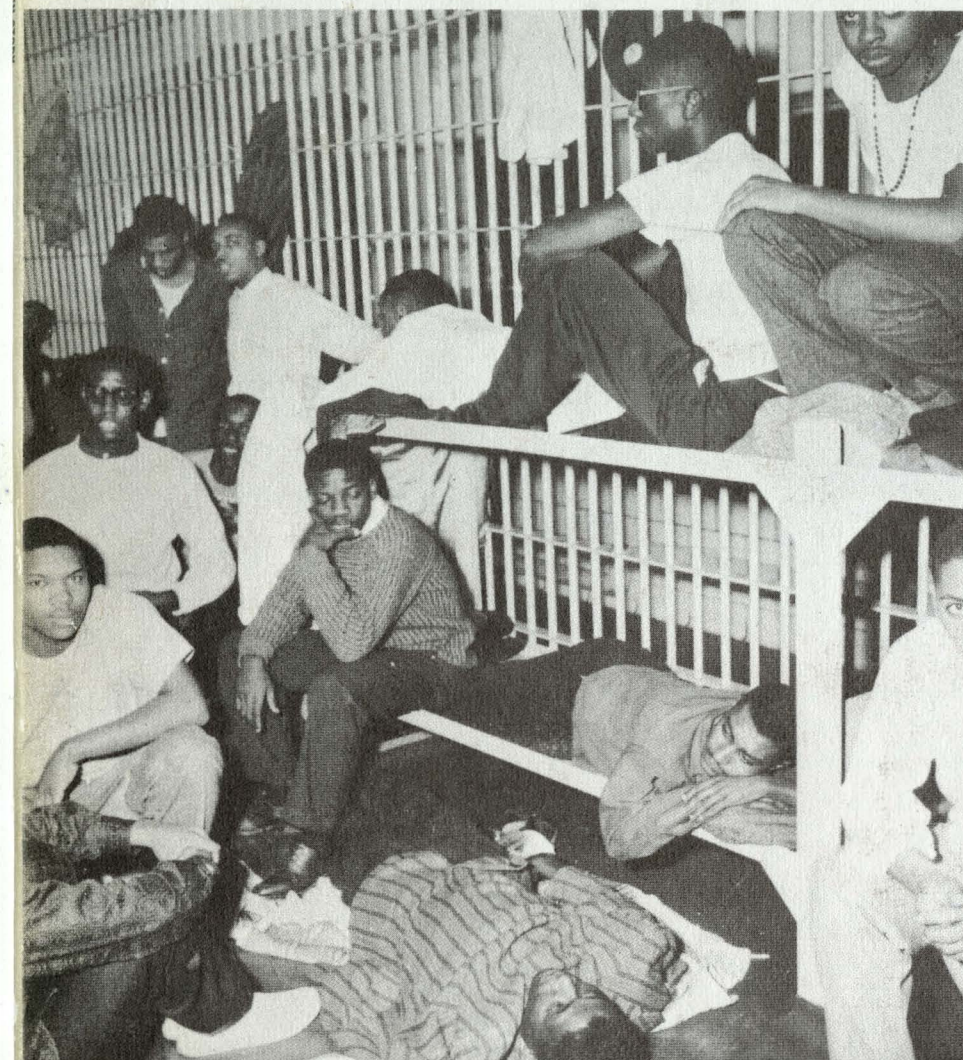


# THE NASHVILLE SIT-IN STORY

FOLKWAYS RECORDS

FH 5590



*Conceived, Coordinated and Directed*  
**GUY CARAWAN**

*Narration Written (and partly ad lib)*  
**REV. C. TINDELL VIVIEN**  
*Vice-President, NCLC*

*Creatively Edited*  
**MEL KAISER**  
*Cue Recording Studio, N. Y.*

*Recorded on Location by*  
**WILLARD ELECTRONICS**  
*Nashville, Tenn.*

## *Singing and Spoken Parts*

Rev. C. Tindell Vivien  
James Bevel  
Diane Nash  
Marion Berry  
John Lewis  
Candy Anderson  
Peggi Alexander

Paul La Prad  
John Nye  
Lesley Green  
Rodney Powell  
Bernard Lafayette  
Samuel Collier  
Guy Carawan

King Holland  
And other students from  
Fisk University  
Meharry Medical College  
Tenn. A&I  
Amer. Bap. Theol. Sem.



"We Shall Overcome"  
Old Spiritual with new words  
Theme Song of the Sit-Ins  
Introduction

The Lunch Counter Incident

"I'm Going to Sit at the  
Welcome Table"

The Story of the Sit-In Movement

"We Shall Not be Moved"

Jail Sequence

"You Better Leave Segregation  
Alone"

"Your Dog Loves My Dog"

"They Go Wild Over Me"

Court Room Scene

"I Hope We'll Meet Again"

"Moving On"

The Trial

Reason for the Sit-In Movement  
Interviews

Remarks by Reverend C. Tindell  
Vivien

Scene on Mayor's Steps

Victory Meeting

PROPERTY OF  
FOLKLIFE PROGRAM  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET



# SIT - IN

## NASHVILLE TENNESSEE

### How This Record Came About - by Guy Carawan

After spending two months in Nashville going through some of the history making events and being in daily contact with the students I decided to try and record some of the spirited singing and new songs that had grown up around the movement. Then the idea hit me that the songs would mean more to people if they were put in the contexts from which they came. Slowly a skeleton outline formed in my mind which wove together the songs, narration and scenes to be recreated. I then parceled out different sections to different people to rough out. The scenes that were reenacted were done so semi-spontaneously by the students - with the following people taking the responsibility for giving the scenes some minimal organization:

Lunch Counter Scene - Paul La Prad  
Jail Scene - Candy Anderson  
Court Room Scene - Bernard Lafayette

Other sections were handled by the following people:  
(and again with much spontaneity)

Introductory statement - James Bevel  
Narration - Rev. C. Tindell Vivian  
Interviews - John Lewis, Marion Berry & Diane Nash  
Scene on Mayors Steps - Rev. Vivian, Diane Nash, Rodney Powell  
Victory Meeting - Diane Nash, Marion Berry, Rev. C. Tindell Vivian

When I got the students and Rev. Vivian together for the recording sessions they were so alive with the events and subject matter that they poured them out in spontaneous fashion very easily.

