

= Birmingham campaign =

The Birmingham campaign , or 1963 Birmingham movement , was a movement organized in early 1963 by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to bring attention to the integration efforts of African Americans in Birmingham , Alabama . Led by Martin Luther King , Jr . , James Bevel , Fred Shuttlesworth and others , the campaign of nonviolent direct action culminated in widely publicized confrontations between young black students and white civic authorities , and eventually led the municipal government to change the city 's discrimination laws .

In the early 1960s , Birmingham was one of the most racially divided cities in the United States , both as enforced by law and culturally . Black citizens faced legal and economic disparities , and violent retribution when they attempted to draw attention to their problems . Martin Luther King called it the most segregated city in the country . Protests in Birmingham began with a boycott led by Shuttlesworth meant to pressure business leaders to open employment to people of all races , and end segregation in public facilities , restaurants , schools , and stores . When local business and governmental leaders resisted the boycott , SCLC agreed to assist . Organizer Wyatt Tee Walker joined Birmingham activist Shuttlesworth and began what they called Project C , a series of sit @-@ ins and marches intended to provoke mass arrests .

When the campaign ran low on adult volunteers , James Bevel , SCLC 's Director Direct Action , thought of the idea of having students become the main demonstrators in the Birmingham campaign . He then trained and directed high school , college , and elementary school students in nonviolence , and asked them to participate in the demonstrations by taking a peaceful walk fifty at a time from the 16th Street Baptist Church to City Hall in order to talk to the mayor about segregation . This resulted in over a thousand arrests , and , as the jails and holding areas filled with arrested students , the Birmingham Police Department , led by Eugene " Bull " Connor , used high @-@ pressure water hoses and police attack dogs on the children and adult bystanders . Not all of the bystanders were peaceful , despite the avowed intentions of SCLC to hold a completely nonviolent walk , but the students held to the nonviolent premise . King and the SCLC drew both criticism and praise for allowing children to participate and put themselves in harm 's way .

The Birmingham campaign was a model of nonviolent direct action protest and , through the media , drew the world 's attention to racial segregation in the South . It burnished King 's reputation , ousted Connor from his job , forced desegregation in Birmingham , and directly paved the way for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibited racial discrimination in hiring practices and public services throughout the United States .

= = Background = =

= = = City of segregation = = =

Birmingham , Alabama was , in 1963 , " probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States . " Although the city 's population of almost 350 @, @ 000 was 60 % white and 40 % black , Birmingham had no black police officers , firefighters , sales clerks in department stores , bus drivers , bank tellers , or store cashiers . Black secretaries could not work for white professionals . Jobs available to blacks were limited to manual labor in Birmingham 's steel mills , work in household service and yard maintenance , or work in black neighborhoods . When layoffs were necessary , black employees were often the first to go . The unemployment rate for blacks was two and a half times higher than for whites . The average income for blacks in the city was less than half that of whites . Significantly lower pay scales for black workers at the local steel mills were common . Racial segregation of public and commercial facilities throughout Jefferson County was legally required , covered all aspects of life , and was rigidly enforced . Only 10 percent of the city 's black population was registered to vote in 1960 .

In addition , Birmingham 's economy was stagnating as the city was shifting from blue collar to white collar jobs . According to Time magazine in 1958 , the only thing white workers had to gain

from desegregation was more competition from black workers . Fifty unsolved racially motivated bombings between 1945 and 1962 had earned the city the nickname " Bombingham " . A neighborhood shared by white and black families experienced so many attacks that it was called " Dynamite Hill " . Black churches in which civil rights were discussed became specific targets for attack .

Birmingham 's black population began to organize to effect change . After Alabama banned the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1956 , Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth formed the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) the same year to challenge the city 's segregation policies through lawsuits and protests . When the courts overturned the segregation of the city 's parks , the city responded by closing them . Shuttlesworth 's home was repeatedly bombed , as was Bethel Baptist Church , where he was pastor . After Shuttlesworth was arrested and jailed for violating the city 's segregation rules in 1962 , he sent a petition to Mayor Art Hanes ' office asking that public facilities be desegregated . Hanes responded with a letter informing Shuttlesworth that his petition had been thrown in the garbage . Looking for outside help , Shuttlesworth invited Martin Luther King and the SCLC to Birmingham , saying , " If you come to Birmingham , you will not only gain prestige , but really shake the country . If you win in Birmingham , as Birmingham goes , so goes the nation . "

