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# The SNFC in The Civil Rights Movement in Carbondale, Illinois

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*The SNFC in The Civil Rights Movement in Carbondale, Illinois*

Jim Crow laws persisted in a large part of the USA even after the overturn of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* by *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* in 1954. Many states, both north and south, continued to maintain the Jim Crow laws which kept black people and white people separated. In areas like Southern Illinois, schools had implemented integrated, but many white businesses still maintained white-only service with the most severe violations taking place in Cairo, Illinois. Local students in the summer of 1962 at Southern Illinois University (SIU) banded together in an attempt to organize an effort to stop segregation in Southern Illinois and created the Student Non-violent Freedom Committee (SNFC). This committee helped to coordinate and supervise different protests in the Southern Illinois region, and later on expanded their efforts to surrounding states as well. The local, student organized, SNFC helped shape the national civil rights movement, and had a dramatic impact on the effort to end Jim Crow in the Southern Illinois region.

The efforts of groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) helped to create an environment that allowed for the movement in the youth to begin their activism in the civil rights movement. In February of 1960, four college students in Greensboro, North Carolina started the youth movement by participating in a sit-in, and within a matter of days the sit-ins had spread to fifteen cities in five southern states with over fifty thousand students participating in sit-ins or demonstrations in the following months.<sup>1</sup> Those sit-ins did not have any unifying force except the desire by all involved to do something against the oppressive nature of the times. They did not coordinate their efforts which was the reason for the formation of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The goal of this

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<sup>1</sup> Howard Zinn, *SNCC, the New Abolitionists*. p.16.

organization was to coordinate the national effort of the youth into a single force that could challenge segregation across the USA. The youth involved in this movement believed in the use of non-violence, and they would suffer blows, beatings, verbal abuses, and not strike back, exercising an astounding level of will power and self-control.<sup>2</sup>

Before the 1960s, few civil rights groups participated in large scale protests, but with the awakening of the youth and the formation of the SNCC, non-violent protests became the center of the civil rights movement. The Montgomery Bus Boycott had, up to that time, been the largest coordinated protest of the civil rights movement. The sit-ins and protests from college students almost eclipsed the scale of the Montgomery boycott overnight. While the NAACP and CORE made vital advances in the civil rights movement, the SNCC took the lead in the direct action by skillfully coordinating and giving direction to student involvement.<sup>3</sup> The awakening of the youth changed the way the civil rights movement fought. It meant that instead of court battles, most action now took place by local students who followed a non-violent form of protest aimed at integrating the entire nation.

The zeal and passion from the college movement spread across the nation and groups all around the country formed in response. In the summer of 1962, a group of college students at Southern Illinois University wanted to participate in this nationwide movement. John O'Neal and Mary McCollum first formed a group of peers to look into housing for black people at SIU and in the Carbondale area.<sup>4</sup> The self-run group soon expanded its activities. In early June of 1962, Reverend Blaine Ramsey of Word Chapel Church in Cairo invited a group of around twenty SIU students to attend an NAACP meeting about discrimination problems in

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid 14.

<sup>3</sup> "SNCC: Freedom Movement in the South", Beatrice Stegeman Collection on Civil Rights in Southern Illinois, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>4</sup> *The Egyptian*, June 29, 1962, Online Archives Daily Egyptian, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Cairo.<sup>5</sup> A former student from SIU, Mary McCollum, spoke at the meeting representing the students from SIU. Mary McCollum was a white person and came from Nashville, Tennessee and attended SIU in the spring 1962 semester and planned on returning for the fall 1962 semester. She was a SNCC field secretary and worked with the Freedom Riders the previous year.<sup>6</sup> McCollum was trained and experienced in civil rights activism, and she knew how to implement non-violent protests. Her efforts proved crucial in the protests carried out against segregation in Cairo throughout the summer of 1962.

