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A comparison of the treatment on the Atlanta Sit-Ins (1960-1961) of the editorial pages of two Atlanta newspapers

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A COMPARISON OF THE TREATMENT OF THE ATLANTA
SIT-INS (1960-1961) ON THE EDITORIAL
PAGES OF TWO ATLANTA NEWSPAPERS

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
FELICIA BOWENS ANDERSON

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
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ABSTRACT

HISTORY

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A Comparison of the Treatment of the Atlanta Sit-Ins (1960-61) on the Editorial Pages of Two Atlanta Newspapers

Advisor: Dr. Margaret N. Rowley

Thesis Dated: May 1984

This study is an examination of the editorial pages of the Atlanta Constitution and the Atlanta Daily World for the purpose of comparing their treatment of the Atlanta sit-ins. Many studies have been made of the Atlanta Sit-In Movement but none of these has compared the treatment of the sit-ins as it appeared on editorial pages of Atlanta newspapers. The comparison of the Constitution and the World was of particular interest since both had and still have completely different audiences. The Constitution, white-owned and operated, had a largely white audience although it also had a wide black readership. The World, black-owned and operated, had a mainly black audience. An examination of editorial materials on the Atlanta lunch counter protests uncovered a wide variety of editorial materials, from the unsigned editorial to the cartoon. Both local and national writers expressed their views on the protests and the opinions varied widely. The editorial pages of both newspapers were examined from January 1, 1960 through March 31, 1961. Monday through Saturday editorial pages of the Constitution were viewed, but no Sunday Atlanta Journal and Constitution editorial pages were used for comparison.
since the Sunday editions contained columns by persons other than those who wrote regularly in the Constitution. The World, while called a daily, was published every day except Monday. Editorial pages of the World for August 20, September 8 and 27, October 15, 16, 26, 28, November 16 and December 20, 1960 and January 15 and February 21, 1961 were missing from microfilm reels of the newspaper examined at Georgia State University and the Atlanta Public Library. A check of the newspaper office resulted in the discovery of only two of these editorial pages, those for October 26 and 28, 1960.

Two major aspects of editorial coverage were considered. First, the editorial policy of each newspaper, as reflected in its unsigned editorials on the sit-ins was examined. The unsigned editorials were expressions of the newspaper's official position on various matters. Second, other (than unsigned editorials) types of material were examined to see if views different from the newspaper's were allowed expression.

Several questions were considered by the writer in this study. The first, did both newspapers give similar editorial commentary on major sit-in events? Next, did the black news organ provide its readers with supplemental information not found in the white news organ? Third, did the white newspaper describe the lunch counter protestors, many of whom were black, in a more negative manner than did the black newspaper?

These questions were kept in mind during the research period. The writer was aware, however, that great care had to be taken in arriving at conclusions in such matters as how a newspaper viewed blacks.

The primary sources for this comparison were the two newspapers, available at the Atlanta Public Library and Georgia State University.
Library and two interviews, one of a man closely connected with the sit-ins and one of an editorial writer. Many secondary works dealing with the lunch counter protests and newspapers were also consulted.
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INTRODUCTION

This study is an examination of the editorial pages of the Atlanta Constitution and the Atlanta Daily World for the purpose of comparing their treatment of the Atlanta sit-ins. Many studies have been made of the Atlanta Sit-In Movement\(^1\) but none of these has compared the treatment of the sit-ins as it appeared on editorial pages of Atlanta newspapers. The comparison of the Constitution and the World was of particular interest since both had and still have completely different audiences. The Constitution, white-owned and operated, had a largely white audience although it also had a wide black readership. The World, black-owned and operated, had a mainly black audience. An examination of editorial materials on the Atlanta lunch counter protests uncovered a wide variety of editorial materials, from the unsigned editorial to the cartoon. Both local and national writers expressed their views on the protests and the opinions varied widely. The editorial pages of both newspapers were examined from January 1, 1960 through March 31, 1961. Monday through Saturday editorial pages of the Constitution were viewed, but no Sunday Atlanta Journal and Constitution editorial pages were used for comparison since the Sunday editions contained columns by persons other than those who wrote regularly in the Constitution. The World, while called a daily,

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was published every day except Monday. Editorial pages of the World for August 20, September 8 and 27, October 15, 16, 26, 28, November 16 and December 20, 1960 and January 15 and February 21, 1961 were missing from microfilm reels of the newspaper examined at Georgia State University and the Atlanta Public Library. A check of the newspaper office resulted in the discovery of only two of these editorial pages, those for October 26 and 28, 1960.

The impetus for this study came from a 1942 thesis, "The Editorial Policy of the Atlanta Constitution on the Negro, 1931-1940," done at Atlanta University by Naomi Thorpe. Further insight was gained from a 1969 Atlanta University thesis, "Attitudes Towards Negroes as Reflected in the Atlanta Constitution, 1908-1918," by Eugene P. Walker. In making the current study of the editorial pages of two newspapers, two major aspects of editorial coverage were considered. First, the editorial policy of each newspaper, as reflected in its unsigned editorials on the sit-ins, was examined. The unsigned editorials were expressions of the newspaper's official position on various matters. Second, other (than unsigned editorials) types of material were examined to see if views different from the newspaper's were allowed expression. This material included letters to the editor, columns, editorial cartoons and editorials from other newspapers.

Several questions were considered by the writer in this study. The first, what editorial stance did each newspaper take on major sit-in events? Next, did the black news organ provide its readers with supplemental information not found in the white news organ? Third, did the white newspaper describe the lunch counter protestors, many of whom were black, in a more negative manner than did the black newspaper?
These questions were kept in mind during the research period. The writer was aware, however, that great care had to be taken in arriving at conclusions in such matters as how a newspaper viewed blacks.
"South of the North, yet north of the South, lies the City of a Hundred Hills."¹ This city of hills, Atlanta, Georgia had been little more than a frontier town as late as 1843, having a white population of about ten families.² The town gradually grew around the junction of three railroads³ and by 1947 it was incorporated under the name Marthasville.⁴ Despite this growth, the town had only 13,000 residents during the Civil War.⁵

After the war, however, Atlanta developed as a regional wholesaler, giving it the potential to outstrip other cities in importance. Supplies to the new country stores, which replaced the plantation system, now came by rail to Atlanta rather than by ship through port cities like Savannah and Charleston, and by 1900, Atlanta had replaced Savannah in importance


and had grown to a population of 90,000.¹

As the city progressed, Atlanta acquired a manufacturing industry and became a center for the collection of cotton and textile goods from the South and for manufactured goods from the North, thus making the city regional headquarters for many firms with Southeastern branches. Further impetus to Atlanta's growth came with the migration of rural people to the city in the 1920's. The coming of air traffic in the 1930's and the 1950's were further thrusts to the city's development.²

Throughout most of its post-Civil War growth, Atlanta profited from Chamber of Commerce booster campaigns. An early Chamber campaign entitled "Atlanta Spirit" employed the phoenix, which eventually became the official seal of the city, as a symbol of the city's rise from Sherman's destruction.³ Carnivals pointing to Atlanta's progress assumed a dominant role in the campaigns of the 1870's and 1880's and were attempts to expand the city's business.⁴ These events reached a pinnacle with the Cotton States Exposition of 1895.⁵

Another major Chamber promotion effort came in 1925 with the "Forward Atlanta Movement," especially associated with Ivan Allen, Sr. The Chamber spent almost a million dollars between 1925 and 1930 for national promotion

¹ Ibid., pp. 2-3.
² Hartshorn, Metropolis in Georgia, pp. 3, 345.
³ Ibid., p. 7.
⁵ Hartshorn, Metropolis in Georgia, p. 9.
of the city and growth did occur as new businesses came to the city between 1912 and 1929. In the 1960's, under the administration of Mayor Ivan Allen Jr., the Chamber reorganized the drive of Allen's father, calling it the "Forward Atlanta Campaign." It included a national advertising campaign and a six point plan of such programs as urban renewal and expressway development, construction of an auditorium-coliseum and a stadium, and development of a rapid transit system. During this campaign, Atlanta gained an important label as the city "too busy to hate."¹

During this post-Civil War growth, another institution, the Atlanta Constitution, sprang up in Atlanta. Born on June 16, 1868, the newspaper's name was "suggested by President Andrew Johnson as fitting for a Democratic newspaper seeking to fight for the restoration of constitutional government in the South."² Several editors came to the Constitution in the early years, but the newspaper's editor, Evan P. Howell, made a significant move in 1876 when he hired Henry Woodfin Grady as a political writer. By 1880, Grady had risen to the position of managing editor. In addition to his journalistic duties, Grady took on another task--spokesman for the New South--in which he sought to bring agricultural and industrial development to the South, as well as better relations with the North. He gained national recognition in 1886 with his famous New South speech to the New England Society of New York, and he

¹ Hartshorn, Metropolis in Georgia, p. 9.

criss-crossed the country preaching the virtues of a born-again South. The New South speech, although appealing to many, reflected an unrealistic and idealistic picture of the state of Southern blacks. In it, Grady said:

But what of the Negro? Have we solved the problem he presents or progressed in honor and equity toward solution? ... No section shows a more prosperous laboring population than the negroes of the South, none in fuller sympathy with the employing and land owning class. He shares our school fund, has the fullest protection of our laws and the friendship of our people.

After Grady's death from pneumonia in 1889, various editors and writers came to the Constitution, but in 1929, a man who was to be a prominent figure at the newspaper for nearly four decades joined the staff as a sports writer. Ralph Emerson McGill, a Tennessee native, rose rapidly, becoming sports editor two years after beginning as sports writer, then executive editor in 1938, editor in 1942 and publisher in 1960. For many years, he wrote a front page editorial column and it was this column that gained him the reputation as a moderate on racial matters. McGill, however, actually underwent a gradual change in his racial views from a segregation to an integration stance, and an important phase of this change occurred during the period that encompassed the sit-ins.