= = = Campaign goals = = =

King and the SCLC had recently been involved in a campaign to desegregate the city of Albany , Georgia , but did not see the results they had anticipated . Described by historian Henry Hampton as a " morass " , the Albany movement lost momentum and stalled . King 's reputation had been hurt by the Albany campaign , and he was eager to improve it . Determined not to make the same mistakes in Birmingham , King and the SCLC changed several of their strategies . In Albany , they concentrated on the desegregation of the city as a whole . In Birmingham , their campaign tactics focused on more narrowly defined goals for the downtown shopping and government district . These goals included the desegregation of Birmingham 's downtown stores , fair hiring practices in shops and city employment , the reopening of public parks , and the creation of a bi @-@ racial committee to oversee the desegregation of Birmingham 's public schools . King summarized the philosophy of the Birmingham campaign when he said : " The purpose of ... direct action is to create a situation so crisis @-@ packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation " .

= = = Commissioner of Public Safety = = =

A significant factor in the success of the Birmingham campaign was the structure of the city government and the personality of its contentious Commissioner of Public Safety , Eugene " Bull " Connor . Described as an " arch @-@ segregationist " by Time magazine , Connor asserted that the city " ain 't gonna segregate no niggers and whites together in this town [sic] " . He also apparently believed that the Civil Rights Movement was a Communist plot , and after the churches were bombed , Connor blamed the violence on local blacks . Birmingham 's government was set up in such a way that it gave Connor powerful influence . In 1958 , police arrested ministers organizing a bus boycott . When the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) initiated a probe amid allegations of police misconduct for the arrests , Connor responded that he " [hadn 't] got any damn apology to the FBI or anybody else " , and predicted , " If the North keeps trying to cram this thing [desegregation] down our throats , there 's going to be bloodshed . " In 1961 , Connor delayed sending police to intervene when Freedom Riders were beaten by local mobs . The police harassed religious leaders and protest organizers by ticketing cars parked at mass meetings and entering the meetings in plainclothes to take notes . The Birmingham Fire Department interrupted such meetings to search for " phantom fire hazards " . Connor was so antagonistic towards the Civil Rights Movement that his actions galvanized support for black Americans . President John F. Kennedy later said of him , " The Civil Rights movement should thank God for Bull Connor . He 's helped it as much as Abraham Lincoln . "

Turmoil in the mayor 's office also weakened the Birmingham city government in its opposition to the campaign . Connor , who had run for several elected offices in the months leading up to the campaign , had lost all but the race for Public Safety Commissioner . Because they believed Connor 's extreme conservatism slowed progress for the city as a whole , a group of white political moderates worked to defeat him . The Citizens for Progress was backed by the Chamber of Commerce and other white professionals in the city , and their tactics were successful . In November 1962 , Connor lost the race for mayor to Albert Boutwell , a less combative segregationist . However , Connor and his colleagues on the City Commission refused to accept the new mayor 's authority . They claimed on a technicality that their terms would not expire until 1965 instead of in the spring of 1963 . So for a brief time , Birmingham had two city governments attempting to conduct business .

= = Focus on Birmingham = =

= = = Selective buying campaign = = =

Modeled on the Montgomery Bus Boycott , protest actions in Birmingham began in 1962 , when students from local colleges arranged for a year of staggered boycotts . They caused downtown business to decline by as much as 40 percent , which attracted attention from Chamber of Commerce president Sidney Smyer , who commented that the " racial incidents have given us a black eye that we 'll be a long time trying to forget " . In response to the boycott , the City Commission of Birmingham punished the black community by withdrawing \$ 45 @,@ 000 (\$ 350 @,@ 000 in 2016) from a surplus @-@ food program used primarily by low @-@ income blacks . The result , however , was a black community more motivated to resist .

The SCLC decided that economic pressure on Birmingham businesses would be more effective than pressure on politicians , a lesson learned in Albany as few blacks were registered to vote in 1962 . In the spring of 1963 , before Easter , the Birmingham boycott intensified during the second @-@ busiest shopping season of the year . Pastors urged their congregations to avoid shopping in Birmingham stores in the downtown district . For six weeks supporters of the boycott patrolled the downtown area to make sure blacks were not patronizing stores that promoted or tolerated segregation . If black shoppers were found in these stores , organizers confronted them and shamed them into participating in the boycott . Shuttlesworth recalled a woman whose \$ 15 hat (\$ 120 in 2016) was destroyed by boycott enforcers . Campaign participant Joe Dickson recalled , " We had to go under strict surveillance . We had to tell people , say look : if you go downtown and buy something , you 're going to have to answer to us . " After several business owners in Birmingham took down " white only " and " colored only " signs , Commissioner Connor told business owners that if they did not obey the segregation ordinances , they would lose their business licenses .

