

JOURNEY FOR EQUALITY

MORGANTON, NC

TIMELINE



THE 1950S AND '60S WERE THE HEIGHT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE CONTINUED STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL AND RACIAL JUSTICE FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES. THE CIVIL WAR ABOLISHED SLAVERY, BUT IT DID NOT END DISCRIMINATION. AFRICAN AMERICANS, ALONG WITH HELP FROM MANY WHITE COLLEAGUES, MOBILIZED AND BEGAN AN UNPRECEDENTED JOURNEY FOR EQUALITY. LISTED HERE MOVEMENTS AND MARCHES INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING SOCIAL CHANGE DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN BURKE COUNTY NC.

A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL

IN 1958, MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL OPENED AND SEPARATED STUDENTS FROM 1ST TO 8TH GRADE FROM OLIVE HILL HIGH SCHOOL, WHICH SERVED STUDENTS IN GRADES 9TH TO 12TH. THIS DIVISION CREATED A GREATER NEED FOR STUDENT TRANSPORTATION.



1959-1962

Efforts by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the local branch of the NAACP resulted in organizing citywide protests and marches, advocating for transportation services for children to attend Mountain View and Olive Hill schools. To move things forward, seven mothers volunteered to meet with the Morganton City Council and Morganton City Schools board. The first positive outcome of this initiative was the arrangement made with the city & Suburban Coach to provide transportation services with drop-off points on Green St., making it more accessible for children to walk to Mountain View and Olive Hill High School respectively. Families continued to meet with local government officials and privately at various locations to address other concerns.

1963 - 64 SCHOOL YEAR CHILDREN REASSIGNED

MORGANTON HIGH SCHOOL

PATRICIA THOMBS* LORRAINE JOHNSON
EUGENE THOMAS

MORGANTON JUNIOR HIGH

FRANCIS CLARK* JOSEPH CLARK
HENRY HICKS* ERVIN CHAMBERS

FLORENCE AVERY* CHARLES FORNEY, JR.
BARBARA ROSEBORO * NANCY LARGENT

KENNY HICKS * ANNA BELL CHAMBERS
MILDRED WILSON



ANNIE J HICKS, RUTH FORNEY, WILLETT CHAMBERS,
LAURA THOMAS, LUCILLE RUTHERFORD,
MILDRED LARGENT, ROSE JOHNSON

1954 - 1960

1954 *Brown v. Board of Education*

Montgomery Bus Boycott

1956 - 1960

- The Supreme Court Declares Bus Segregation Unconstitutional (1956)*
- The 1960 Presidential Election (Kennedy elected)*
- The Desegregation of Interstate Travel (1960)*

SONGS OF THE MOVEMENT

AIN'T GONNA LET NOBODY TURN ME AROUND

PEOPLE GET READY, THERE'S A TRAIN A COMIN'

CHANGE GONNA COME!

SAY IT LOUD! I'M BLACK & I'M PROUD!

TO BE YOUNG, GIFTED & BLACK

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING 1958-1959

Families struggling to find dependable and budget-friendly transportation for their children came together to tackle the issue. They collaborated with the local NAACP branch, holding meetings at Slades Chapel, Gaston Chapel, and New Bethel Baptist Church to work towards finding a solution.

1961-1963

June 11, 1963, Morganton City School board approved the reassignment of 30 Negro students whose parents requested changes to schools nearer their homes

FOREST HILL

JAMES AVERY* MICHAEL CORPENING
SARAH RUTH LARGENT

RUTH ROSEBORO* CANDACE FORNEY

GARY CHAMBERS * SANDRA LARGENT

TERRANCE FORNEY* DENNIS CHAMBERS

FRANCIS JEAN CHAMBERS* ELWOOD AVERY

WANDA LARGENT * LILA LAVERNE AVERY

CENTRAL ELEMENTARY

BEVERLY FORNEY * MARYLIN FORNEY

ANDREA CHAMBERS * ROBERT FORNEY

School choice was available until the 1964-1965 school year, after which schools were fully integrated in 1965 - 66 forward.