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1 Ibid.
As the Constitution moved along in its Democratic tradition, the Atlanta World was born on August 5, 1928. It was a weekly, founded by William A. (W. A.) Scott II, a black businessman, who hoped the newspaper would provide jobs for blacks and be a successful business venture. In the spring of 1931, it became a tri-weekly and on March 13, 1932, it became a daily newspaper and its name was changed to the Atlanta Daily World.¹

W. A. Scott had shown an industrious spirit early in life by selling umbrellas to pay his way through Morehouse College. He also printed and promoted a business directory, and in 1928 rented a building at 210 Auburn Avenue and launched the World. His interest in printing originated in childhood when his father, W. A. Scott, Sr., an Edwards, Mississippi minister, purchased a small press so that his wife could teach her sons printing. So, not only did W. A. Scott know printing, but so did his eight brothers and sisters and his mother, all of whom assisted him when he founded the World. Later, he turned the newspaper's management over to his 26-year-old younger brother, Cornelius Scott.²

Abruptly, the career of W. A. Scott ended when he was killed by an unknown assassin's bullet on February 7, 1934. His brother, Cornelius (C. A.), took the helm of the newspaper. A Morris Brown College graduate, C. A. Scott spent a year at the University of Kansas where he received a little training in journalism. He has been credited with building the


World into a solid business enterprise through his "business acumen developed from his natural propensity for the practical, the lessons he learned from the exacting 'school of experience,' and the responsibilities of proprietorship."\(^1\)

Early in his leadership of the World, C. A. Scott decided that the best way to preserve his brother's memory was to preserve the newspaper. In an arena (the black press) where newspapers appeared and disappeared rapidly, Scott accomplished the goal of preserving the World and went further to build it into a syndicate of newspapers during the Depression. Semi-weeklies were established in Birmingham, Alabama; Columbus, Georgia; and Chattanooga and Memphis, Tennessee.\(^2\) At the time of Vishnu Oak's study of the Negro newspaper, the World controlled a chain of twelve other newspapers that were printed entirely or partially in the newspaper's Atlanta office.\(^3\) The peak came in 1941 when the World's syndicate consisted of twenty-nine affiliates.\(^4\)

While the traditional view of the black press was that of a crusader for change, the World received the label of conservative from some of its critics. C. A. Scott explained the newspaper's policies by identifying himself as a New Deal Democrat and Roosevelt supporter in the thirties and

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1. Ibid., p. 100.
2. Ibid., p. 105.
4. Ibid., Chapter 9.
forties but as one who switched to the Republicans and Eisenhower in the fifties. He elaborated:

We started changing our focus in fifty-four. Prior to fifty-four I didn't care what the editors wrote, what headlines, or how much hate it caused, or what effect it would have . . . but we were . . . like an army. You move in with tactics of just destroying the opposition. But you don't apply those same tactics to mop up a town after you've conquered it . . .

Now I considered that with the fifty-four Decision that this country meant to straighten up and do right by its citizens, including us. And I--actually--being the publisher--I toned down. I paid more attention to our headlines and the effect it would have on our people after they'd read 'em. And because I didn't want to create a further cleavage of distrust and prejudice between the races . . . I couldn't make everybody on the staff change . . .

The editorials changed in fifty-four.1

In the Atlanta of Ralph McGill, C. A. Scott and the Chamber of Commerce booster campaigns, the year 1960 rolled around and brought with it racial controversy that was to capture the attention of the media, Chamber and citizenry. When seventy-seven blacks, most of them students from the predominantly black schools of the Atlanta University Center (AUC), were arrested after they sought service at segregated downtown lunch counters on March 15, 1960, debate over their use of the direct action method (the sit-in) began.

The students' protest action was actually part of a larger movement that was sweeping the South. On February 1, 1960, an idea born out of some college "bull sessions" became a reality as the first Southern sit-ins took place in Greensboro, North Carolina. Ezell Blair, Jr., David Richmond, Joseph McNeil and Franklin McCain decided it was time to do more than talk about the problem of segregation. The four men, freshmen

1 Blackwell, "Black-Controlled Media," p. 103.
at Greensboro's black North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College, decided to seek service at a local Woolworth's lunch counter and sit there until they were served. They had no idea what the results of their sit-in would be. The outcome of that lunch counter protest, however, affected dramatically the state of segregation throughout the South. Word of the event spread rapidly throughout Greensboro and North Carolina and many students, black and white, participated in sit-ins in a half-dozen North Carolina towns in the next two weeks.\footnote{Howell Raines, \textit{My Soul is Rested} (New York: Bantam Books, 1977), pp. 73-74, 79, 81.}

Students in Atlanta heard about what happened in North Carolina and began to meet and plan a course of action. Their first public move came in the form of a full-page advertisement, entitled "An Appeal for Human Rights," in local newspapers. The "Appeal" pointed to "inequalities and injustices in Atlanta and in Georgia against which we protest" and called upon those in authority "to assert themselves and abolish these injustices."\footnote{Atlanta Constitution, 9 March 1960.} Six days after the publication of the "Appeal", Atlanta students followed the lead of Blair and company.

The events in Greensboro, Atlanta and other Southern cities became part of the long history of opposition by American blacks to their country's racial discrimination. Since Africans had been brought to America as slaves, there had been major and minor slave revolts. Notable among these were the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy of 1822 and the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831. Then came freedom for the slaves with the Emancipation
Proclamation of 1863 and the Civil War victory for Union forces in 1865. The Reconstruction that followed the War gave hope to Southern blacks, many of whom were allowed to vote and hold public office for the first time. Fifteen years later, however, this hope was shattered with vigorous efforts to disfranchise Southern blacks. Segregation, Jim Crow and white supremacy reigned from the 1890's to the 1950's. Both North and South, blacks knew the reality of racism, lynching and race riots.

Several wars and eighty years later, the currents of a Second Reconstruction began. After World War II, Afro-Americans saw the possibilities for change and began to work hard for it. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) stepped up its efforts for equality and the federal executive branch, under President Harry S. Truman, was more sensitive to blacks. Some integration occurred in public housing, interstate transportation and employment. The migration of blacks from the South to the North and the West, which had been going on for decades, helped blacks in the North gain enough political power to hold the balance of power in close elections in several cities.

As was the case with the first Reconstruction, black drives for equality met with white violence and resistance. Notable examples included the 1950 bombing death of Florida NAACP leader Harry T. Moore and the 1955 lynching of Emmett Till in Mississippi. White violence against blacks was coupled with a new wave of anti-black organizations--notably the National Association for the Advancement of White People and the White Citizens Councils--and a drive to pass laws to maintain segregation.

One of the most significant events for black Americans in the 1950's was Brown v The Board of Education (1954), a case in which the Supreme
Court ruled that segregated schools were unconstitutional. This ruling, in effect, opened the way for a challenge of laws in many states that allowed for the maintenance of separate facilities for blacks and whites. These facilities were supposedly equal, but in many cases, the facilities for blacks were in much poorer condition and received much less state expenditure than the facilities for whites.

Blacks continued to push for justice. For example, a year of boycotting public buses in Montgomery, Alabama paid off in 1956 when that city agreed to integrate the buses. Voter registration drives that had begun after World War II brought results in 1959 with the elections of blacks to city council seats in Nashville and Oak Ridge, Tennessee and in North Carolina. Finally, blacks used sit-ins, which had been effectively applied in 1958 but which were first employed on a widespread scale in 1960 following the Greensboro sit-ins.\(^1\) A month and a half after Greensboro, Atlanta students utilized the lunch counter protest, although such action failed to gain the full support of older blacks and of the city's power structure. Typical reactions of Atlantans to such protests were expressed on the editorial pages of two of the city's leading newspapers, one black and one white.

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CHAPTER II

OFFICIAL POSITIONS OF THE NEWSPAPERS' MANAGEMENT:

UNSIGNED EDITORIALS

Before any sit-ins occurred in Atlanta, the Atlanta Constitution and the Atlanta Daily World turned their attention to the lunch counter protest movement that was sweeping the South. Both newspapers, while not openly attacking the sit-in movement, expressed the hope that Atlantans would use other methods of achieving desegregation. The World began its focus on the issue with a February 21, 1960 editorial entitled, "On the Question of Protests at Eating Places." In this editorial, the newspaper made it clear that desegregation of lunch counters was not a high priority. School desegregation, increased voter and political participation, equal justice at the state level, and better economic opportunities were considered by the World to be the highest priorities for blacks. Readers were told also that lunch counter protests played into the hands of segregationists who had always said elimination of segregation would disturb the peace; the implication being that sit-ins disturbed the peace.

The Constitution began its sit-in related comments with, "To predict Violence is to Encourage It," an editorial containing a rebuke to the attorney general of Georgia who had predicted violence if the lunch counter demonstrations came to Atlanta. This prediction was called "an example of grave official irresponsibility" by the Constitution. The editorial expressed the hope that sit-ins would "not spread to Atlanta," but spoke

1 Atlanta Constitution, 24 February 1960.
confidently that if the demonstrations did reach Atlanta, they could be handled by local authorities. "There will be no violence here unless it is brought from the outside," the Newspaper suggested. The World's editorials continued with a slap on the wrist for the Georgia General Assembly. On February 18, 1960, the Assembly passed House Bill No. 1112, hereafter referred to as the anti-trespass law. It provided for the arrest of anyone who refused to leave the premises of another when asked to do so by the owner of the premises or by an agent appointed by the owner. The law was passed specifically as a curb to possible Atlanta sit-ins. In an editorial entitled "More Needless Legislation," the World, wrote that the legislation "leaves the gate open for unnecessary tensions and doubts... Put to a proper test, it more than likely would be declared unconstitutional on its face."

The World ended its pre-Atlanta sit-in remarks with two March editorials. In the first, the Newspaper elaborated on comments made by former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt about the sit-ins. Prior to an Atlanta press conference, Mrs. Roosevelt had been asked her opinion about the lunch counter protests. She was quoted as responding with, "I think it's too bad that it has to be done." The World agreed with Mrs. Roosevelt by

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1 Ibid.

2 The bill provided that anyone refusing to leave when asked to do so would be guilty of a misdemeanor. See Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, 1960. Hapeville, Ga., pp. 142-143.


4 Atlanta Daily World, 1 March 1960.
saying it was a pity the demonstrations had "to be employed in order to
register for a minority its request to be treated as fellow communicants
before this great fountain of democracy."\(^1\) The second March editorial
reinforced the sense of pity that a group of citizens in the United States
had to stage sit-ins to dramatize their need to be treated as equals. The
Newspaper expressed the hope that in the next one hundred years "there
will be few occasions for sit-down strikes."\(^2\)

Atlanta student movement leaders began their dramatic effort to gain
rights with "An Appeal for Human Rights," published in local newspapers on
March 9. It read in part:

> We pledge our unqualified support to those students in
   this nation who have recently been engaged in the signifi-
   cant movement to secure certain long-awaited rights and pri-
   vileges. . . .
   > We do not intend to wait placidly for these rights
   which are already legally and morally ours to be meted out
   to us one at a time. Today's youth will not sit by sub-
   missively, while being denied all of the rights, privileges
   and joys of life. . . .\(^3\)

The Constitution chose not to comment on the "Appeal" immediately.
The World, on the other hand, quickly commended the students for the adver-
tisement, calling it "a dramatic, dynamic vehicle,"\(^4\) but warned the stu-
dents not to use the inequities they mentioned "to stir widespread dis-
orders nor a breakdown in law and order."\(^5\) The Newspaper reiterated its

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\(^1\) Ibid.

\(^2\) Atlanta Daily World, 4 March 1960.

\(^3\) Atlanta Constitution, 9 March 1960.