= = = Project C = = =

Martin Luther King 's presence in Birmingham was not welcomed by all in the black community . A local black attorney complained in Time that the new city administration did not have enough time to confer with the various groups invested in changing the city 's segregation policies . Black hotel owner A. G. Gaston agreed . A white Jesuit priest assisting in desegregation negotiations attested the " demonstrations [were] poorly timed and misdirected " .

Protest organizers knew they would meet with violence from the Birmingham Police Department and chose a confrontational approach to get the attention of the federal government . Wyatt Tee Walker , one of the SCLC founders and the executive director from 1960 to 1964 , planned the tactics of the direct action protests , specifically targeting Bull Connor 's tendency to react to demonstrations with violence : " My theory was that if we mounted a strong nonviolent movement , the opposition would surely do something to attract the media , and in turn induce national sympathy

and attention to the everyday segregated circumstance of a person living in the Deep South . " He headed the planning of what he called Project C , which stood for " confrontation " . Organizers believed their phones were tapped , so to prevent their plans from being leaked and perhaps influencing the mayoral election , they used code words for demonstrations .

The plan called for direct nonviolent action to attract media attention to " the biggest and baddest city of the South " . In preparation for the protests , Walker timed the walking distance from the 16th Street Baptist Church , headquarters for the campaign , to the downtown area . He surveyed the segregated lunch counters of department stores , and listed federal buildings as secondary targets should police block the protesters ' entrance into primary targets such as stores , libraries , and all @-@ white churches .

== == Methods == ==

The campaign used a variety of nonviolent methods of confrontation , including sit @-@ ins at libraries and lunch counters , kneel @-@ ins by black visitors at white churches , and a march to the county building to mark the beginning of a voter @-@ registration drive . Most businesses responded by refusing to serve demonstrators . Some white spectators at a sit @-@ in at a Woolworth 's lunch counter spat upon the participants . A few hundred protesters , including jazz musician Al Hibbler , were arrested , although Hibbler was immediately released by Connor .

The SCLC 's goals were to fill the jails with protesters to force the city government to negotiate as demonstrations continued . However , not enough people were arrested to affect the functioning of the city and the wisdom of the plans were being questioned in the black community . The editor of The Birmingham World , the city 's black newspaper , called the direct actions by the demonstrators " wasteful and worthless " , and urged black citizens to use the courts to change the city 's racist policies . Most white residents of Birmingham expressed shock at the demonstrations . White religious leaders denounced King and the other organizers , saying that " a cause should be pressed in the courts and the negotiations among local leaders , and not in the streets " . Some white Birmingham residents were supportive as the boycott continued . When one black woman entered Loveman 's department store to buy her children Easter shoes , a white saleswoman said to her , " Negro , ain 't you ashamed of yourself , your people out there on the street getting put in jail and you in here spending money and I 'm not going to sell you any , you 'll have to go some other place . " King promised a protest every day until " peaceful equality had been assured " and expressed doubt that the new mayor would ever voluntarily desegregate the city .

== == City reaction == ==

On April 10 , 1963 , Bull Connor obtained an injunction barring the protests and subsequently raised bail bond for those arrested from \$ 300 to \$ 1 @,@ 200 (\$ 2 @,@ 000 to \$ 9 @,@ 000 in 2016) . Fred Shuttlesworth called the injunction a " flagrant denial of our constitutional rights " and organizers prepared to defy the order . The decision to ignore the injunction had been made during the planning stage of the campaign . King and the SCLC had obeyed court injunctions in their Albany protests and reasoned that obeying them contributed to the Albany campaign 's lack of success . In a press release they explained , " We are now confronted with recalcitrant forces in the Deep South that will use the courts to perpetuate the unjust and illegal systems of racial separation " . Incoming mayor Albert Boutwell called King and the SCLC organizers " strangers " whose only purpose in Birmingham was " to stir inter @-@ racial discord " . Connor promised , " You can rest assured that I will fill the jail full of any persons violating the law as long as I 'm at City Hall . "