HISTORICAL MARKER COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2022 - 2023

ALICIA CONNELLY
BEVERLY CARLTON
GARY HARBISON
LAURIE JOHNSTON

RUTH ROSEBORO
MARY CHARLOTTE SAFFORD
PHYLISS WOGAN

Acknowledgments

Burke County Public Library * Burke County History Museum

NC African American Heritage Commission

SHARING OUR STORIES

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

WELCOME & INVOCATION

FREEDOM SONGS

WORDS OF SUPPORT

EVENT PURPOSE & HISTORICAL CONTENT

GLIMPSES OF THE HISTORICAL PERIOD

CLOSING REMARKS

GARY HARBISON, COMMITTEE MEMBER

REV. STEPHEN WINGATE, PASTOR SLADES CHAPEL

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION - WILLETT MCINTOSH

MAYOR RONNIE THOMPSON

DR. LESLIE MCKESSON, MEMBER
NC AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION

ANDREA CHAMBERS LYCLE - MOTHER WILLETT CHAMBERS
DIANE THOMAS TATE - MOTHER LAURA THOMAS

RUTH ROSEBORO - COMMITTEE MEMBER
RECOGNITION OF THE CHILDREN

UNVEILING & DEDICATION OF MARKER

PLEASE JOIN US FOR FELLOWSHIP & REPASS IN FELLOWSHIP HALL! THANKS SLADES CHAPEL HOST

SOLDIERS IN THE ARMY OF THE LORD 1959 - 1963

The Jim Crow era was an oppressive time for the African American community as they were enacted in many states to legalize racial segregation. These laws, which spanned around a century from the post-Civil War era until 1968, aimed to marginalize African Americans by denying them basic rights such as voting, employment, education, and other opportunities. Those who dared to challenge these unjust laws faced severe consequences, including arrest, fines, imprisonment, violence, and even death.

However, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, sparked by Rosa Parks' courageous act of defiance, began to awaken the consciousness of African Americans and embolden them to challenge Jim Crow laws, particularly in relation to education, justice and economic opportunities. African Americans were forbidden from entering public schools, parks; theaters and restaurants were segregated as well. Segregated waiting rooms, water fountains, restrooms, building entrances, elevators, cemeteries, and even amusement park cashier windows became the norm.

In 1950's, the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum with the work of organizations like the NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership Conference and SNCC. In 1954, the Supreme Court made a landmark ruling in Brown v. Board of Education, deeming educational segregation unconstitutional and effectively ending the era of "separate but equal" education. In 1958, Mountain View Elementary School opened separating Olive Hill Schools into elementary and high schools specifically for the African American community.

However, the opening of Mountain View Elementary School exacerbated transportation issues that already existed within the community. Very few families had access to transportation, let alone reliable means of transportation. Teachers were the main car owners but were reluctant to provide rides to students. Boonies' taxi cab service was expensive and out of reach for most families. Moreover, the schools were not easily accessible on foot, creating long journeys for children from neighborhoods such as West Concord, Jordan Hill, Rockyford, Vine Arden, Bouchelle, the Canyon and other outlying areas in the city limits of Morganton.

In response to these challenges, the community organized meetings at Slades Chapel AME Zion Church, led by the Burke County Branch of the NAACP. Out of the numerous attendees, seven courageous women volunteered to represent the group in their efforts to secure transportation support services from the city of Morganton and the Morganton City Schools. These meetings incorporated scriptural teachings and included songs like "Soldiers in the Army of the Lord." Participants learned about nonviolent conflict resolution methods advocated by the NAACP and willingly participated in local nonviolent protests and marches through downtown Morganton.

Gatherings often took place on the front steps of Slades Chapel, where attendees sang protest songs and shared their stories, highlighting the urgent need for public transportation services for the children attending school. Initially, the City of Morganton conceded to limited transportation through the Suburban Coach Bus Company, but the routes did not extend all the way to the schools. Eventually, after many meetings and protests, in 1962, Morganton City Schools agreed to voluntary enrollment of African American students in nearby segregated white schools that were closer to their respective communities. Volunteer integration began during the 1963-64 school year. Organized efforts led by the 'Mothers' & the community succeeded in resolving the need for transportation.