\(^4\) Atlanta Daily World, 10 March 1960.

\(^5\) Ibid.
position that any dramatic effort by the students which resulted in "tumult, chaos and violence"\(^1\) would make them pawns in the hands of segregationists. The *World* also published two other editorials on the "Appeal." One was critical of Governor Ernest Vandiver's claim that the "Appeal" was left-wing.\(^2\) The other one urged students to follow up the Advertisement with letters to their congressmen urging the passage of the civil rights bill that was before Congress.\(^3\)

Some Atlantans thought or hoped (as did the *Constitution* and the *World*) that the "Appeal" would be used in lieu of sit-ins by Atlanta students. To these Atlantans, the March 15 beginning of local lunch counter protests, less than a week after publication of the "Appeal", must have been disappointing. Seventy-seven blacks were arrested as a result of the March 15 protests in which about 200 persons, mostly college students, had been involved. The demonstrators struck ten downtown eating establishments simultaneously at 11:30 a.m. Five of the ten eating places were in government buildings, four of them were in transportation centers and the tenth was Kress's, a variety store. All seventy-seven were arrested under the 1960 anti-trespass law and eighteen of the seventy-seven were arrested also under two older laws, one an anti-mask law aimed at the Ku Klux Klan and the other a law which made it unlawful to assemble to disturb the peace.\(^4\) Local black ministers and real estate

\(^1\)Ibid. See also *Atlanta Daily World*, 21 February 1960.


\(^3\)*Atlanta Daily World*, 13 March 1960. The civil rights bill was passed later in the year.

\(^4\)The anti-mask law made it unlawful to assemble masked or unmasked for an unlawful act. See *Atlanta Constitution*, 16 March 1960.
men posted bond for the seventy-seven and no new mass sit-ins immediately followed those of March 15 due to a decision by student leaders to stage no additional lunch counter protests until after the cases of the seventy-seven were settled in court.¹

Both the Constitution and the World responded immediately and negatively to the onset of local sit-ins. Both called for an end to the demonstrations and said that, with the arrest of seventy-seven demonstrators, the issue was now before the courts and should be left to the processes of law. The newspapers mirrored each other in questioning the necessity of the sit-ins in light of the publication of the "Appeal". "The action [lunch counter protest], by its dubious timing, also blurs and damages the reception accorded the advertisement. . . ."² the Constitution wrote. "Since the students had so intelligently and, we believe, impressively presented their position through the press, we wonder if there is a necessity here in Atlanta to continue the demonstrations,"³ the World echoed.

As previously stated, students decided that the March 15 sit-ins would be their last until the cases were settled for those arrested in the demonstrations. The Constitution made no comments on the sit-ins for a while after the March 15 protests. The World, however, commended the students for deciding against further lunch counter protests and urged


² Atlanta Constitution, 16 March 1960.

them to concentrate on registering voters.¹

A few weeks after the March 15 sit-ins, the World printed an editorial reflecting what it saw as a need for direction in Atlanta civil rights activities. All blacks were urged to look to the Atlanta Negro Voters League for guidance. The Newspaper emphasized the necessity for "mature and experienced leadership which has been in this struggle for years."² Although the students were not mentioned by name, it was obvious that the World was urging them to get their direction from the Voters League. The newspaper editorialized:

Now is the time for cool, calm, deliberate and sensible action. Emotionalism should be discouraged. There should be no unnecessary display of dramatics. We must bear this in mind as we approach issues as a matter of strategy. We should move in such a way and at such a time as to create a minimum of ill will or frustration on the part of those with whom we wish to adjust a grievance.³

The Voters League was "the established organization"⁴ in the civil rights arena and the students were new to this arena. One got the sense in this editorial of the rift between young and old Atlanta blacks later alluded to by authors Jack Walker and Alton Hornsby,⁵ both of whom wrote about

³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
Atlanta politics.

Almost two months after the March 15 protests, the World seemed to do an about-face and printed an editorial sympathetic to the students' cause. At this time, students readied themselves to leave school for summer vacation and the World appealed to local authorities, asking that the sit-in cases not be brought to trial during the summer recess, since this would "work a hardship on the students." The prosecutor and judge in the cases were also asked to "give the students sympathetic consideration," since they (the students) had "displayed an attitude of goodwill and non-violence"\(^1\) in establishing the cases.

Although summer recess meant a smaller student body in the city, student leaders did not stop protest activities. The Committee on Appeal for Human Rights,\(^2\) which had been formed in March to co-ordinate the sit-in effort, used the summer months to picket for better jobs for blacks at local branches of grocery store chains and to hold a march commemorating the 1954 Brown decision. The Committee also formed an important operating sub-committee, the Student Adult Liaison Committee, which explained the student movement to the black community and sought community support. Business executives, professors, college presidents, lawyers, other black

\(^1\) Atlanta Daily World, 6 May 1960.

\(^2\) This Committee was formed following a mass meeting at Atlanta University. It was the Committee which drew up the "Appeal" and directed the mass sit-ins. See C. Eric Lincoln, "Strategy of a Sit-in," The Reporter, January 5, 1961, p. 21. Morehouse student Lonnie King was chairman of the Committee. For further information on the formation of the Committee, see Jack Lamar Walker, "Protest and Negotiation," p. 80. For further information on the student leaders, see George B. Leonard, Jr., "The Second Battle of Atlanta," Look, April 25, 1961, pp. 31-42.
leaders and students were on the Liaison Committee.¹

Both the Constitution and the World commented on the Committee's summer activities. The Constitution began by objecting to the planned march to commemorate the Brown decision.² But, after the march was held, the newspapers complimented the students on the orderly way in which they had conducted themselves.³ The World, instead of criticizing the students, questioned the state's expenditure of $70,000 to monitor the march and made it clear that the state could avoid such useless expenditure of money if it would comply with the Court's school desegregation order.⁴

Other summer issues related to the students were not handled in unison by the two newspapers. These issues included a call by the state auditor for elimination of tax exempt status for colleges from whence student demonstrators came; an advertisement from older black Atlantans who supported the students; picketing by students; efforts by the U. S. Attorney General that resulted in desegregated lunch counters; and violence related to Jacksonville, Florida's sit-ins. The World chose to lash out at the state's auditor⁵ for suggesting elimination of tax exempt status for the students' schools, while the Constitution made no comment.

² Atlanta Constitution, 17 May 1960.
³ Atlanta Constitution, 18 May 1960.
about the state auditor but did voice its approval of the advertisement by older black Atlantans who supported the students' efforts. The Constitution was thrilled to "see the calm printed statement again used" ¹ rather than "milling in the streets." ² In this editorial, the Newspaper sounded much like the World ³ by implying that the students had allowed youth and emotionalism to dominate their strategy. The Constitution editorialized:

... we see that students do have the sympathetic but adult advice that must temper and guide enthusiasm.  
... Negro students have permitted undirected zeal to damage their efforts.  
... Restraint is not the word to sum it up. Confidence is. Confidence that positions expressed with dignity in Atlanta will be fairly weighed ... where disorder carried into the streets will beget a counter resentment. ⁴

In terms of numbers, the World dominated in summer editorials related to the sit-ins and student activities. A June editorial written in response to a small group of students picketing for integrated eating facilities at a downtown store was used by the World to reiterate its position that negotiation was preferable to demonstration. While in sympathy with the aspirations of the students, the Newspaper urged them to await court action before further demonstrations. ⁵ In another summer

1  
Atlanta Constitution, 31 May 1960.

2  
Ibid.

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4  
Atlanta Constitution, 31 May 1960.

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editorial, the World agreed with Warren Cochrane, then executive secretary of the Butler Street Y. W. C. A., who cautioned the students against pressure tactics.\footnote{Atlanta Daily World, 30 July 1960.} An August editorial commended United States Attorney General William B. Rogers for his quiet but vigorous work with Southern Community leaders and chain store officials which had resulted in the desegregation of lunch counters in a number of Southern communities.\footnote{Atlanta Daily World, 14 August 1960.} A final summer editorial used the violence in the Jacksonville, Florida sit-ins as a warning to other communities and cautioned, "These issues should not be left to students alone to resolve."\footnote{Atlanta Daily World, 30 August 1960.}

Another World editorial, although written in the fall, was related to the students' summer activities. The students had picketed grocery stores, mainly outlets of the Colonial Store chain, in an attempt to force the stores to hire blacks in better paying positions, such as clerks.\footnote{Lincoln, "Strategy of a Sit-In," p. 21.} A few of the Colonial stores, on the heels of these protests, upgraded the positions of some of its black employees,\footnote{Ibid.} but the World gave the credit for this upgrading to Colonial's management, rather than to student protestors.\footnote{Atlanta Daily World, 25 September 1960.}

Besides its comments about the march to commemorate the 1954 Supreme Court decision, the Constitution's only other summer editorial came in
response to Governor Vandiver's announcement that he would close the Capitol cafeteria, one of the sites of the March sit-ins. The newspaper called the closing "wise"\(^1\) and said the Governor just faced the fact that the state had to treat black and white taxpayers alike in the services, such as the cafeteria, it offered. If the state had fought to keep the cafeteria open on a segregated basis, the newspaper admitted that the state would have lost in court and that "misunderstanding . . . and . . . divisions"\(^2\) between the races would have "heightened . . . and sharpened."\(^3\)

By fall, the sit-ins were a topic of discussion again. This time, in listing cases before the United States Supreme Court, the World mentioned one concerning lunch counter protests and implied that it would be among one of the most important decisions since Brown vs The Board of Education (Topeka).\(^4\) The Constitution did not mention this case. In October, mass sit-ins, like those in March, were resumed and fifty-two persons, including student leader Lonnie King and civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., were arrested as a result of the first day of renewed protests on October 19, 1960. All of the arrests were made at various lunch counters within Rich's, a prominent downtown department store, heavily patronized by blacks. At the seven other downtown lunch counters where sit-ins

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2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

occurred, the demonstrators were refused service, the lunch counters were closed and no arrests were made. As the protests were occurring, students also set up picket lines outside the stores, urging blacks not to trade with the shopkeepers. Charges were dropped against sixteen of the fifty-two arrested demonstrators, while the other thirty-six were bound over to Municipal Court, held under a five hundred dollar bond each, and charged with violation of the 1960 anti-trespass law.¹

Sit-in leaders had adopted, by the time of the October 19 demonstration, a tactic already tried by protestors in other cities. Instead of posting bond and immediately being released from jail, the students and Dr. King employed the "jail-not-bail" tactic, a strategy which required those arrested to stay in jail rather than post bail.²

Both the Constitution and the World responded to the renewed lunch counter protests with more negative editorials. "... we consider the repeated use of sit-ins as the means of pressure here to be unwise and destructive,"³ the Constitution stated. "We urge an end to it,"⁴ the Newspaper continued. The Constitution emphasized that although blacks claimed a moral right to eat at places they patronized, storekeepers had the legal right to serve whom they chose. The demonstrations were called

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³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.
a violation of "valid law"¹ (an apparent reference to the antitrespass law) that put whites sympathetic to the black cause in an awkward position.² The Constitution made no further comment in the next few days of sit-ins.