At this meeting on June 11<sup>th</sup>, the people of Cairo raised multiple concerns about discrimination in their town, and with the help and support of the SIUC students, the Cairo nonviolent freedom committee (CNFC) was formed. Two SIU representatives acted as advisors to this group, one of which was Mary McCollum. The committee was headed by sixteen year old Charles Koen and immediately following this meeting there was a ten day training program where people in the community, mostly high school students, were trained in nonviolent tactics.<sup>7</sup> The two advisors from SIU took the lead in the training of Cairo youth in these non-violent tactics. While the CNFC was formed by adults and youth in Cairo, the vast majority of protesters would be the students, most of which were less than twenty years old.

It is worth noting that universal support for the formation of the CNFC did not exist at SIU. The student council at SIU failed to approve a resolution supporting the CNFC and its campaign in Cairo to end segregation. An article about the decision in *The Egyptian* was titled “Student Council Fails”, which indicates there was some support for the group in Cairo and its SIU

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<sup>5</sup> *The Egyptian*, July 24, 1962, Interview with John O’Neal, Beatrice Stegeman Collection on Civil Rights in Southern Illinois, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>6</sup> *The Egyptian*, June 29, 1962.

<sup>7</sup> “*SNFC Cairo Southern Roots report*”, Beatrice Stegeman Collection on Civil Rights in Southern Illinois, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

student supporters.<sup>8</sup> Support for the group remained shaky at first as people remained uncertain of what the group represented at this point or what the group would accomplish. As the fight dragged on, people began to see that this group would not quit fighting. It gradually began to gain more support from both in and around the community.

The first decisive action took place at a restaurant called Macks BBQ. A team tested and deemed worthy the business for protest. The facility refused service to the first test group, and when informed of Illinois's public accommodation law they received overpriced food that was inedible.<sup>9</sup> The protest was non-violent with a picket line holding signs outside the building that did not harass or prevent people from entering the business, but a group gradually formed around the protesters. Mary McCollum led the protest, and as the crowd turned violent around them a man charged the group with a knife; Mary McCollum blocked him and received a knife slash to her thigh that required twelve stitches.<sup>10</sup> The dedication in the face of extreme danger showed how the youth of the civil rights movement were willing to sacrifice anything to achieve their goal of an equal society. The protests continued into July with six protestors arrested, and they finally ended when the owner served food to two black protestors.<sup>11</sup> Future Vice President of the SNFC, Jim Adams, was in Cairo supporting the sit-ins when the police arrested him. They charged him with supposedly trespassing on church grounds, and in response *The Egyptian* published an article entitled "Jim Adams Day??"<sup>12</sup> The article supported the student's actions in Cairo, and it also commended SIU for recognizing the brave action of one of its students in

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<sup>8</sup> *The Egyptian*, July 10, 1962, Box 373, University Archives: Office of the President and Student Activities, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>9</sup> SNFC Cairo Southern Roots report.

<sup>10</sup> *The Student Voice*, October 1962, Beatrice Stegeman Collection on Civil Rights in Southern Illinois, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>11</sup> SNFC Cairo Southern Roots report.

<sup>12</sup> *The Egyptian*, July 10, 1962.

Cairo.<sup>13</sup> The support for the protests in Cairo began to grow as more publicity about the event spread, and as more and more students began to rally behind the movement.

Students at SIU continued to travel to Cairo to support the protest. On July 8<sup>th</sup>, the students at SIU rallied to form their own organization called the SNFC with John O'Neal elected as president. Prior to the formation of the organization, support from SIU had merely been people acting on their own accord with no larger governing body. The group stated that their goal was to "Coordinate activities against any racial discrimination they might find in Southern Illinois," and special interest for the summer of 1962 would be placed on Cairo.<sup>14</sup> The group helped with the coordination of the efforts in Cairo, and organized buses to take SIU students to Cairo. However, the group did not limit itself to one town or county. Rather, the group stood against all segregation in Southern Illinois and beyond which put it at the forefront of student activism in the civil rights movement in Southern Illinois.