NEGRO NATIONAL ANTHEM

LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING, 'TIL EARTH AND HEAVEN RING, RING WITH THE HARMONIES OF LIBERTY; LET OUR REJOICING RISE, HIGH AS THE LISTNING SKIES, LET IT RESOUND LOUD AS THE ROLLING SEA, ... SING A SONG FULL OF THE FAITH THAT THE DARK PAST HAS TAUGHT US, SING A SONG FULL OF THE HOPE THAT THE PRESENT HAS BROUGHT US; FACING THE RISING SUN OF OUR NEW DAY BEGUN, LET US MARCH ON 'TIL VICTORY IS WON.

STONY THE ROAD WE TROD, BITTER THE CHASTENING ROD, FELT IN THE DAYS WHEN HOPE UNBORN HAD DIED; YET WITH A STEADY BEAT, HAVE NOT OUR WEARY FEET, COME TO THE PLACE FOR WHICH OUR FATHERS SIGHED? WE HAVE COME OVER A WAY THAT WITH TEARS HAS BEEN WATERED, WE HAVE COME, TREADING OUR PATH THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE SLAUGHTERED, OUT FROM THE GLOOMY PAST, 'TIL NOW WE STAND AT LAST, WHERE THE WHITE GLEAM OF OUR BRIGHT STAR IS CAST.

GOD OF OUR WEARY YEARS, GOD OF OUR SILENT TEARS, THOU WHO HAS BROUGHT US THUS FAR ON THE WAY; THOU WHO HAS BY THY MIGHT, LED US INTO THE LIGHT, KEEP US FOREVER IN THE PATH, WE PRAY. LEST OUR FEET STRAY FROM THE PLACES, OUR GOD, WHERE WE MET THEE, OUR HEARTS DRUNK WITH THE WINE OF THE WORLD, WE FORGET THEE; SHADOWED BENEATH THY HAND, MAY WE FOREVER STAND, TRUE TO OUR GOD, TRUE TO OUR NATIVE LAND.

SOLDIERS IN THE ARMY OF THE LORD

WE ARE SOLDIERS IN THE ARMY, WE'VE GOTTO FIGHT ALTHOUGH WE HAVE TO CRY WE HAVE TO HOLD UP THE BLOOD STAINED BANNER, WE HAVE TO HOLD IT UP UNTIL WE DIE.

MY MOTHER WAS A SOLDIER SHE HAD HER HAND ON THE GOSPEL PLOW BUT THEN ONE DAY WHEN SHE GOT OLD COULDNT STAND BUT SHE SAID I'LL FIGHT ANYHOW (CHORUS)

MY FATHER WAS A SOLDIER HE HAD HIS HAND ON THE GOSPEL PLOW BUT ONE DAY HE GOT OLD COULDNT FIGHT ANYMORE, HE SAID I'LL STAND HERE AND FIGHT ANYHOW

WE HAVE TO HOLD IT UP, UNTIL WE DIE!

OH FREEDOM

OH, FREEDOM! OH, FREEDOM OVER ME! BEFORE I'LL BE A SLAVE, I'LL BE BURIED IN MY GRAVE.. AND GO HOME WITH MY LORD, UP ABOVE."

NO MORE MOURNING! NO MORE MOURNING! NO MORE MOURNING OVER ME! BEFORE I'LL BE A SLAVE, I'LL BE BURIED IN MY GRAVE.. AND GO HOME WITH MY LORD, UP ABOVE."

"NO MORE CRYING! NO MORE CRYING! NO MORE CRYING OVER ME! BEFORE I'LL BE A SLAVE, I'LL BE BURIED IN MY GRAVE.. AND GO HOME WITH MY LORD, UP ABOVE.

WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED

WE SHALL NOT BE, WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED; WE SHALL NOT BE WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED, JUST LIKE A TREE, PLANTED BY THE WATER, WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED.

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE, I'M GONNA LET IT SHINE,
THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE, I'M GONNA LET IT SHINE, THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE, I'M GONNA LET IT SHINE,LET IT SHINE, LET IT SHINE, LET IT SHINE!

