on the lives and livelihoods of people.

# The Atlanta Sit-Ins

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