

Black History: Museum Honors N.C. A&T Students' Protest

Contributed by Jonathan Alexander -- Black College Wire
Friday, 04 February 2011

Greensboro Four remembered as civil rights center celebrates its one-year anniversary

It all happened Feb. 1, 1960, in a very segregated North Carolina, when four African-American college students from North Carolina A&T University organized a sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro.

The four freshmen, who became known as the Greensboro Four, were Joseph McNeil, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair, and David Richmond. Their defiant act spread like wildfire. Soon black and white students — 75,000 in all — spread over 55 cities, including Durham, to join the sit-in.

The purpose? To fight for what America was supposed to stand for: that "all men are created equal."

To commemorate the 51th anniversary of this event, the International Civil Rights Center and Museum opened in Greensboro on Feb. 1, 2010.

N.C. Central University business administration graduate Melvin Alston was one of the founders of the museum. Alston is now a Guilford County Commissioner.

The museum's entrance features a large poster of the Greensboro Four.

The museum tour begins with a historical video, followed by the "Hall of Shame."

The Hall of Shame consists of horrible images of blacks, and their white supporters, being terrorized and killed for standing up for civil rights.

One stark image shows the lynching of a black man while white viewers — even a father with his young boy — watch as if being entertained.

"We are not born prejudiced. That is something we are taught," said Anita Johnson, the tour guide.

Johnson, who has guided tours since the museum's opening, is openly emotional as she guides viewers through the museum.

"Everything for blacks was inferior," she said. "Life for black people wasn't fair."

After the Hall of Shame, there is a short video of the four students in their dorm room, planning the sit-in.

"These students didn't want to be served food, they wanted to be served equality," said Johnson.

The lunch counter that was desegregated almost 51 years ago is on display in the museum, just as it was back then.

The tour concludes with image of President Barack that is form from many individual pictures of activists that fought for civil rights. Museum tours cost \$8 for students, \$10 for others.

Jonathan Alexander writes for The Campus Echo , the North Carolina A&T University student newspaper, which originally published this article.{moshaloscan}