The movement organizers found themselves out of money after the amount of required bail was raised . Because King was the major fundraiser , his associates urged him to travel the country to raise bail money for those arrested . He had , however , previously promised to lead the marchers to jail in solidarity , but hesitated as the planned date arrived . Some SCLC members grew frustrated with his indecisiveness . " I have never seen Martin so troubled " , one of King 's friends later said . After King prayed and reflected alone in his hotel room , he and the campaign leaders decided to

defy the injunction and prepared for mass arrests of campaign supporters . To build morale and to recruit volunteers to go to jail , Ralph Abernathy spoke at a mass meeting of Birmingham 's black citizens at the 16th Street Baptist Church : " The eyes of the world are on Birmingham tonight . Bobby Kennedy is looking here at Birmingham , the United States Congress is looking at Birmingham . The Department of Justice is looking at Birmingham . Are you ready , are you ready to make the challenge ? I am ready to go to jail , are you ? " With Abernathy , King was among 50 Birmingham residents ranging in age from 15 to 81 years who were arrested on Good Friday , April 12 , 1963 . It was King 's 13th arrest .

= = = Martin Luther King jailed = = =

Martin Luther King Jr. was held in the Birmingham jail and was denied a consultation with an attorney from the NAACP without guards present . When historian Jonathan Bass wrote of the incident in 2001 , he noted that news of King 's incarceration was spread quickly by Wyatt Tee Walker , as planned . King 's supporters sent telegrams about his arrest to the White House . He could have been released on bail at any time , and jail administrators wished him to be released as soon as possible to avoid the media attention while King was in custody . However , campaign organizers offered no bail in order " to focus the attention of the media and national public opinion on the Birmingham situation " .

Twenty @-@ four hours after his arrest , King was allowed to see local attorneys from the SCLC . When Coretta Scott King did not hear from her husband , she called Walker and he suggested that she call President Kennedy directly . Mrs. King was recuperating at home after the birth of their fourth child when she received a call from President Kennedy the Monday after the arrest . The president told her she could expect a call from her husband soon . When Martin Luther King called his wife , their conversation was brief and guarded ; he correctly assumed that his phones were tapped . Several days later , Jacqueline Kennedy called Coretta Scott King to express her concern for King while he was incarcerated .

Using scraps of paper given to him by a janitor , notes written on the margins of a newspaper , and later a legal pad given to him by SCLC attorneys , King wrote his essay " Letter from Birmingham Jail " . It responded to eight politically moderate white clergymen who accused King of agitating local residents and not giving the incoming mayor a chance to make any changes . Bass suggested that " Letter from Birmingham Jail " was pre @-@ planned , as was every move King and his associates made in Birmingham . The essay was a culmination of many of King 's ideas , which he had touched on in earlier writings . King 's arrest attracted national attention , including that of corporate officers of retail chains with stores in downtown Birmingham . After King 's arrest , the chains ' profits began to erode . National business owners pressed the Kennedy administration to intervene . King was released on April 20 , 1963 .

= = Conflict escalation = =

= = = Recruiting students = = =

Despite the publicity surrounding King 's arrest , the campaign was faltering because few demonstrators were willing to risk arrest . In addition , although Connor had used police dogs to assist in the arrest of demonstrators , this did not attract the media attention that organizers had hoped for . To re @-@ energize the campaign , SCLC organizer James Bevel devised a controversial alternative plan he named D Day that was later called the " Children 's Crusade " by Newsweek magazine . D Day called for students from Birmingham elementary schools and high schools as well as nearby Miles College to take part in the demonstrations .

Bevel , a veteran of earlier nonviolent student protests with the Nashville Student Movement and SNCC , had been named SCLC 's Director of Direct Action and Nonviolent Education . After initiating the idea he organized and educated the students in nonviolence tactics and philosophy .

King hesitated to approve the use of children , but Bevel believed that children were appropriate for the demonstrations because jail time for them would not hurt families economically as much as the loss of a working parent . He also saw that adults in the black community were divided about how much support to give the protests . Bevel and the organizers knew that high school students were a more cohesive group ; they had been together as classmates since kindergarten . He recruited girls who were school leaders and boys who were athletes . Bevel found girls more receptive to his ideas because they had less experience as victims of white violence . When the girls joined , however , the boys were close behind .