The World, on the other hand, did not comment on the renewed sit-ins until two days of demonstrations had occurred. On the second day of protests, twenty-two more students were arrested and sentenced to ten days in the city jail. These students also joined the "jail-not-bail" movement.³ The World's response to these two days of sit-ins was much milder in tone than its response had been to the one day of demonstrations in March. "This is a time for thoughtful and considerate action with a view to reaching an understanding which will be based on mutual goodwill,"⁴ the Newspaper wrote. The lunch counter protests were not condemned or questioned but rather the World wrote that it understood the justice of the students' contentions but also saw the "practical and legal aspects of the issues."⁵ The Newspaper expressed the hope that the Student-Adult Liaison Committee, headed by Rev. William Holmes Borders, pastor of Atlanta's Wheat Street Baptist Church, would reach a solution to the

¹ Ibid.
² Ibid.
³ Atlanta Constitution, 21 October 1960.
⁵ Ibid.
controversy.1

On day number three of the October sit-ins, only two persons were arrested in demonstrations. The sharp decline in arrests may have been due to the fact that most downtown lunch counters remained closed. Picketing of stores continued, however.2 By Sunday night, October 23, all of the jailed sit-in demonstrators, except Dr. King, had left jail. Charges were dropped against twenty-two of the demonstrators, while thirty-eight others were allowed to sign their own bonds. These release actions were part of a thirty-day truce called by Atlanta Mayor William Hartsfield after negotiations between the Mayor, Municipal Judge James E. Webb, Fulton Sheriff T. Ralph Grimes and black leaders,3 including the Student-Adult Liaison Committee.4

The World commended the Mayor and the Student-Adult Liaison Committee for the truce. The Newspaper was confident that the truce would facilitate "sober and calm consideration which should enable the settlement of the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned."5 The Constitution made no comment on the truce.

As previously stated, Dr. King was the only lunch counter protestor

1 Ibid.
2 Atlanta Constitution, 22 October 1960.
3 Atlanta Constitution, 24 October 1960.
5 Ibid.
left in jail after the truce began. He had been ordered held by DeKalb County authorities because of a suspended sentence for driving without a license in DeKalb,¹ a condition of the suspension having been that King violate no other state law. Now he was charged with violation of the state anti-trespass law as a result of the sit-ins.² On October 25, King's suspended sentence was revoked and he was ordered to serve four months in the state's public work camps.³ He appealed but was denied bail pending appeal⁴ and was sent to the state penitentiary at Reidsville before his appeal was heard.⁵

Both the Constitution and the World responded with displeasure to the action taken in the King case. The Constitution called on the state to pardon King rather than allow him to serve the four-month term, realizing that four months in Reidsville would place Dr. King in the "martyr's pillory."⁶ On the other hand, the World saw the four-month sentence as "a shocking action."⁷

¹ At the time King was charged with driving without a license, he did have a valid Alabama license. He had recently moved back to Atlanta from Montgomery, Alabama and had not yet obtained a Georgia license. See Raines, My Soul, p. 92.

² Atlanta Constitution, 24 October 1960.

³ Atlanta Constitution, 26 October 1960.

⁴ Ibid.


⁶ Atlanta Constitution, 26 October 1960.

The King sentencing caused great debate in the city and the nation. Senator John F. Kennedy, then a candidate for the presidency, phoned King's wife on October 26 to express his concern over the jailing of her husband.\(^1\) The Senator's brother and campaign manager, Robert F. Kennedy, made a telephone call to the presiding judge in the case to ask if King had a constitutional right to bail.\(^2\) The judge concluded that King did have such a right and King was released the day after the calls were made (October 27) on an appeal bond of two thousand dollars.\(^3\)

The direct intervention of the Kennedy brothers was a little too much for the traditionally Democratic Constitution. Robert Kennedy had to do some fast explaining on the issue. The Constitution put it this way:

> When Robert Kennedy telephoned the judge who handled the case . . . he went too far. We have an indication from him now that he knows it, and this is a reassuring sign that common sense prevails in the Kennedy camp.\(^4\)

The Republican World, on the other hand, did not want its readers to overreact to Democratic Presidential Candidate Kennedy's intervention in the King case. The World chided Kennedy for publicizing his concern for King and said the matter should not influence anyone's vote in the coming election.\(^5\)

\(^1\) Atlanta Constitution, 27 October 1960.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Atlanta Constitution, 28 October 1960.

\(^4\) Atlanta Constitution, 1 November 1960.

At least one person, however, had already made known a change in his vote because of the Kennedy intervention. Dr. Martin Luther King Sr., father of the recently released younger King and co-pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church with his son, had been a supporter of Republican Presidential Candidate Richard Nixon. However, after Kennedy’s concern for his son, Dr. King Sr. threw his support behind the Democratic candidate.\(^1\) Despite this endorsement, however, Atlanta’s black voters overwhelmingly supported Nixon and were commended for this support by the *World*.\(^2\) Some historians believe, however, that the endorsement by the elder King and the Kennedy intervention convinced Northern blacks to switch from Nixon to Kennedy and that this change aided Kennedy in his narrow November victory over Nixon.\(^3\)

The *Constitution* had nothing else to say about the Kennedy intervention, but the *World* later wrote an editorial based on post-election discoveries about the matter. According to this newspaper, Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower had asked the Justice Department to look into the handling of the King case prior to the election. Before the Justice Department investigation could bring results, the Newspaper asserted, the Kennedy brothers made their telephone calls. The *World* implied that the Republicans were more noble than the Democrats because they (the Republicans) had not made political capitol out of the event as had the

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\(^1\) *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 October 1960.


The furor over the King-Kennedy affair died down but the sit-in issue was still unresolved. Mayor Hartsfield's truce had ended but the issue was not settled. The World applauded when the truce was extended but the extension ended with still no resolution of the issue and the sit-ins, picketing and boycotting were resumed in late November.

With the resumption of the protests, the World, in a November 27 editorial, reiterated its position that lunch counter desegregation was not a high priority. However, the Newspaper admitted that, since the issue had been raised, the question of lunch counter desegregation needed to be resolved. The World called for more discussions, with the mayor as mediator, despite the fact that discussions over the thirty-day truce period had proved ineffective. When a planned meeting between the two sides failed to occur, the Newspaper simply told the parties involved to try again.

In December, the World turned its editorial energies toward showing the sit-in leaders the damage they had caused by their demonstrations. One December editorial pointed to the unemployment brought about by closing of lunch counters and saw as "timely" a published statement by the Student-Adult Liaison Committee that the Committee was making progress in placing

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1 Atlanta Daily World, 18 December 1960.
those put out of work by the demonstrations.\footnote{Ibid.} Another December editorial called on Atlantans to face the "unpleasant facts"\footnote{Atlanta Daily World, 18 December 1960.} that violence was resulting from the sit-ins. Several violent incidents, including that in which a sit-in demonstrator was pushed down by "an irate white pedestrian,"\footnote{Ibid.} were cited.

The two newspapers were both editorially silent on the lunch counter question for awhile (after November for the \textit{Constitution} and after December for the \textit{World}). The \textit{World} was the first to resume editorial comment on the demonstration with a February 4, 1961 behind-the-scenes look at events at the Atlanta University Center. Atlanta University President Dr. Rufus Clement reportedly told student leader Lonnie King that he needed to negotiate and not demonstrate. The newspaper agreed with Dr. Clement's advice and called for a committee, representing a cross-section of the community, to look at the sit-in question from both sides.

Also in February, the \textit{World} turned its attention to sit-in news with three editorials on the "jail-not-bail" strategy. In one of these editorials, the Newspaper told of a report it had seen that the Atlanta students again planned to use this strategy. "Mature people should discourage young people from choosing to stay in jail over this lunch counter business because it is not of sufficient importance to make such a sacrifice,"\footnote{Atlanta Daily World, 8 February 1961.} the
Newspaper wrote. A second editorial reiterated the position of the first and added that the sit-ins had been "carried beyond the point of being effective." The final editorial on "jail-not-bail" pointed to a statement by the World's Washington columnist Louis Lautier which had agreed with the Newspaper's position that not making bond was senseless. The Newspaper also alluded to the fact that students were acquiring jail records and suffering educationally (in terms of lost time and money).

The World's barrage of February editorials included three others, all implying criticism of the sit-ins. One dealt with money being raised for the student movement and other civil rights causes. The Newspaper called on the fund-raisers to give some of the money they collected to people who had lost their jobs because of the demonstrations. Another editorial during this month praised Rev. William Holmes Borders and his Student-Adult Liaison Committee for calling off a planned demonstration. Finally, in February, the World mentioned a Baton Rouge, Louisiana case before the Supreme Court that could possibly determine whether or not a privately owned business was subject to the same interstate rules forbidding discrimination that governed public businesses.

1 Atlanta Daily World, 10 February 1961.
In March, the Constitution and the World again echoed each other when they praised the sit-in settlement. According to the agreement between black leaders and business leaders, desegregation of lunch counters would be delayed until a reasonable time after scheduled school desegregation in the fall. The Constitution's applause read like this:

The sit-in settlement is a magnificent testimony to the reason and common sense that distinguish both races in Atlanta.

Both sides made concessions. But they conceded only those things that were wise and right.

. . . both sides reasoned together, on aims, on pace and on grounds that conceded mutual rights and granted mutual dignity.¹

Rather than printing one editorial about the settlement as the Constitution did, the World printed three editorials on the agreement. The first praised the pact as recognition of a point that the Newspaper had made all along--school desegregation should receive a higher priority than lunch counter desegregation.² The second editorial was an admission that the settlement was controversial but was also a plea that the pact "be accepted in good faith."³ It was pointed out that the Student-Adult Liaison Committee assured their group that the pact contained a written agreement to desegregate lunch counters by the fall. The Newspaper also reminded its readers that the settlement called for the return of several hundred employees, many of whom were black, who had been laid off as a

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¹ Atlanta Constitution, 8 March 1961.
result of the closing of lunch counters during the sit-ins.¹

The World's third and final article on the controversial pact referred to a speech by Mayor Hartsfield at the Butler Street Y. M. C. A.'s Hungry Club Forum, a weekly luncheon which usually featured some public leader as speaker. In his speech, the Mayor tried to allay the fears of some blacks who thought the terms of the sit-in settlement were vague. The World reiterated its belief that, despite the agreement's faults it should be respected since it had been made by "authorized representatives."²

In summary, the Constitution and the World mirrored each other in their opinion that the use of sit-ins was not the best method of achieving desegregation. Both saw the students as young, immature and in need of more mature and responsible adult leadership. Though sympathetic with the students' goals, both newspapers preferred the use of negotiation and law suits to settle differences. Both applauded the "Appeal for Human Rights." Both also agreed that the King sentencing was harsh, the Kennedy intervention was mishandled and the sit-in settlement was good.