WE SHALL OVERCOME, WE SHALL OVERCOME, WE SHALL OVERCOME SOMEDAY. OH, DEEP IN MY HEART, I DO BELIEVE, WE SHALL OVERCOME SOMEDAY

WE ARE NOT AFRAID, WE ARE NOT AFRAID, WE ARE NOT AFRAID TODAY.

WE ARE NOT ALONE, WE ARE NOT ALONE WE ARE NOT ALONE TODAY

THE TRUTH WILL MAKE US FREE, THE TRUTH WILL MAKE US FREE, (SOMEDAY)

WE'LL WALK HAND IN HAND, WE'LL WALK HAND IN HAND, (SOMEDAY)

THE LORD WILL SEE US THROUGH, THE LORD WILL SEE US THROUGH, (SOMEDAY)

BLACK AND WHITE TOGETHER, BLACK AND WHITE TOGETHER, (SOMEDAY)

WE SHALL ALL BE FREE, WE SHALL ALL BE FREE, WE SHALL ALL BE FREE SOMEDAY

HISTORY OF WE SHALL OVERCOME

HOW A SONG HELPED STEEL THE COURAGE OF BLACK AMERICANS AS THEY STRUGGLED TO SURMOUNT THE BARRIERS TO CIVIL RIGHTS.

ON SEPTEMBER 2, 1957, DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., VISITED HIGHLANDER FOLK SCHOOL IN TENNESSEE. PART OF THE SCHOOL'S MISSION WAS TO HELP PREPARE CIVIL RIGHTS WORKERS TO CHALLENGE UNJUST LAWS AND RACIST POLICIES THAT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST AFRICAN AMERICANS. THE SCHOOL ALSO MADE A POINT OF BRINGING BLACK AND WHITE PEOPLE TOGETHER TO SHARE EXPERIENCES AND TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER. IT WAS A DANGEROUS IDEA. AT A TIME WHEN SOUTHERN LAWS KEPT BLACK AND WHITE PEOPLE SEGREGATED (OR SEPARATE), SOME WHITE RACISTS TERRORIZED AFRICAN AMERICANS WITH DEADLY VIOLENCE. DR. KING DELIVERED THE MAIN SPEECH THAT DAY, HONORING THE SCHOOL'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY. AS PART OF THE MEETING, FOLK SINGER PETE SEEGER GOT UP WITH HIS BANJO. HE PLUCKED OUT A SONG HE HAD LEARNED AT HIGHLANDER AND LED THE AUDIENCE IN SINGING IT. LATER THAT DAY, DR. KING FOUND HIMSELF HUMMING THE TUNE IN THE CAR. "THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THAT SONG THAT HAUNTS YOU," HE SAID TO HIS COMPANIONS.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

THAT SONG WAS "WE SHALL OVERCOME." IT SOON BECAME THE ANTHEM OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT OF THE 1950S AND 1960S. IT OFFERED COURAGE, COMFORT, AND HOPE AS PROTESTERS CONFRONTED PREJUDICE AND HATE IN THE BATTLE FOR EQUAL RIGHTS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS.

PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON, A SOUTHERNER FROM TEXAS, SIGNED THE LANDMARK LEGISLATION ON AUGUST 6, 1964. IN A SPECIAL SPEECH BEFORE CONGRESS, HE USED THE TITLE OF THE SONG TO MAKE CLEAR HIS BELIEFS, SAYING:

"THIS GREAT, RICH, RESTLESS COUNTRY CAN OFFER OPPORTUNITY AND EDUCATION AND HOPE TO ALL: BLACK AND WHITE, NORTH AND SOUTH, SHARECROPPER AND CITY DWELLER. THESE ARE THE ENEMIES: POVERTY,

IGNORANCE, DISEASE. THEY ARE THE ENEMIES AND NOT OUR FELLOW MAN, NOT OUR NEIGHBOR. AND THESE ENEMIES TOO, POVERTY, DISEASE

AND IGNORANCE, WE SHALL OVERCOME."