

I Want to Write

Margaret Walker

I want to write
I want to write the songs of my people
I want to hear them singing melodies in the dark.
I want to catch the last floating strains from their sob-torn throats.
I want to frame their dreams into words; their souls into notes.
I want to catch their sunshine laughter in a bowl;
fling dark hands to a darker sky
and fill them full of stars
then crush and mix such lights till they become
a mirrored pool of brilliance in the dawn.



Sit-Ins

Margaret Walker

Greensboro, North Carolina, in the Spring of 1960

You were our first brave ones to defy their dissonance of hate

With your silence

With your willingness to suffer

Without violence

5 Those first bright young to fling your names across pages

Of new southern history

With courage and faith, convictions, and intelligence **B**

The first to blaze a flaming path for justice

And awaken consciences

0 Of these stony ones.

Come, Lord Jesus, Bold Young Galilean¹

*Sit Beside this Counter, Lord, with Me! **C***



From A Dream of Freedom by Diane McWhorter

On the last day of January 1960, a North Carolina teenager named Ezell Blair Jr. announced to his mother, "Mom, we are going to do something tomorrow that may change history, that might change the world." Blair attended a black college in Greensboro called North Carolina Agricultural and Technical. On Monday afternoon, February 1, he and three A&T classmates, Franklin McCain, David Richmond, and Joseph McNeil, went downtown to Woolworth's department store, took a seat at the lunch counter, and ordered a doughnut and coffee.

"I'm sorry," said the waitress, "we don't serve you here."

Though white-only lunch counters were a fact of southern life, one of the students replied, "We just beg to disagree with you." Before sitting down, they had deliberately bought some school supplies. Holding up a receipt, they pointed out that they had just been served at a nearby

cash register. One of the most insulting hypocrisies of segregation was that stores in the South, as Franklin McCain put it, "don't separate your money in this cash register, but, no, please don't step down to the hot dog stand."

The youths sat at the counter for an hour. They were heckled by a black dishwasher, and stared at by a white policeman. An elderly white woman cheered in a loud whisper: "You should have done it ten years ago!"

The store manager turned off the lights at five-thirty, half an hour before closing time. "By then," McCain recalled, "we had the confidence, my goodness, of a Mack truck." In a week, the Greensboro Four had grown to hundreds. Within two months, protests had taken place in 125 cities in nine states. . . .

The sit-ins, as the lunch counter campaign became known, sparked a freedom flame.