The University also began to put its support behind the students, and took precautions to stay on the student's side. On July 11<sup>th</sup>, Dennis Trueblood, a professor in the Department of Higher Education, wrote to President Morris outlining his opinion on the incidents taking place in Cairo and about the SNFC on campus. Trueblood stated three main points in his letter to President Morris. Trueblood advised President Morris not to try and control the students but to simply let the student exercise their rights as citizens.<sup>15</sup> Trueblood also recommended that President Morris look into the school's own discrimination policies.<sup>16</sup> In the past two years, the policies had become lax and two instances of discrimination had occurred that Trueblood had dealt with, and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> *The Southern Illinoisan*, July 9, 1962, Box 373, University Archives: Office of the President and Student Activities, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>15</sup> *Dennis Trueblood to President Morris*, July 11, 1962, Box 373, University Archives: Office of the President and Student Activities, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

by pure coincidence the two professional black staff were leaving the university which left the university with no proof of their non-discriminatory hiring.<sup>17</sup> Unintentionally, the SNFC had caused the administration at SIU to begin its own self examination to combat discrimination within SIU. Trueblood's aim was to warn President Morris that the university could be at risk of the student-led group turning on SIU, and that steps should be taken to prevent this such as, hiring more black staff on campus, and tightening other non-discriminatory policies on campus. Trueblood acknowledged that the youth would not submit to any control from above, and that any attempt to do so could result in protests against SIU.

The SNFC acted swiftly and decisively in the coming months. They started with helping to organize two protests at the roller rink and swimming pool in Cairo. The pool proved an easier target because the Rotary Club operated it, a national organization with a non-discriminatory policy. The protests took place over July 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> with over forty students, three from SIU, arrested, and of the forty arrested only twenty were over the age of seventeen.<sup>18</sup> Seventeen of the students chose to remain in jail, including the three SIU students, who all went on a hunger strike in protest of the arrests.<sup>19</sup> One of the three SIU students arrested was Jim Adams, vice president of the SNFC, and he organized the hunger strikes in the jail. In response to the arrests, students at SIU held a morale drive where sympathizers wore white arm bands to show support; it was estimated that over five hundred arm bands were distributed.<sup>20</sup> The student population rallied to the cause to show their support for their fellow students in jail, and the courage by the students in jail to go on hunger strikes shows their dedication to the cause. These students cared more for the movement than they did for their personal health and well-being. The SNFC helped to spread the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> SNFC Cairo Southern Roots report.

<sup>19</sup> *The Egyptian*, July 16, 1962, Box 373, University Archives: Office of the President and Student Activities, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>20</sup> SNFC Cairo Southern Roots report.

news of the fight going on in Cairo, and proved essential in organizing the transportation of students down to Cairo to participate in those protests. That helped to expand the scope of the action being taken in Cairo to generate support from other towns in the area like Carbondale.

Trials for all of the protestors arrested took place on July 20<sup>th</sup>. It ends with twenty-one people being charged and fined for their actions; all charges were appealed. The courtroom filled with black people from the town of Cairo and supporters from SIU, to the extent that people overflowed outside of the courtroom. While the trial took place, the crowd outside sang freedom songs in protest of the trials, showing their unity against the oppression being committed against them in Cairo.<sup>21</sup> The three SIU students arrested were all charged and convicted; Jim Adams, vice president of the SNFC was charged \$300 and the two others charged \$100. The three student's cases continued until August 17<sup>th</sup>, but the students were released from jail six days after being arrested, after posting bail. The following day of the trials the CNFC and the SNFC held a meeting, and afterwards, they organized a march where over three hundred demonstrators marched silently through the main part of town, thirty five of which were SIU students.<sup>22</sup> The CNFC and the SNFC kept the pressure on Cairo to make it clear that the fight would not stop until justice and equality existed in Cairo. The racist people in Cairo could no longer oppress the masses of Cairo, and the black people in Cairo refused to be treated as an inferior race with few rights. The march showed how support for the movement in Cairo gained more and more momentum as publicity from the non-violent protests reached further people. The resolve of the people involved did not falter when the police tried to end their protests. Instead, the SNFC used the arrests as a rallying cry that only strengthened their will to keep fighting. They continued to

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<sup>21</sup> *The Egyptian*, July 20, 1962, Box 373, University Archives: Office of the President and Student Activities, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>22</sup> SNFC Cairo Southern Roots report.



show their support for Cairo by encouraging its members to travel to Cairo to participate in the protests.