Bevel and the SCLC held workshops to help students overcome their fear of dogs and jails . They showed films of the Nashville sit @-@ ins organized in 1960 to end segregation at public lunch counters . Birmingham 's black radio station , WENN , supported the new plan by telling students to arrive at the demonstration meeting place with a toothbrush to be used in jail . Flyers were distributed in black schools and neighborhoods that said , " Fight for freedom first then go to school " and " It 's up to you to free our teachers , our parents , yourself , and our country . "

= = = Children 's Crusade = = =

On May 2 , more than a thousand students skipped school and gathered at the 16th Street Baptist Church . The principal of Parker High School attempted to lock the gates to keep students in , but they scrambled over the walls to get to the church . Demonstrators were given instructions to march to the downtown area , to meet with the Mayor , and integrate the chosen buildings . They were to leave in smaller groups and continue on their courses until arrested . Marching in disciplined ranks , some of them using walkie @-@ talkies , they were sent at timed intervals from various churches to the downtown business area . More than 600 students were arrested ; the youngest of these was reported to be eight years old . Children left the churches while singing hymns and " freedom songs " such as " We Shall Overcome " . They clapped and laughed while being arrested and awaiting transport to jail . The mood was compared to that of a school picnic . Although Bevel informed Connor that the march was to take place , Connor and the police were dumbfounded by the numbers and behavior of the children . They assembled paddy wagons and school buses to take the children to jail . When no squad cars were left to block the city streets , Connor , whose authority extended to the fire department , used fire trucks . The day 's arrests brought the total number of jailed protesters to 1 @,@ 200 in the 900 @-@ capacity Birmingham jail .

The use of children proved very controversial . Incoming mayor Albert Boutwell and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy condemned the decision to use children in the protests . Kennedy was reported in The New York Times as saying , " an injured , maimed , or dead child is a price that none of us can afford to pay " , although adding , " I believe that everyone understands their just grievances must be resolved . " Malcolm X criticized the decision , saying , " Real men don 't put their children on the firing line . "

King , who had been silent and then out of town while Bevel was organizing the children , was impressed by the success of using them in the protests . That evening he declared at a mass meeting , " I have been inspired and moved by today . I have never seen anything like it . " Although Wyatt Tee Walker was initially against the use of children in the demonstrations , he responded to criticism by saying , " Negro children will get a better education in five days in jail than in five months in a segregated school . " The D Day campaign received front page coverage by The Washington Post and The New York Times .

= = = Fire hoses and police dogs = = =

When Connor realized that the Birmingham jail was full , on May 3 he changed police tactics to keep protesters out of the downtown business area . Another thousand students gathered at the church and left to walk across Kelly Ingram Park while chanting , " We 're going to walk , walk , walk . Freedom ... freedom ... freedom . " As the demonstrators left the church , police warned them to stop and turn back , " or you 'll get wet " . When they continued , Connor ordered the city 's fire

hoses , set at a level that would peel bark off a tree or separate bricks from mortar , to be turned on the children . Boys ' shirts were ripped off , and young women were pushed over the tops of cars by the force of the water . When the students crouched or fell , the blasts of water rolled them down the asphalt streets and concrete sidewalks . Connor allowed white spectators to push forward , shouting , " Let those people come forward , sergeant . I want ' em to see the dogs work . "

A.G. Gaston , who was appalled at the idea of using children , was on the phone with white attorney David Vann trying to negotiate a resolution to the crisis . When Gaston looked out the window and saw the children being hit with high @-@ pressure water , he said , " Lawyer Vann , I can 't talk to you now or ever . My people are out there fighting for their lives and my freedom . I have to go help them " , and hung up the phone . Black parents and adults who were observing cheered the marching students , but when the hoses were turned on , bystanders began to throw rocks and bottles at the police . To disperse them , Connor ordered police to use German shepherd dogs to keep them in line . James Bevel wove in and out of the crowds warning them , " If any cops get hurt , we 're going to lose this fight . " At 3 p.m. , the protest was over . During a kind of truce , protesters went home . Police removed the barricades and re @-@ opened the streets to traffic . That evening King told worried parents in a crowd of a thousand , " Don 't worry about your children who are in jail . The eyes of the world are on Birmingham . We 're going on in spite of dogs and fire hoses . We 've gone too far to turn back . "