The two newspapers differed, however, on some issues. One of these was the constitutionality of the state's anti-trespass law. The Constitution said the law was valid while the World saw it as needless and wrote that it probably would not withstand a court test. Another area of difference was in the number of editorials about the sit-ins. By far, the World printed more editorials on the demonstrations. While the

¹ Ibid.

Constitution wrote about main events during the protests, the World elaborated on events, gave behind-the-scenes information and let its readers know the declarations of community leaders, especially those leaders who agreed with the Newspaper. The difference in the volume of editorials may have been due to the difference in audiences. The Constitution's audience was mainly white and may not have been interested in some of the details the World's black audience would have been seeking.

Finally, both newspapers failed to admit the fact that despite the controversy over the lunch counter protest as a method of gaining rights, the sit-ins had brought about desegregation in some communities. Both newspapers, while calling for negotiation, did not get at the causes of the failure of several attempts to negotiate a settlement in the Atlanta sit-in crisis.
CHAPTER III

OTHER EDITORIAL PAGE MATERIALS

The editorial pages of the Constitution and the World contained more on the sit-ins than their unsigned editorials. There were also letters to the editor, columns by national and local journalists, editorials from other newspapers and editorial cartoons. Much of the editorial page material, besides unsigned editorials, came from the general public in the form of letters to the editor. Since all letters received probably were not published, a newspaper's selection of those to print probably reflected the volume and type of letters it received on a given subject. The letters to the editor section in the Constitution was very substantial and regular when compared to the World's section. Several letters usually appeared each day in the Constitution. The World often printed only one or two letters and these were infrequent.

The first letter relating to the sit-ins published in either of the two newspapers appeared in the World prior to the publication of the "Appeal." The writer of it asserted that sit-ins would not get popular support in Atlanta. The correspondent explained that Atlanta officials were different from other Georgia officials in that the Atlantans worked at equal representation. This work, in turn, made Atlanta people act with restraint.¹

The next issue covered in the letters was that of the "Appeal." Both

¹ Atlanta Daily World, 4 March 1960.
newspapers printed letters on this subject and in both the majority of the letters were favorable to the advertisement. The *Constitution* printed ten letters on the subject and all of these except one expressed approval of the "Appeal". The *World* published two letters, both of which were positive.

A typical letter of approval was that found in the *Atlanta Constitution*. It read:

> The dignified appeal for human rights which was made by the students of our six Negro institutions of higher learning is an inspiration and a challenge to us all. It is worthy of the most thoughtful attention of everyone of us who have enjoyed the rights and privileges of citizens of the greatest democracy on earth.

Many of the letters that expressed approval of the "Appeal" also included harsh criticism of Georgia's Governor Ernest Vandiver's printed statement about the advertisement. Since so many of the letter writers responded to the Governor, a portion of his statement is included below:

> Obviously, it [the "Appeal"] was not written by students. Regrettably, it had the same overtones which are usually found in anti-American propaganda pieces.
> It did not sound like it was prepared in any Georgia school or college, nor in fact, did it read like it was written in this country.
> This left-wing statement is calculated to breed dissatisfaction, discontent, discord and evil.
> It is strange that this statement allegedly comes from a group receiving opportunities not enjoyed by most people of both races...

A typical reaction to the Governor's statement was found in a letter to the *Constitution* from a local correspondent. It read in part:

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Governor Vandiver's reaction to the proclamation issued by the students of the Atlanta University Center is in many ways a shocking and tragic commentary indeed. Of its intellectual, moral and historical deceptions, the worst is clear implication that the document is 'un-American.' It is perilous to let this myth go unchallenged. What could be more American than the peaceful and legal effort to achieve equality, dignity, justice and freedom for all persons. What could be more characteristically American and democratic? This is not only the birthright but the moral duty of the great American heritage.1

In addition to implying that the "Appeal" was "un-American," the Governor said all Georgians rejected the implication that inequality and injustice reigned in Georgia. He added that Atlanta had "more Negro property owners, more bankers, more insurance executives, more insurance companies, more doctors, more lawyers, more real estate concerns, and more Negro school teachers and more colleges than any other city on the face of the earth." Horace M. Bond, prominent educator and father of sit-in participant Julian Bond, in a letter appearing in the March 17, 1960 World, criticized the Governor for describing Atlanta as a black mecca. Bond cited several cities with more black property owners, teachers, lawyers and college students than Atlanta. He also said Atlanta had a pitiful number of black doctors and hospitals, mainly because of segregation.

The one letter unfavorable to the "Appeal" was printed in the March 25 edition of the Constitution. It commended Governor Vandiver for his stance on the advertisement as follows:

I agree with Governor Vandiver. If the Negroes would stop and think, they would agree that everything they have

1 Atlanta Constitution, 12 March 1960.

2 Atlanta Constitution, 10 March 1960.
was given them by the white people. The whole article was not an appeal for human rights but an article written telling the white people what the Negro wants us to give him. Since the white people pay most of the taxes, then we have the right to say where our money goes. Why don't the Negroes ask us to help them help themselves instead of give me this, give me that, give, give, give, which will soon turn into take, take, take.1

At least two letters were published in an apparent response to this letter, both of which criticized the writer for the comments about blacks.

The sit-ins began in Atlanta a little less than a week after the publication of the "Appeal," on March 9. The World immediately printed letters in response to these initial demonstrations; but, the Constitution did not print letters about the protests until early April. The World's letters gave the demonstrations mixed reviews. For example, a portion of a letter commending the students for their patience read:

Could they (the students) have also known that in spite of their well written manifesto, that those in authority would read it, denounce it and finally confine it to file '13'?

Suppose then, that they knew all these and other instances of efforts to abrogate the laws of God, the courts and the lands, do you not wonder how they were able to wait so long to perform such a meaningful demonstration in such appalling calmness?2

On the other hand, while not condemning the sit-ins, another correspondent said students should direct their energies into other activities. The students, instead of conducting lunch counter protests, should persuade others to register to vote and should join the NAACP or one of "the Christian Associations throughout the south [sic],"3 the writer said.

1 Atlanta Constitution, 25 March 1960.
3 Ibid.
After the initial day of sit-ins on March 15, 1960, there were no new mass demonstrations until October 19, 1960. The period between the initial protest and the resumption of demonstrations in October was one in which both newspapers published various letters to the editor about the sit-ins and other student activities. One letter of note printed in the World was in response to a speech made by Warren Cochrane, then executive secretary of the Butler Street Y. M. C. A. As previously stated, the World, in an unsigned editorial, had agreed with Cochrane when he cautioned the students against pressure tactics.\(^1\) The letter writer, while disagreeing with some of Cochrane's views, defended the secretary's right to his opinion. "... in our group,"\(^2\) the correspondent said, "there is always room for dissent."\(^3\)

The Constitution, by far, printed more letters on the sit-ins and related student issues between the March and October protests than did the World. An interesting one that included objections to the sit-ins was a letter in which the writer expressed the belief that black actor Harry Belafonte (who had won an Emmy) and black prize fighter Floyd Patterson (who was the World Heavyweight Boxing Champion) had "done more to help the Negro race than all the counter sitdowns, mass parades and mouthings of the NAACP combined."\(^4\) A northern writer during the period

\(^1\) Atlanta Daily World, 30 July 1960.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Atlanta Constitution, 1 July 1960.
blasted newspaper coverage of the protests, saying the coverage was "strictly propaganda and full of half-truths and innuendos." \(^1\)

Constitution letter writers who wrote favorably of the sit-ins during the period between demonstrations included one woman writing in response to former President Harry Truman's statement that he did not approve of the protests. "As far as I'm concerned," she wrote, "it [sit-in] is no different than a union strike. Both are an attempt to improve man's way of life." \(^2\)

Another writer who responded to criticism of the sit-ins by Truman and others was Julian Bond, then a Morehouse student and a participant in the student movement that directed the lunch counter protests. He wrote:

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\ldots \text{Concerning this state's antitrespass law, I cannot deny that it does have merit and is doubtlessly constitutional on its face. However, when this law is applied in discriminatory fashion and is used to deprive members of society of their oft-repeated but infrequently heeded constitutional rights, then this law is definitely unconstitutional.} \\
\ldots \text{May I assure you and Mr. Truman, that it is not the Communists, that it is not the NAACP, that it is not CORE, that it is not an Atlanta University teacher who is behind the sit-ins. It is now, it always has been and will be a student movement, encompassing students from each of Atlanta's eleven institutions of higher learning.} \(^3\)
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After the sit-ins were resumed on October 19, most of the letters in both newspapers centered around the King/Kennedy incident. In the World, all the correspondents were critical of the treatment King received

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\(^1\) Atlanta Constitution, 15 September 1960.

\(^2\) Atlanta Constitution, 1 April 1960.

\(^3\) Atlanta Constitution, 12 July 1960.
in the case. For example, an attorney wrote saying the judge in the case had given the Communists a boost with the picture of Dr. King being carried off to prison as if he had robbed a bank.¹

The Constitution also published letters critical of the treatment of King. A minister wrote that Dr. King was sentenced because "he had a divine license which enable [sic] him to drive toward the goal of brotherhood."² Several writers complained of the bad publicity the King/Kennedy incident had received in the North and abroad.³ One person wrote from Athens, Greece, that what had happened to Dr. King was "deplorable and embarassing"⁴ and difficult to explain to his Greek neighbors.

Some correspondents, however, did not think King was treated in an unfair manner. One example of such letters was that of a Columbus, Georgia person who wrote criticizing Kennedy's intervention:

Then we are treated to the spectacle of an immature strip-ling running for president who also harps on the 'law, no mat-ter if wrong, must be obeyed' sticking his nose into it also asking that the violators of the law be dismissed.⁵

Another writer who questioned King's release from prison was Georgia's Fifth District Congressman, James C. Davis, whose district included Atlanta. Congressman Davis was writing in response to an editorial by

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¹ Atlanta Daily World, 28 October 1960.
² Atlanta Constitution, 31 October 1960.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Atlanta Constitution, 29 October 1960.
Constitution Editor, Eugene Patterson, who had quoted Davis as saying the only way to stop black protestors was "to fill up the jails with them."¹ Davis responded by expressing his displeasure at the sit-ins, which he thought the Constitution supported. He called the sit-in "organized lawlessness" that was "instigated and directed by outsiders."² In response, the newspaper added an editor's note below the Davis letter which explained that the Constitution had never condoned any illegal aspect of the protests.