The recent marches and protests attracted attention to SIU. On July 20<sup>th</sup>, John O’Neal wrote a letter to President Morris reaffirming the purpose of the SNFC. O’Neal did not want the university to see the group as negatively representing the university, but instead as a positive mark on its record. John O’Neal stated, as in the constitution of the SNFC:

We affirm our faith in the ultimate value of every person as asserted by the religious and ethical traditions of our civilizations, and by our present commitment. We affirm our belief in the right of every person to the freedom and respect, implied by this faith regardless of distinctions among persons. We consider racial discrimination contrary to this belief. We affirm our belief in the principles of non-violence as that way of bringing about the social change, while respecting the dignity of those persons who oppose such change. We affirm our duty as students to work toward furthering these ideals and principles in our community and in society as a whole, with the firm conviction that, only by these principles can this or any nation be truly democratic.<sup>23</sup>

The steadfast values the students of the SNFC had in pursuing their goal of equality through non-violent means always remained embedded in how they operated and represented themselves.

John O’Neal admitted to President Morris that the SNFC had been responsible for much of the action taking place in Cairo, but that the SNFC believed what they were doing was a necessity for the community in Cairo.<sup>24</sup> The last line about creating a truly democratic nation demonstrates how the group saw itself as participating in the larger movement to give equal rights to all people in the United States, and how the group saw itself as performing actions that bettered society as a whole.

Later in the week, The Egyptian interviewed John O’Neal about the SNFC and their actions in Cairo. The main issue at hand regarded the “violence” that had taken place in Cairo, and why non-violent protests seem to inevitably lead to “violence”, and John O’Neal responded

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<sup>23</sup> *John O’Neal to President Morris*, July 20, 1962, Box 373, University Archives: Office of the President and Student Activities, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

to those accusations by saying that people do not change overnight and that the protestors had not broken any of the nonviolent code.<sup>25</sup> He stated that “In terms of violence worked on us, that is something that each individual who participates has to work out for himself. If he is willing to suffer violence and accept it and still maintain an attitude of love and respect, as much as possible then he’s ready to participate.”<sup>26</sup> The SNFC believed not in creating violence, but in stopping it from happening again by changing the people who brought violence onto them. The protests aimed “to be corrective in terms of that individuals own moral sickness.”<sup>27</sup> The SNFC and the larger civil rights movement as a whole sought to eradicate racism through the use of non-violent tactics and policies. The act of protesting instead of holding court cases brought the issue to each individual person in Cairo so that they could no longer claim this problem did not exist. By not fighting back and maintaining a friendly, humble, calm, and forgiving attitude the protestor built mutual respect for both sides.<sup>28</sup>

The *Egyptian* on July 24<sup>th</sup> published three articles written by students showing the multiple views held at SIU. One article, titled “Education vs. Demonstrations”, argued that the actions taken by students should be stopped because the upheaval and the drastic changing of culture will only lead to more turmoil later on, and instead, integration should be taken at a slow pace to let education and social economic gains gradually integrate the population.<sup>29</sup> The students who wrote this article claimed to be in support of equal rights, but the bias in their article clearly shows they disapprove of the integration attempt in Cairo. The fact that The *Egyptian* published this article revealed that this view was shared by more than just the two

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<sup>25</sup> *The Egyptian*, July 24, 1962.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> *SNFC Nonviolence Key to Dignity report*, Beatrice Stegeman Collection on Civil Rights in Southern Illinois, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>29</sup> William J. Ball and James M. Bail, *The Egyptian*, July 24, 1962.