= = = Images of the day = = =

A battle @-@ hardened Huntley @-@ Brinkley reporter later said that no military action he had witnessed had ever frightened or disturbed him as much as what he saw in Birmingham . Two out @-@ of @-@ town photographers in Birmingham that day were Charles Moore , who had previously worked with the Montgomery Advertiser and was now working for Life magazine , and Bill Hudson , with the Associated Press . Moore was a Marine combat photographer who was " jarred " and " sickened " by the use of children and what the Birmingham police and fire departments did to them . Moore was hit in the ankle by a brick meant for the police . He took several photos that were printed in Life . The first photo Moore shot that day showed three teenagers being hit by a water jet from a high @-@ pressure firehose . It was titled " They Fight a Fire That Won 't Go Out " . A shorter version of the caption was later used as the title for Fred Shuttlesworth 's biography . The Life photo became an " era @-@ defining picture " and was compared to the photo of Marines raising the U.S. flag on Iwo Jima . Moore suspected that the film he shot " was likely to obliterate in the national psyche any notion of a ' good southerner ' . " Hudson remarked later that his only priorities that day were " making pictures and staying alive " and " not getting bit by a dog . "

Right in front of Hudson stepped Parker High School senior Walter Gadsden when a police officer grabbed the young man 's sweater and a police dog charged him . Gadsden had been attending the demonstration as an observer . He was related to the editor of Birmingham 's black newspaper , The Birmingham World , who strongly disapproved of King 's leadership in the campaign . Gadsden was arrested for " parading without a permit " , and after witnessing his arrest , Commissioner Connor remarked to the officer , " Why didn 't you bring a meaner dog ; this one is not the vicious one . " Hudson 's photo of Gadsden and the dog ran across three columns in the prominent position above the fold on the front page of The New York Times on May 4 , 1963 .

Television cameras broadcast to the nation the scenes of fire hoses knocking down schoolchildren and police dogs attacking unprotected demonstrators . Such coverage and photos were given credit for shifting international support to the protesters and making Bull Connor " the villain of the era " . President Kennedy told a group of people at the White House that The New York Times photo made him " sick " . Kennedy called the scenes " shameful " and said that they were " so much more eloquently reported by the news camera than by any number of explanatory words . "

The images also had a profound effect in Birmingham . Despite decades of disagreements , when the photos were released , " the black community was instantaneously consolidated behind King " , according to David Vann , who would later serve as mayor of Birmingham . Horrified at what the Birmingham police were doing to protect segregation , New York Senator Jacob K. Javits declared ,

" the country won 't tolerate it " , and pressed Congress to pass a civil rights bill . Similar reactions were reported by Kentucky Senator Sherman Cooper , and Oregon Senator Wayne Morse , who compared Birmingham to South Africa under apartheid . A New York Times editorial called the behavior of the Birmingham police " a national disgrace . " The Washington Post editorialized , " The spectacle in Birmingham ... must excite the sympathy of the rest of the country for the decent , just , and reasonable citizens of the community , who have so recently demonstrated at the polls their lack of support for the very policies that have produced the Birmingham riots . The authorities who tried , by these brutal means , to stop the freedom marchers do not speak or act in the name of the enlightened people of the city . " President Kennedy sent Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall to Birmingham to help negotiate a truce . Marshall faced a stalemate when merchants and protest organizers refused to budge .

= = = Standoff = = =

Black onlookers in the area of Kelly Ingram Park abandoned nonviolence on May 5 . Spectators taunted police , and SCLC leaders begged them to be peaceful or go home . James Bevel borrowed a bullhorn from the police and shouted , " Everybody get off this corner . If you 're not going to demonstrate in a nonviolent way , then leave ! " Commissioner Connor was overheard saying , " If you 'd ask half of them what freedom means , they couldn 't tell you . " To prevent further marches , Connor ordered the doors to the churches blocked to prevent students from leaving .

By May 6 , the jails were so full that Connor transformed the stockade at the state fairgrounds into a makeshift jail to hold protesters . Blacks arrived at white churches to integrate services . They were accepted in Roman Catholic , Episcopal , and Presbyterian churches but turned away at others , where they knelt and prayed until they were arrested . Well @-@ known national figures arrived to show support . Singer Joan Baez arrived to perform for free at Miles College and stayed at the black @-@ owned and integrated Gaston Motel . Comedian Dick Gregory and Barbara Deming , a writer for The Nation , were both arrested . The young Dan Rather reported for CBS News . The car of Fannie Flagg , a local television personality and recent Miss Alabama finalist , was surrounded by teenagers who recognized her . Flagg worked at Channel 6 on the morning show , and after asking her producers why the show was not covering the demonstrations , she received orders never to mention them on air . She rolled down the window and shouted to the children , " I 'm with you all the way ! "

Birmingham 's fire department refused orders from Connor to turn the hoses on demonstrators again , and waded through the basement of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church to clean up water from earlier fire @-@ hose flooding . White business leaders met with protest organizers to try arrange an economic solution but said they had no control over politics . Protest organizers disagreed , saying that business leaders were positioned to pressure political leaders .