Another correspondent also apparently misread the Constitution's position on lunch counter protests. This writer thought the newspaper agreed with Dr. King's efforts in the sit-ins. He wrote:

> By your silence, I assume that you agree with Reverend Martin Luther King that he can obey only those laws that he chooses to. If one of our white officials had made such a statement, we would have had editorials, cartoons and front page columns condemning same.³

After the comments on the King/Kennedy incidents ceased, the World printed no more letters until after the sit-in settlement in March 1961. The Constitution, however, carried a variety of letters on issues related to the second phase of the lunch counter protests which began October 19.

A sampling of letters against the sit-ins included one by a writer who questioned where the "Negro pickets and their white lovers,"⁴ got the

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¹ Atlanta Constitution, 3 November 1960.

² Atlanta Constitution, 8 November 1960.

³ Atlanta Constitution, 8 December 1960. See also a similar letter in the Constitution, March 1, 1961.

⁴ Atlanta Constitution, 14 December 1960.
authority to gather on the patio of the post office across from Rich's to
eat lunch. The Constitution, in an editor's note, replied to this writer
by saying, "the U. S. Constitution." 1 Another correspondent said the sit-
isins had little effect on the stores targeted and were "only slightly
annoying like a slight cold." 2

At the first of the year, letters continued to be published attacking
the sit-ins and accompanying boycotts. One, replete with stereotypes,
questioned why blacks did not serve their own race. The writer said:

When Greek meets Greek, they start a restaurant. When
Chinaman meets Chinaman, they start a Laundry. When Negro
meets white, they start to agitate whites.
When Negro meets Negro, why can't they go into busi-
ness to serve other Negroes? 3

Another writer was disturbed by "a mob of Negroes yelling," 4 an apparent
description of the boycotters. Still another was upset by the "jail-not-
bail" movement and wanted those who refused bail to pay three dollars a
day for meals, "thus taking some of the burden of supporting the law-
breaker off the law-abiding taxpayer's back." 5

Positive letters during the second phase of protests included one by
a correspondent who wrote that the typical Southerner was "scared of

1 Ibid.

2 Atlanta Constitution, 26 December 1960.


5 Atlanta Constitution, 16 February 1961.
declaring . . . that he doesn't give a hoot who drinks 10 cent store coffee on the next stool for fear his stuffier friends will consider him a traitor to the Southern way of life."1 Another correspondent answered the writer who had said the sit-ins were only a slight cold by writing, "Even a slight cold can and often does get worse. My prediction is that the sit-ins, though slightly annoying now, will take effect eventually."2

Other letter writers favorable to the lunch counter protests commented on how the sit-ins should be managed. One writer addressed the failure of white business leaders to offer any concrete solutions during the October-November truce period. He said whites gave excuses to blacks such as, "The time is not ripe, the school crisis has to be handled first, etc., etc."3 Another correspondent said that although he supported the aims and methods of the demonstrations, there were problems on both sides (the students' side and the business leaders' side). He wrote:

   To call for an end to the sit-ins is not enough. To call for the withdrawal of the pickets is not enough. While I don't propose to speak for the Negro group, based on their actions during the 32-day truce, I am confident that they would agree to another halt in demonstrations, if they were given some reason to believe that an equitable solution would be reached. But it is unrealistic and frankly unfair for us to call for the Negro group to desist in their efforts, while we make no effort to reach agreement.4

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1 Atlanta Constitution, 19 November 1960.
2 Atlanta Constitution, 31 December 1960.
3 Atlanta Constitution, 29 December 1960.
4 Atlanta Constitution, 13 January 1961.
This letter may have been in response to an editorial by Constitution Editor Patterson in which he told blacks, who had asked for negotiations with white business leaders, to withdraw their pickets first. The whites had refused to come to the bargaining table while the boycott was still in process.

Three other letters favorable to the sit-ins are of particular interest. One told the story of a British man who, while visiting Atlanta, was thrown out of a transportation station's lunchroom after blacks sought service there. He also saw whites yell obscenities at black demonstrators and later read a column that twisted Bible passages into giving support for segregation. The Britisher was shocked by all this Southern rudeness and compared it to Hitler's fascist action. The second letter was concerned with the rift between young blacks and their elders, a problem alluded to in chapter one. The letter writer, who seemed to agree that the rift existed, identified himself as a black youth who joined "my fellow Negro American collegians when we continue to stand up and take the lead against discrimination which our elders have left undone." He added that while older blacks had learned to accept their place in society, "We Negro youth have been so well educated that we cannot adjust to a Southern way of life that is wrong."

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1 Atlanta Constitution, 20 December 1960.

2 Atlanta Constitution, 6 January 1961.


4 Ibid.
The third letter dealt with the inconsistencies of segregation. A couple of the inconsistencies listed related directly to segregation in eating facilities. Part of the letter read:

... Negroes cannot eat in white restaurants. ... Whites cannot tolerate Negroes in theaters and restaurants, but freely mingle with them while operating businesses in Negro neighborhoods. ¹

As was indicated earlier, the lunch counter protests and accompanying boycotts ended with a controversial agreement in early March 1961. The Constitution published no letters through the end of March on the settlement, while the World printed only one. The writer of this letter said it was good to see the sit-ins "partially resolved."² He added, however, that "more to be desired than the privilege of eating downtown, would be a few jobs as clerks and sales people downtown."³ Implicit in this correspondent's tone was the same priority list that the World had, that is, that desegregation, employment opportunities and other matters were much more important than lunch counter desegregation.

In addition to the letters to the editor, columns on the sit-ins by local writers were published on the editorial pages of the two newspapers. The Constitution had several local columnists who wrote about the lunch counter demonstrations, while the World had only one.

The World's lone regular local columnist was William Fowlkes, managing editor of the newspaper. A native of Tennessee and a graduate

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¹ Atlanta Constitution, 21 March 1961.
³ Ibid.
of Tennessee State College in 1935, Fowlkes wrote his column, "Seeing and Saying" for the World and the Pittsburg Courier. The tone of his columns was markedly different from the tone of the World's unsigned editorials. He never directly referred to the sit-ins but it was apparent that he was generally in favor of the attempts by youth to gain full American citizenship.

For example, in an editorial agreeing with President Eisenhower's call for bi-racial conferences to solve the South's racial problems, Fowlkes wrote, "THE POINT TO WHICH [sic] I wish to arrive is that President Eisenhower was eminently correct in reiterating that Americans have a right to peacefully assemble and protest against inequities and injustices." The editor was referring to the President's comments about sit-ins being constitutional and right as long as they were conducted in an orderly manner.

Fowlkes, in another March editorial, wrote, "Youth Is Going [sic] to solve America's great racial dilemma." He added that the youth were "ready and willing to protest" the wrongs of tradition and even white youths had joined "their Negro counterparts who issued a manifesto on

1 From Biographical Notebook on Atlantans, Special Collections Atlanta Public Library.


inequities facing them."¹

In one of his editorials, entitled "Our Common Goal," Fowlkes expressed the opinion that neither youth nor adults had the best methods, but rather that the combined efforts of youth and adults would bring solutions. He wrote:

Only the combination and coordination of the oldsters and youths can blueprint the house of freedom. Negroes are trying so desperately to build. Let no division obscure our vision and block us from our common goal.²

In a later editorial, Fowlkes also addressed the issue of civil rights methodology by explaining how blacks had turned to mass protests and demonstrations because persuasion and litigation had become ineffective.³

In a mid-May editorial, Fowlkes came close to endorsing the sit-ins but did not mention them by name. He said that "one has been led to be horrified"⁴ by mass showings of youth in places traditionally reserved for others. However, he added, after careful examination of the motives of these youth, "...one, if he is honest with himself and his people must give youth the nod in attempting to change the shameful conduct of some Americans toward their fellowmen."⁵ He was also quick to point out

¹ Ibid.
² Atlanta Daily World, 1 May 1960.
⁵ Ibid.
that he did not endorse all facets of the student movement. In this editorial and a later one, Fowlkes also emphasized the fact that the youth protests were American and not Communist-inspired. Finally, Fowlkes criticized the treatment and imprisonment of Dr. King and said DeKalb County had failed to measure the stature of King, "who was seized and handled like a common criminal."

Fowlkes' counterpart at the Constitution, Eugene Patterson, took a completely opposite view from that of Fowlkes. Patterson echoed the condemnation of the lunch counter protests found in the Constitution's unsigned editorials. A South Georgia native, Patterson graduated from the University of Georgia with a journalism degree in 1943. He worked for the Temple (Texas)Telegram, the Macon (Georgia)Telegraph and United Press before coming to the Constitution in 1956 as an editorial writer. He soon became executive editor of the Atlanta Journal and Constitution and, on June 1, 1960, became editor of the Constitution. A couple of days before he became Constitution editor, a regular column written by him began to appear each day on the newspaper's editorial page.

A little more than a month after Patterson's column began, he used

1 Ibid.


5 For his first column, see Atlanta Constitution, 30 May 1960.
it to address the lunch counter issue. In fact, he mentioned or alluded to the sit-ins in more of his July columns than he did in columns for any other month under examination. These July columns were mainly concerned with the statements on the lunch counter protests in the civil rights planks of the platform at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. Other sit-in related issues handled by Patterson in July included the question of the constitutionality of the anti-trespass law and the position on the protests of the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates.

Patterson started his July barrage with "Sit-In Question Needs Examining." He wrote that it was difficult to say whether or not one was for or against sit-ins. He said the protests took blacks from their "familiar footing of legal right"\(^1\) to the new ground of an illegal act. He added that there was little chance that the Supreme Court would strike down the law (apparent reference to the anti-trespass law) under which the Atlanta lunch counter protestors were arrested.\(^2\)

Patterson turned his attention next to the party platform. From the Democratic convention in Los Angeles, he criticized the platform for containing an endorsement of all sit-ins, even those that went against local law.\(^3\) The portion of the platform he was probably referring to read:

If discrimination in voting, education, the administration of justice or segregated lunch counters are the issues

\(^1\) *Atlanta Constitution*, 5 July 1960.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) *Atlanta Constitution*, 14 July 1960.
in one area, discrimination in housing and employment may be pressing questions elsewhere. 