authors of the article. Another article titled in *The Egyptian* “Questions Need Answering”, written by a member of the student council, took a neutral stance on the issue stating that students may act as they wish regarding the actions being taken in Cairo, but stated that the student council is not involved in the movement nor was it backing the movement.<sup>30</sup> The last article titled “Students are Involved”, written by Wendell O’Neal, vice president of the SNFC and younger brother to John O’Neal, called for active support of the demonstrations in Cairo and stated that “We are involved; each of us, whether white or Negro.”<sup>31</sup> Wendell also spoke directly to each individual student on campus when he said that “I think that it is painfully evident that until each of us realizes his personal involvement in this situation that confronts us that we are shrinking our responsibility and abusing our privilege as people, as Americans, as Individuals.”<sup>32</sup> The student body at the end of July did not know where to stand, many simply ignored the problem, and only a small percentage decided to not shrink from their responsibility, but the movement, compared to where it had started, had grown immensely. The whole campus, the whole city, and much of Southern Illinois now knew of the SNFC and the fight taking place in Cairo.

Possibly in response to the publicity to the SNFC and the continued demonstrations in Cairo, Reverend Lockard of Shiloh Baptist Church in Cairo wrote a letter to President Morris on July 24<sup>th</sup>. The contents of the letter asked two questions. One questioned asked about what jurisdiction the University has over its students, and the other asked, do the actions of the protestors represent only themselves or the University as a whole?<sup>33</sup> The reaction of Reverend

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<sup>30</sup> Robert K. Gray, *The Egyptian*, July 24, 1962.

<sup>31</sup> Wendell O’Neal, *The Egyptian*, July 24, 1962.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> *Shiloh Baptist Church to President Morris July 26, 1962*, Box 373, University Archives: Office of the President and Student Activities, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Lockard to the actions of the SNFC sheds light on the impact the group had in Cairo, and how now, the students became viewed as a serious threat to segregation in Cairo. President Morris drafted a response but never sent it. In it, he stated that the students were not under the control of SIU and that the students did not represent SIU as a whole, but in the ending paragraph Morris said that “The issues being explored in Cairo are critical to the welfare of all mankind”.<sup>34</sup>

President Morris, while never directly stating that he backed the movement in Cairo, from the beginning unofficially supported the efforts of his students and thought their endeavor was a just one.

The efforts of people like Reverend Lockhart and others did not deter the SNFC, and on July 28<sup>th</sup> the group expanded itself further and sent a testing team into Murphysboro to investigate any discriminatory practices there. Upon finding some discriminatory practices, John O’Neal spoke to the community asking if they wanted to take a stand against segregation, stating that “We’re here to help you, but we won’t do things for you”.<sup>35</sup> The reason for not protesting themselves remained the same reason why the SNFC helped to form the CNFC; the people needed to change their own mindset in order to make the changes permanent. The people responded by inviting the SNFC back on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1962 for a mass community meeting. The people appointed a subcommittee from the SNFC to help organize the people of Murphysboro, and they decided that the pool in Murphysboro should be tested.<sup>36</sup> The committee tested the pool on the following day and found that it did not allow black people to enter. Due to the publicity about Cairo, and for fear of protests from the SNFC, the pool owners, along with others in the

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<sup>34</sup> *Drafted response to Shiloh Baptist Church from President Morris September 10, 1962*, Box 373, University Archives: Office of the President and Student Activities, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>35</sup> *SNFC Murphysboro report: Citizens Take the Lead*, Beatrice Stegeman Collection on Civil Rights in Southern Illinois, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

community, quickly changed their discriminatory policies.<sup>37</sup> The SNFC built a reputation by that point as a group that was not afraid to take a stand against discrimination. The sheer determination and commitment of the group made multiple business owners in Murphysboro change their ways without the need to stage public protests. The Murphysboro Nonviolent Freedom Organization (MNFO) formed on August 16<sup>th</sup> to continue the fight not only against segregation but against discrimination as a whole. A sub-committee formed to study employment problems and another human relations sub-committee formed to pinpoint goals in order to work toward an understanding with civic and business leaders in Murphysboro.<sup>38</sup> This organization differed from the SNFC and the CNFC in that students did not lead the organization, but students actively participated in this group as facility testers and as protestors. The SNFC continued its role as an advisor and supporter of the MNFO after its formation.