= = = City paralysis = = =

The situation reached a crisis on May 7 , 1963 . Breakfast in the jail took four hours to distribute to all the prisoners . Seventy members of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce pleaded with the protest organizers to stop the actions . The NAACP asked for sympathizers to picket in unity in 100 American cities . Nineteen rabbis from New York flew to Birmingham , equating silence about segregation to the atrocities of the Holocaust . Local rabbis disagreed and asked them to go home . The editor of The Birmingham News wired President Kennedy and pleaded with him to end the protests .

Fire hoses were used once again , injuring police and Fred Shuttlesworth , as well as other demonstrators . Commissioner Connor expressed regret at missing seeing Shuttlesworth get hit and said he " wished they 'd carried him away in a hearse " . Another 1 @, @ 000 people were arrested , bringing the total to 2 @, @ 500 .

News of the mass arrests of children had reached Western Europe and the Soviet Union . The Soviet Union devoted up to 25 percent of its news broadcast to the demonstrations , sending much

of it to Africa , where Soviet and U.S. interests clashed . Soviet news commentary accused the Kennedy administration of neglect and " inactivity " . Alabama Governor George Wallace sent state troopers to assist Connor . Attorney General Robert Kennedy prepared to activate the Alabama National Guard and notified the Second Infantry Division from Fort Benning , Georgia that it might be deployed to Birmingham .

No business of any kind was being conducted downtown . Organizers planned to flood the downtown area businesses with black people . Smaller groups of decoys were set out to distract police attention from activities at the 16th Street Baptist Church . Protesters set off false fire alarms to occupy the fire department and its hoses . One group of children approached a police officer and announced , " We want to go to jail ! " When the officer pointed the way , the students ran across Kelly Ingram Park shouting , " We 're going to jail ! " Six hundred picketers reached downtown Birmingham . Large groups of protesters sat in stores and sang freedom songs . Streets , sidewalks , stores , and buildings were overwhelmed with more than 3 @,@ 000 protesters . The sheriff and chief of police admitted to Burke Marshall that they did not think they could handle the situation for more than a few hours .

= = = Resolution = = =

On May 8 at 4 a.m. , white business leaders agreed to most of the protesters ' demands . Political leaders held fast , however . The rift between the businessmen and the politicians became clear when business leaders admitted they could not guarantee the protesters ' release from jail . On May 10 , Fred Shuttlesworth and Martin Luther King told reporters that they had an agreement from the City of Birmingham to desegregate lunch counters , restrooms , drinking fountains and fitting rooms within 90 days , and to hire blacks in stores as salesmen and clerks . Those in jail would be released on bond or their own recognizance . Urged by Kennedy , the United Auto Workers , National Maritime Union , United Steelworkers Union , and the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL @-@ CIO) raised \$ 237 @,@ 000 in bail money (\$ 1 @,@ 830 @,@ 000 in 2016) to free the demonstrators . Commissioner Connor and the outgoing mayor condemned the resolution .

On the night of May 11 , a bomb heavily damaged the Gaston Motel where King had been staying ? and had left only hours before ? and another damaged the house of A. D. King , Martin Luther King 's brother . When police went to inspect the motel , they were met with rocks and bottles from neighborhood blacks . The arrival of state troopers only further angered the crowd ; in the early hours of the morning , thousands of blacks rioted , numerous buildings and vehicles were burned , and several people , including a police officer , were stabbed . By May 13 , three thousand federal troops were deployed to Birmingham to restore order , even though Alabama Governor George Wallace told President Kennedy that state and local forces were sufficient . Martin Luther King returned to Birmingham to stress nonviolence .

Outgoing mayor Art Hanes left office after the Alabama State Supreme Court ruled that Albert Boutwell could take office on May 21 , 1963 . Upon picking up his last paycheck , Bull Connor remarked tearfully , " This is the worst day of my life . " In June 1963 , the Jim Crow signs regulating segregated public places in Birmingham were taken down .