The peaceful demonstrations for first-class citizenship which have recently taken place in many parts of this country are a signal to all of us to make good at last the guarantees of our Constitution.¹

Today, such statements seem very uncontroversial. However, in 1960 the Democrats' civil rights plank, of which the above is only a small portion, caused great debate at the convention. Delegates from nine Southern states, led by Georgia Democratic Chairman James H. Gray and North Carolina Senator Sam Ervin, signed a statement repudiating the plank.²

Patterson wrote that the Democrats' civil rights plank, which endorsed all sit-ins had gone beyond the convictions of their nominee, Kennedy, who endorsed only legal demonstrations.³ While he chided Southern Democrats for their narrow-mindedness over civil rights issues (an apparent reference to the Gray/Ervin statement), he also criticized what he saw as excessive liberal influence on the platform.⁴

The Constitution editor, on the other hand, applauded the Republicans, in an editorial from their convention in Chicago, for endorsing only those protests that were "within the law."⁵ However, from reading what the

³ Atlanta Constitution, 14 July 1960.
⁵ Atlanta Constitution, 23 July 1960.
Republican civil rights plank contained about the demonstrations, it is
difficult to distinguish the Republican position from that of the Demo-
crats. That part of the plank read:

We affirm the constitutional right to peaceful assembly
to protest discrimination in private business establishments.
We applaud the action of the businessmen who have abandoned
discriminatory practices in retail establishments, and we
urge others to follow their example.¹

Although these statements also seem very uncontroversial today, at that
time the mere inclusion of a reference to the demonstrations caused con-
troversy at the Republican convention. The original platform is said to
have contained no mention of the protests. After a meeting between Repub-
llican Candidate Nixon and Nelson Rockefeller, then governor of New York,
the platform committee was persuaded by Nixon and Rockefeller to include
some support for the demonstrations.²

After the conventions were over and the presidential nominees re-
turned to the campaign trail, Patterson ended his July sit-in editorials
by responding to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's condem-
nation of Republican Presidential Nominee Richard Nixon. SNCC condemned
Nixon for supporting only lunch counter protests that stayed within local
laws. The Constitution editor pointed out that SNCC should also condemn
Democratic Nominee Kennedy because he held the same position as Nixon.
He added that since both nominees had to qualify their endorsement of "a
movement that is enormously popular in most of the nation, there is an
imperfection in the movement worth calm examination."³

¹ National Party Platform, p. 620.
² National Party Convention, p. 81.
³ Atlanta Constitution, 20 August 1960.
In August, Patterson, as did the World in its unsigned editorials, used the violence surrounding the Jacksonville lunch counter protests to generalize about the demonstrations. In "The Sit-Ins Have Run Their Course," the Constitution editor summarized his feelings about the protests by declaring that although the Jacksonville violence was probably started by whites, blacks had created the climate for it by taking the "race problem into the streets." Believing that blacks should use the courts, the polling places, the media and moral and economic pressures to solve the race problem, he insisted that "in the name of post-jungle civilization, it must be kept out of the streets."

Following the October sit-ins, Patterson wrote a column commenting on two letters he received about the demonstrations. He agreed with one of the correspondents who wrote that he was not sure it was right to refuse to serve blacks just because they were blacks. The other letter was from Wyatt Tee Walker, then director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), in which Walker questioned Patterson's description of the protests as an unwise weapon. "... I am deeply disturbed," the Constitution editor replied to Walker, "to see the students led into

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1 Atlanta Daily World, 30 August 1960.

2 Atlanta Constitution, 30 August 1960.

3 Ibid.

4 Probably a reference to Patterson's column, Atlanta Constitution, 30 August 1960.
The economic boycott generated by the October sit-ins was well underway in December when Patterson made his next reference to the protests. That reference was a veiled comment about the demonstrations in a column on the bombing of the English Avenue School, an act which was considered racially motivated. He decried again the illegal aspects of the protests and insisted that blacks and whites who were reasonable should come together to negotiate solutions to Atlanta's racial problems. "... the Negro who has supported violation of the law for his own purposes must see the division he is creating in what was once a larger sympathy" (for the Negro's cause).

The Constitution editor, in another December editorial, called for an end to the economic boycott. He said the continued "racial deadlocks in Atlanta," would bring "vengeance." He continued:

It would speak well for the Christian profession of the Negro movement if it withdrew its force as an expression of faith before asking for talks. If it chooses to keep tension on the crowbar, it appears to want only to dictate terms.

Patterson had said in his Jacksonville column that "withdrawal of Negro business" had been "the moving pressure on Southern stores." Yet, in


3 *Atlanta Constitution*, 20 December 1960.

4 Ibid.

5 *Atlanta Constitution*, 30 August 1960.
the column quoted above, he wanted blacks to give up this valuable pres-
sure and he offered nothing in return.

Patterson's next comments about the lunch counter protests came in
February 1961, when students again began to employ "jail-not-bail tactics."
He stated that blacks had now changed from being the offended to being
the offenders. He added that the weakness of the direct action of the
students was that it gave ammunition to white bigots who could not fight
blacks before because of their (blacks) lawful means of gaining rights.¹

When the sit-in agreement was reached in March 1961, the Constitution
editor lavished praise on Ivan Allen Jr., then president of the Atlanta
Chamber of Commerce, for his role in reaching the settlement. Patterson
gave just a little credit to black Attorney A. J. Walden, also a nego-
tiator of the pact. No mention is made of student leaders.²

Another local columnist who wrote in the Constitution about the sit-
ins was Eddie Barker. A native of Uriah, Alabama, he began his career
with the Atlanta newspapers as a sports writer for the Atlanta Journal in
the early 1950's and, within a couple of years, began to write editorial
columns for the combined Sunday edition of the Atlanta Journal and Con-
stitution. When Eugene Patterson was promoted from executive editor of
the Journal and Constitution to editor of the Constitution, effective
June 1, 1960, Barker was moved from the combined newspaper to the daily
Constitution, where he continued to write editorial columns until 1963.

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He was a journalism graduate of Florida Southern College, Lakeland, Florida, and had worked for two Florida newspapers, the Pensacola News Journal and the Panama City News Herald, before joining the staff of the Atlanta Journal.  

In three different columns, Barker seemed to have assumed the role of a satirist who "in fun" criticized the anti-integration forces, while not openly supporting the demonstrators. One column expressed regrets at the closing of the Capitol cafeteria because it meant the end to a good source of collard greens. The second was a humorous description of the October sit-ins at Rich's. The third column concerned the spraying of sit-in demonstrators by a gleeful white youth, who, according to Barker, might be well qualified for membership in the Ku Klux Klan or even for elective office because of his race baiting. However, Barker doubted that this youth would reach the highest office in the land. The columnist addressed his comments to the youth, writing:

But son, there you will sit in office. You will not be picked for president, because those with soft souls will not have forgotten what you sprayed, shot and shouted down South.

A third Constitution local columnist who wrote about the lunch counter protests was Ralph McGill. He was editor when the demonstrations began

1 Telephone interview with Eddie Barker at his home, Clayton, Georgia, 4 April 1984.

2 Atlanta Constitution, 19 August 1960.

3 Atlanta Constitution, 21 October 1960.

4 Atlanta Constitution, 23 December 1960.
but was promoted to publisher, effective June 1, 1930. A native Tennessean, he had come to the Constitution in 1929 as a sports writer. Two years later, he became sports editor and, in 1938, he was made executive editor. In 1942, he was named editor.

McGill gained the recognition as a moderate on racial matters but actually his position on race changed over the years. Lonnie King, a 1960's student movement leader and sit-in participant, said McGill was a "late bloomer" in his stand for civil rights. Calvin Logue, one of McGill's biographers, divided the Constitution publisher's pilgrimage in civil rights into three stages. First, Logue said the Tennessean apparently supported the separate-but-equal doctrine from about 1930 to 1950. The biographer explained that McGill, in 1946, took the position that any effort by law to mix the races at a rate faster than the general public desired would be detrimental to race relations. The second stage for McGill, according to Logue, came between the late 1940's and early 1950's. During this period, McGill attempted to convince people that they could live with what he began to realize was the inevitable--the end of segregation. Logue's final stage for McGill coincided with the onset of the

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1 Atlanta Constitution, 5 May 1960.


3 Interview with Lonnie King, Onxy Corporation, Atlanta, Georgia, April 21, 1978.

sit-ins. The biographer described this stage as one in which McGill, after the Brown decision, began to urge people to comply with the court ruling and began to see more and more the evil of segregation.¹

In the early 1960's McGill himself showed how far he had come on the race issue when he wrote that the sit-ins "without question were productive of the most change."² He added:

It was morally wrong, and it was preposterous, that a customer in a store was not merely permitted but invited to buy anything on sale, but if he was a colored customer he could not buy food or drink. No argument in a court of law could have dramatized the immorality and the irrationality of such a custom as did the sit-ins. No force brought change as quickly as they.³

McGill's column, although editorial in nature, always appeared on the front page rather than the editorial page during the period under examination. In his first reference to the sit-ins, the Constitution editor pointed to the protests as the results of "the denial of general human rights."⁴ He wrote that the demonstrations had "become a top international story, intriguing the interest of millions around the world."⁵

The Constitution editor's next look at the sit-in question came when he turned his attention to events in Nashville, Tennessee. Lunch counters in that city had been desegregated after weeks of protests. Owners of

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¹ Ibid., p. 76
³ Ibid., pp. 16-17.
⁵ Ibid.
variety store lunch counters, city officials and media representatives had gotten together and agreed to desegregate lunch counters without publicity. The desegregation occurred without incident and McGill saw this as an example of the goodness of the average Southerner. Perhaps he overstated the case in an attempt to show the good side of his native Southland. He wrote:

One important fact illustrated by the desegregation of Nashville lunch counters is that the majority of people want to do what is right. They may not like the idea of desegregated lunch counters; nonetheless, it is so preposterous to argue that a customer may buy everything else in a variety store but a cup of coffee or sandwich at the lunch counter, that even the objector realizes that business management can't be expected to so insist. The average Southerner is as fair-minded as any other American. Given a chance he will show it.¹

In a June column, McGill made a brief mention of the lunch counter protests when he wrote about a book partially written from a Japanese prison camp in 1941. The author of the book was quoted by McGill as saying that the law of retribution was in operation whenever human dignity was "withheld from a man because of his race or nationality or religion."² The Constitution editor wrote that such a law of retribution was an explanation for the sit-ins. He implied that people who were otherwise sensible failed to correct the injustices that brought on the protests and thus placed themselves in line for retribution.³

¹ Atlanta Constitution, 14 May 1960.

² Relman Morin, East Wind Rising: A Long View of the Pacific Origin, quoted in (or "cited by") Ralph McGill, Atlanta Constitution, 6 June 1960.

³ Ibid.
Following the King imprisonment, McGill, now Constitution publisher, called that jailing 'so obvious a discrimination that the conscience of the nation was outraged against the South.'\(^1\) He said King's opponents had cast him into the spotlight and would unwittingly assure him the victory he desired. He also criticized those who condemned Robert Kennedy's call to the judge in the case. McGill wrote:

Finally, Georgians who profess to be upset by Bob Kennedy's telephone call about the case should cast the first stone at those who made Georgia vulnerable to a charge of injustice. Without them, there would have been no call.\(^2\)

A later editorial by McGill revealed that President Eisenhower had drawn up a statement deploping the King imprisonment prior to the November election. The Constitution publisher also wrote that the statement was never released because of strong objections from Southern Republicans. The publisher's version was in sharp contrast to that found in an unsigned editorial in the World. That Newspaper's version did not include information about objections from Southern Republicans.\(^3\)

Besides editorials by local columnists, both newspapers published columns by nationally known or syndicated columnists (non-local).\(^4\) A couple of the Constitution's national columnists wrote about the sit-ins while one of the World's national columnists, Gordon B. Hancock, wrote

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\(^1\) Atlanta Constitution, 5 November 1960.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Atlanta Daily World, 18 December 1960.