The movement in Cairo became increasingly volatile as the summer progressed. The CNFC and the SNFC continued their protests of multiple businesses in Cairo, and on August 10<sup>th</sup> President Morris received an anonymous letter from Cairo. The letter was very hostile towards Morris and the students going down to Cairo with the opening paragraph stating:

Mr. president I just know that you are delighted to send your stuges down to Cairo to disturb the community and create a lot of publicity for your great University, you load them up at the beautiful student center that the tax payers built, and send them down to Cairo to form mobs and try their best to put our business people out of business, (needless to say communistic) [*sic*].<sup>39</sup>

These people became desperate to keep the status quo in Cairo, and this letter revealed the anger and hatred from these racist people. Other lines from the letter said that “If nothing else we can find out why you send them down here so dirty they stink they are filthy, have them take a

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> *Letter from Cairo to President Morris August 10, 1962*, Box 373, University Archives: Office of the President and Student Activities, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

bath before the come down they stink up our streets and our jails [*sic*]”.<sup>40</sup> Compared to the previous letter from Shiloh Baptist Church, a dramatic change in attitude can be seen where the tone became very hostile and vengeful which demonstrates the impact the SNFC had in Cairo. The SNFC successfully broke down barriers, and the people who resisted against them realized that they were losing the fight.

The anger and hatred in Cairo came to a climax on August 17<sup>th</sup> during protests at the Roller Rink in Cairo. Since the July 20<sup>th</sup> trials, protests continued at the pool, supermarket, and the roller rink. Seventeen-year-old Charles Koen and Mary McCollum led the protest group at the roller rink. The group encountered the normal racial slurs and comments as they maintained their peaceful conduct. However, the situation quickly turned violent as a crowd gathered around the group and an elderly man struck Charles Koen viciously across the forehead with a black jacket knife, and then proceeded to strike Charlene Williams multiple times across the head, shoulders, right arm, and back as she tried to shield Charles.<sup>41</sup> The hostile crowd quickly surrounded the group and multiple protestors were struck with bats, chains, clubs, sticks, and shot at multiple times with several students receiving severe wounds.<sup>42</sup> Upon the sheriff arriving on scene, Mary McCollum asked for help in finding injured protestors who were still missing, but he completely ignored her.<sup>43</sup> When she asked for help in taking wounded protestors to the hospital, she was told by the sheriff that “You got them here, you get them back”.<sup>44</sup> Not only was the group violently and maliciously attacked, but they received no support from the local sheriff or state police in getting medical help or in looking for suspects in the attack. This shows the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> “SNFC Cairo Action Report”, Beatrice Stegeman Collection on Civil Rights in Southern Illinois, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

uphill battle for the SNFC and the CNFC because they had to fight not only against many of the common people in the town, but also people in authoritative positions in Cairo like the police and city government who did not carry out their duties to protect the black and white protestors or uphold the law. The sheriff did finally arrest four men, but Clifford Jones, who had taken part in the attack, repeatedly pointed a pistol at the group of students, and the Sheriff ignored that until multiple people directly brought that to his attention and even then he seemed reluctant to arrest Jones.<sup>45</sup> Even with those few arrests, the police did not intend to convict any of the men involved. Only with the arrival and urging of Reverend Blaine Ramsey and Dr. L. C. Holman, state president of the NAACP, did the police bring any real charges against the assailants. In total, seven students needed to be taken to the hospital to be treated for wounds, the oldest was twenty two and the youngest was thirteen.<sup>46</sup>