= = After the campaign = =

Desegregation in Birmingham took place slowly after the demonstrations . King and the SCLC were criticized by some for ending the campaign with promises that were too vague and " settling for a lot less than even moderate demands " . In fact , Sydney Smyer , president of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce , re @-@ interpreted the terms of the agreement . Shuttlesworth and King had announced that desegregation would take place 90 days from May 15 . Smyer then said that a single black clerk hired 90 days from when the new city government took office would be sufficient . By July , most of the city 's segregation ordinances had been overturned . Some of the lunch counters in department stores complied with the new rules . City parks and golf courses were

opened again to black and white citizens . Mayor Boutwell appointed a biracial committee to discuss further changes . However , no hiring of black clerks , police officers , and firefighters had yet been completed and the Birmingham Bar Association rejected membership by black attorneys .

The campaign brought national and international attention to racist violence in Birmingham . Fear that unrest might spread provoked a meeting of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy with James Baldwin and other Black leaders .

The reputation of Martin Luther King soared after the protests in Birmingham , and he was lauded by many as a hero . The SCLC was much in demand to effect change in many Southern cities . In the summer of 1963 , King led the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where he delivered his most famous speech , " I Have a Dream " . King became Time 's Man of the Year for 1963 and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 .

The Birmingham campaign , as well as George Wallace 's refusal to admit black students to the University of Alabama , convinced President Kennedy to address the severe inequalities between black and white citizens in the South : " The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased cries for equality that no city or state or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them . " Despite the apparent lack of immediate local success after the Birmingham campaign , Fred Shuttlesworth and Wyatt Tee Walker pointed to its influence on national affairs as its true impact . President Kennedy 's administration drew up the Civil Rights Act bill . After being filibustered for 75 days by " diehard southerners " in Congress , it was passed into law in 1964 and signed by President Lyndon Johnson . The Civil Rights Act applied to the entire nation , prohibiting racial discrimination in employment and in access to public places . Roy Wilkins of the NAACP , however , disagreed that the Birmingham campaign was the primary force behind the Civil Rights Act . Wilkins gave credit to other movements , such as the Freedom Rides , the integration of the University of Mississippi , and campaigns to end public school segregation .

Birmingham 's public schools were integrated in September 1963 . Governor Wallace sent National Guard troops to keep black students out but President Kennedy reversed Wallace by ordering the troops to stand down . Violence continued to plague the city , however . Someone threw a tear gas canister into Loveman 's department store when it complied with the desegregation agreement ; twenty people in the store required hospital treatment .

Four months after the Birmingham campaign settlement , someone bombed the house of NAACP attorney Arthur Shores , injuring his wife in the attack .

On September 15 , 1963 , Birmingham again earned international attention when Ku Klux Klan members bombed the 16th Street Baptist Church on a Sunday morning and killed four young girls .

The Birmingham campaign inspired the Civil Rights Movement in other parts of the South . Two days after King and Shuttlesworth announced the settlement in Birmingham , Medgar Evers of the NAACP in Jackson , Mississippi demanded a biracial committee to address concerns there . On June 12 , 1963 , Evers was fatally shot outside his home . He had been organizing demonstrations similar to those in Birmingham to pressure Jackson 's city government . In 1965 Shuttlesworth assisted Bevel , King , and the SCLC to lead the Selma to Montgomery marches , intended to increase voter registration among blacks .

= = = Campaign impact = = =

Historian Glenn Eskew wrote that the campaign " led to an awakening to the evils of segregation and a need for reforms in the region . " The black middle class generally assumed leadership in Birmingham and the SCLC , and the black underclass still struggled . According to Eskew , the riots that occurred after the bombing of the Gaston Motel foreshadowed rioting in larger cities later in the 1960s . ACMHR vice president Abraham Woods claimed that the rioting in Birmingham set a precedent for the " Burn , baby , burn " mindset , a cry used in later civic unrest in the Watts Riots , the 12th Street riots in Detroit , and other American cities in the 1960s . A study of the Watts riots concluded , " The ' rules of the game ' in race relations were permanently changed in Birmingham . "

Wyatt Tee Walker wrote that the Birmingham campaign was " legend " and had become the Civil

Rights Movement 's most important chapter . It was " the chief watershed of the nonviolent movement in the United States . It marked the maturation of the SCLC as a national force in the civil rights arena of the land that had been dominated by the older and stodgier NAACP . " Walker called the Birmingham campaign and the Selma marches " Siamese twins " joining to " kill segregation ... and bury the body " . Jonathan Bass declared that " King had won a tremendous public relations victory in Birmingham " but also stated pointedly that " it was the citizens of the Magic City , both black and white , and not Martin Luther King and the SCLC , that brought about the real transformation of the city . "