\(^4\) McGill was a syndicated columnist but he was also a local columnist.
about the lunch counter demonstrations. A writer for the Associated Negro Press, Hancock, a minister and educator, received educational training at Benedict College and at Colgate, Harvard, Cambridge and Oxford universities. An advocate of interracial cooperation and self-help for blacks, the South Carolina native was one of the leaders of the movement which eventually resulted in the establishment of the Southern Regional Council. He served for many years as a professor of sociology, economics and religion at Virginia Union University in Richmond and as pastor of the city's Moore Street Baptist Church.1

Hancock wrote several columns about the lunch counter protests, all of which were favorable toward the demonstrations. He called them "a phase of passive resistance"2 which had moral power. He added that the major goal of the sit-in participants was to keep their movement non-violent.3 He viewed the demonstrations as presenting a realistic picture of race relations and wrote:

The current picture of Negro students protesting against segregation, and the evils thereof and of whites sworn to opposition, is a much truer picture than that of whites and Negroes sitting around a discussion table forty years ago.4


2 Atlanta Daily World, 8 March 1960.

3 Atlanta Daily World, 8 March 1960.

Next, the Associated Negro Press writer linked the sit-in to voting and said each was a "stepping stone to freedom." He also pointed to the dollar as "a stepping stone to freedom," explaining:

We contended that the Dollar could be made a stepping stone to freedom. The current sit-downs are attempts to emphasize the possibilities in making the dollar do double duty, by using it as a weapon against segregation and as a protest against restricted economic opportunities.

Later, Hancock labeled the sit-ins a "mild form of protest," but, nonetheless, a symbol of "the Negroes revolt against the tyranny of segregation." He also pointed to use of this symbol by students at white universities, such as Harvard and Radcliffe in the Boston area, to show support for the Southern student movement. Students at these white universities, according to Hancock, were flooding offices of national variety store chains (such as F. W. Woolworth) that had been the southern lunch counter protest targets with post cards aimed at getting the stores to change their segregation policies in the South. He said the Boston students had also picketed chain stores in the North which had segregation policies in the South.

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1 Atlanta Daily World, 18 March 1960.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
Finally, Hancock saw the lunch counter protests as part of a worldwide "Color Revolution." He said that "darker peoples everywhere" were staging "a Colour Revolution to attain the great human estate conceived by the French Revolutionaries of the 18th Century." He viewed the sit-ins, along with the independence movement in Africa, as part of this revolution "against the color prejudice of the world."

At the Constitution, two of its nationally known columnists chose to write about the lunch counter demonstrations. Both of these journalists wrote one column each on the protests. Arthur Krock, a Pulitzer Prize winner, who wrote from Washington, was a former reporter, Washington bureau chief, and editorial commentator for the New York Times. Krock gave his interpretation of President Eisenhower's remarks about the demonstrations, stating that the President's position was that private business owners could choose not to serve certain people but that discrimination in public places was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. Krock added that some Supreme Court rulings seemed to agree with the President's position but that, with the recent pattern of Court decisions, anyone

1 Atlanta Daily World, 23 March 1961.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
would be wise to note that the trend was against many forms of racial discrimination previously upheld by the Court. ¹

The other Constitution national columnist who was concerned with the lunch counter protests was Roscoe Drummond, who also wrote from Washington. He was a Washington columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate and had previously worked for the New York Herald Tribune and the Christian Science Monitor. ² In his Constitution column, he commended United States Attorney Gen. William Rogers for helping to bring about the desegregation of lunch counters at variety-store chains in sixty-nine Southern communities. Drummond wrote:

Local initiative is undoubtedly indispensable. But Atty. Gen. Rogers has shown, I think, that local initiative, with the quiet but visible power of the federal government behind it, has the best prospect of success. ³

He also drew attention to the fact that, while many of the communities where Rogers got results desegregated without demonstrations, "peaceful sit-in demonstrations are a potent economic weapon." ⁴ In essence, the columnist saw the importance of the federal government's role in bringing about Southern desegregation but also did not dismiss the importance of the sit-in as a tool in achieving desegregation.

¹ Atlanta Constitution, 19 March 1960.
³ Atlanta Constitution, 19 August 1960.
⁴ Ibid.
As previously stated, the World, in an unsigned editorial had also commended Rogers in his efforts to end segregation at lunch counters. Like Drummond, the World acknowledged the important role of the federal government in accomplishing desegregation. Unlike Drummond, however, the World did not expressly recognize the need for sit-ins.¹

Besides columns by local and nationally known writers, the Constitution printed editorials about the lunch counter protests from other newspapers. One of these came from the Macon Telegraph and implied that sit-ins were an example of black extremism while white violence against blacks was an example of white extremism. The Newspaper called for restraint by both blacks and whites.²

The other three guest editorials came from the Wichita Eagle, the Richmond Times-Dispatch and the Macon News. All of these editorials criticized the harshness of Dr. Martin Luther King's sentence following his participation in an Atlanta sit-in.³

Finally, the Constitution devoted two of its editorial cartoons to the lunch counter demonstrations. Both of these cartoons were signed "Baldy," the pen name for the Constitution's regular cartoonist, Cliff Baldowski. A native of Augusta, Georgia, Baldy had been with the Newspaper since 1950 and had received the national Sigma Delta Chi award for

¹ Atlanta Daily World, 14 August 1960.

² Atlanta Constitution, 21 March 1960.

³ Atlanta Constitution, 3 November 1960.
editorial cartoons in 1959. The first of his cartoons on the sit-ins appeared on August 10, 1960, shortly after the announcement that the Capitol cafeteria, a March sit-in target, would be closed. It was a visual expression of sentiments of regret over the closing similar to those found in a later column by Constitution columnist Eddie Barker. Men were pictured going up to the cafeteria telling each other the drab contents of their lunch boxes; an apparent sad contrast to the culinary delights they had enjoyed at the cafeteria.

The other cartoon on the demonstrations seemed to be an expression of the newspaper's view that the right of blacks to refuse to leave private businesses was questionable. A door, carrying the word "Law" was pictured and a sign next to the door read, "PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS 

A headless man had been thrown out of the door and on his shirt was written, "INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS " The cartoon's caption read, "Works Both Ways."

In summary, the Constitution and the World gave some opportunity for both sides to state their positions through letters to the editor and

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1 Atlanta Constitution, 2 February 1961.
2 Atlanta Constitution, 19 August 1960.
3 Atlanta Constitution, 11 February 1961.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
columns. In both newspapers, some of the writers of letters and columns disagreed with the positions the newspapers had taken on the sit-ins in their unsigned editorials. However, the Constitution often used its guest editorials (called Specials to the Constitution) and Baldy cartoons to augment its own position on the protests.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Both the Atlanta Constitution and the Atlanta Daily World provided a potpourri of editorial material on the Atlanta Sit-In Movement between March 1960 and March 1961. Both newspapers printed unsigned editorials, provided space in their letters to the editor section for varying views and both carried columns by national and local journalists who wrote generally about lunch counter protests or specifically about the Atlanta protests. In addition, the Constitution carried guest editorials and cartoons on the demonstrations.

Although the sit-ins originated from students at the predominantly black schools of the Atlanta University Center, the black-owned World took an editorial position on the protests very similar to that of the white-owned Constitution. Both newspapers in their unsigned editorials agreed that lunch counter protests were an inappropriate method for gaining civil rights and should be discontinued and that the youth who directed the demonstrations needed to bring their enthusiasm under the guidance of their elders. The newspapers maintained this stance throughout the course of the Atlanta sit-ins.

Despite their adamant and consistent opposition to the protests, both newspapers printed other editorial material that was in direct opposition to their views. The letters to the editor section, especially in the Constitution, was notable in having more letters in favor of the demonstrations than against them. At least one local columnist on each
newspaper (McGill at the Constitution and Fowlkes at the World) provided opinions far different from that of their newspapers. That neither of these men were prevented from disagreeing with their employers showed some effort by the two news organizations to provide freedom of expression within their ranks. Gordon B. Hancock, the only one of the World's two national columnists who wrote about the protests at this time, was certainly a constant source of contrast to the newspaper's sit-in opposition.

For a white newspaper of its day, the Constitution, in its unsigned editorials, addressed blacks in a fairly favorable light, giving persons such as Martin Luther King, Jr. the title of "Dr."1 The polite titles notwithstanding, the newspaper still failed to realize the impatience many young blacks felt with the traditionally slow method of gaining rights through court action. Any use of a direct action technique, such as the sit-in, was viewed by the Constitution as extremism and as an action which might bring resentment.2 The World, in an editorial stance parallel to the Constitution's, also failed to see the need for blacks to employ the traditional role of the black news organ as special advocate for human rights3 but seemed to be more concerned with keeping the peace.4 However, the World had a much greater grasp than did the Constitution on the

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1 See Henry G. La Brie III, ed. ed. Perspectives of the Black Press 1974 (Kennebunkport, Maine: Mercer House Press, 1974), p. 42. The author described how blacks were never referred to by titles in many newspapers, especially those in the South.

2 Atlanta Constitution, 31 May 1960.

3 See Oak, Negro Newspaper, introduction. Oak said the special advocacy role was common to black newspapers.

injustice of several matters such as the passage of the anti-trespass law and the implication by Governor Vandiver that the "Appeal" was Communist-inspired.¹

When it came to providing its black audience with supplemental information not found in the white newspaper, a traditional task of the black newspaper,² the World did an excellent job. For example, the newspaper's unsigned editorials told of efforts by the Student Liaison Committee to secure jobs for blacks who had joined the ranks of the unemployed due to the sit-ins and of Atlanta University President Dr. Rufus Clement's alleged attempt to get Student Leader Lonnie King to negotiate and stop demonstrating.³

In summary, neither the Constitution nor the World realized the swiftness with which the sit-ins would bring about desegregation. Both insisted that blacks rely on negotiation, a method which blacks had constantly tried but which had often failed because of the refusal of whites to change existing segregation policies.⁴ Both also wanted blacks to rely on favorable court rulings, despite the fact that the implementation of even the most monumental of court cases--the Brown decision--had been slow and sporadic. Finally, both newspapers failed to offer new solutions to the

² Oak, Negro Newspaper, chapter three.
old problems that sent thousands of young people to jail for use of direct action methods such as lunch counter protests.
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