The events of August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1962 affirmed the determination of racist people in Cairo to try and maintain their power, but, as with the arrests, trials, and setbacks before in the summer, the CNFC and the SNFC used this incident to strengthen their cause. The organization sent telegrams to the governor looking for support and acknowledgement of the situation that had occurred. On August 20<sup>th</sup>, Charles Koen, John O'Neal, Reverend Ramsey, Dr. Holman, and Roger Nathan met with the governor along with one hundred individuals who were ready to protest if the meeting proved unsatisfactory.<sup>47</sup> The meeting resulted in the governor saying that "the group should continue to demonstrate whenever it was deemed necessary" and the attorney general stated that his office would now prosecute in any case of unlawful segregation.<sup>48</sup> While the violence that happened on August 17<sup>th</sup> was tragic, the results brought full state support for the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Cairo: Southern Roots.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

action being taken in Cairo. The support from the Illinois government affected not only Cairo, but, after the meeting, John O'Neal and Charles Koen spoke to the MNFO on August 20<sup>th</sup> encouraging them to continue their fight as well.<sup>49</sup> Barriers swiftly fell in Murphysboro following that meeting. The CNFC made progress in Cairo with admission being granted to black people at the roller rink, cafes and hotels allowing black people to be served there, and they made significant progress in the independent voter's league which desired to help black people obtain a voice in government and run for office.<sup>50</sup> The achievements accomplished over the summer also had effects in Carbondale. In October, the student council at SIU passed a resolution, by one vote, supporting student's nonviolent activities against segregation and for the continued fight to achieve equal rights for all citizens.<sup>51</sup> While only passing by one vote, the resolution shows how the SIU campus, as a whole, began to recognize the importance of the SNFC and their fight against discrimination.

At the end of 1962, the SNFC said that "The Movement has as its goal the enlightenment and freedom of all men, all mankind."<sup>52</sup> The SNFC did not limit itself to one area or one battle, and in the years to come continued to expand their fight against racial discrimination. The SNFC newspaper created in 1964 reveals how the group continued to expand its reach and prestige. In November of 1964, they launched a campaign to help with the voter registration movement in Mississippi. Ten SIU students went to Mississippi to act as leaders to help register black people to vote and to organize protests, and Jane Adams, an SIU student and member of the SNFC,

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<sup>49</sup> Murphysboro: Citizens Take the Lead.

<sup>50</sup> Cairo: Southern Roots.

<sup>51</sup> *Southern Illinoisan*, October 19, 1962, Box 373, University Archives: Office of the President and Student Activities, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>52</sup> "SNFC Future Proposal: Intensified Student Involvement", Beatrice Stegeman Collection on Civil Rights in Southern Illinois, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.



became the coordinator of federal projects for Mississippi.<sup>53</sup> The students fought to allow black people to assert their power at the polls, and many gave up a semester of schooling to participate in that movement. The SNFC still fought battles in Carbondale and launched a series of protests against businesses that practiced discriminatory hiring, in January of 1965.<sup>54</sup> While areas of blatant discrimination had been eliminated, areas such as hiring, housing, and pay still remained unequal between black and white people in Carbondale. The SNFC, in April of 1965, also helped send students to a march on Washington to protest voter registration in the United States.<sup>55</sup> The SNFC continued to fight against discrimination both at home, and lent its support to the national movement by sending volunteers and money, as well.

The SNFC made large breakthroughs against Jim Crow in the Southern Illinois region, and the group continued to help fight in the larger civil rights movement across the country. The group helped form not only a local organization in Carbondale, but also two other organizations in Murphysboro and Cairo. Together these organizations, usually led by SNFC members, ended segregation in Cairo by the end of 1962, and achieved support from the state government in future protests. The local SNFC continued to push for integration in nearby states, and also fought for equal employment opportunities in Carbondale and the surrounding community. The courageous actions of students, like John O'Neal and Marry McCollum, helped shape the driving force behind those organizations. Students like them proved essential in the effort to end

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<sup>53</sup> *SNFC Newsletter*, November, 1964 Vol. I no. 1, Box 8, Campus Newsletters, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>54</sup> *SNFC Newsletter*, January, 1965 Vol. I no. 4, Box 8, Campus Newsletters, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

<sup>55</sup> *SNFC Newsletter*, April, 1965 Vol. I no. 7, Box 8, Campus Newsletters, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

segregation in Southern Illinois. Ordinary students who performed extraordinary acts helped define the civil rights movement, and end segregation in Southern Illinois and the nation.

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