With the magic of tape editing the recordings were tightened up - the rougher spots and the superfluous removed, music and narration mixed in with the scenes ---- lo and behold, out came this L.P. None of us had ever tried anything like this before. Except for Mel Kaiser, the sound man at Cue Studio in N.Y. Without his "experienced ear" and creative suggestions to help me edit and put the pieces together this record would have never seen the light of day.

### Songs

They Go Wild Over Me (parody of the old pop song & wobbly song) -

Candy Anderson - Fisk University  
(exchange student from Pomona)

You Better Leave Segregation Alone (parody on a Rock'n Roll song)

Moving On (parody on Hank Snows Hill Billy favorite)

Your Dog Loves My Dog (original)

I Hope We'll Meet Again (original)

--- all four: James Bevel & Bernard Lafayette  
and the American Baptist Theol. Sem.  
Quartet.

We Shall Overcome - an old Spiritual with new words.  
It is the theme song of the Nashville Sit-Ins

I'm Gonna Sit At the Welcome Table  
Keep Your Eyes On the Prize, Hold On  
We Shall Not Be Moved

--- all three are old spirituals but are used as  
theme songs in Nashville



Picketing on Court House steps in Nashville.



Students singing at a mass meeting



Court Room Scene : on left, defense attorneys  
middle, students; right, prosecuting attorney.



## INTRODUCTION

by Rev. Kelly Miller Smith

THE MOVEMENT IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE that is commonly called the "Student Sit-in Movement" is considerably more than that appellation would seem to suggest. While the chief courageous and dramatic thrust was made by students in the form of "sit-ins," it should be made clear that this was a unified community movement backed by a community organization known as the Nashville Christian Leadership Council. Students from the various Nashville schools and colleges worked unitedly with older residents of the community in the effort to attain an objective about which they were all concerned.

The organization of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council followed a meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia when a Nashville representative was in attendance. On the inspiration of the SCLC and its concern for Christian social action, letters were sent to all Negro ministers of the city urging them to attend a meeting to be held January 18, 1958. At this time plans were to be made for a mass meeting which was to feature Dr. Martin L. King, Sr. on the following February 12th - Lincoln's birthday. Plans for Christian social action in general were also to be considered. The January 18th meeting was a success and a permanent organization was decided upon.

Regular times of meeting were agreed upon and, armed with a staff of officers representing several of the many religious denominations of the city, the group went forward with plans for attacking the various social problems while always operating within the context of the Christian faith. It was soon recognized that the group could do its most effective work by including laymen among its members. Emphasis was always placed upon the fact that it was a Christian organization and that those who would be members should be strongly committed to the purposes of that faith.

The immediate objective of the organization was to increase the number of Negro registered voters. Yet, because it was clear from the outset that the group would go well beyond this emphasis, plans were begun for other action. Two representatives of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Glenn Smiley and James M. Lawson, Jr. were in town on other business and were impressed with the N.C.L.C. and its plans. They offered their services to assist in setting up a workshop on nonviolence as Christian social action would necessarily have to take this discipline into account. The proposal was accepted, and the first workshop on nonviolence was held March 26-28, 1958, two months after NCLC was organized.

While the nonviolence workshop was still in the planning stage the committee on plans decided that the workshop would seek "to establish a concept of Christian nonviolence." The workshop was planned to lay a foundation for the practical application of the technique of Christian nonviolence in situations where racial discrimination or injustice prevailed. Leaders in the first workshop were the Reverend Glenn Smiley, the Reverend James M. Lawson, Jr. and Miss Anna Holden. Guest speaker was the Reverend Ralph D. Abernathy who had been a leader in the nonviolent bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama. The workshop was attended by a number of persons who held significant positions in the community, many of whom were destined to play important roles in the "sit-in" movement. Incidentally, it was during this time that it was learned that James Lawson planned to become a resident of Nashville and complete his work on the bachelor of divinity degree at the Vanderbilt University Divinity School.

A period of several months elapsed before the workshops were begun on a continuing basis. This was not embarked upon until Lawson returned to the city

on a permanent basis. In the meantime, the NCLC fostered a voter-registration campaign for which it maintained an office in a local church.

It was early in 1959 when the NCLC adopted the project of desegregating the downtown eating facilities. In connection with this project the attempt was made to negotiate with representatives of the two leading department stores. In these conferences the store managers expressed an unwillingness to attempt to desegregate their eating facilities on the ground that they would lose more business than they would gain. At this time it was emphasized that no publicity had been given to the project which would mean that the changeover could be done in an atmosphere of relative calm. The store managers were unimpressed. The risk would be too great, they contended. Both stores expressed the willingness to desegregate after the rest of the city had changed, in this direction. The committee members were unimpressed. The most that was accomplished at this time was the laying of the foundation for further conversations on the matter. This proved to be a great value, however, for it meant that when the negotiations were to be resumed on a continuing basis all the persons representing the Negro community and those representing the merchants would not be strangers. This helped greatly in the tedious process of establishing rapport between the groups.

Although representatives had verbal confirmation of the fact that the stores were adhering to a policy of segregation, it was felt that the policy of the stores should be further determined in an "action" situation. To do this, a group of NCLC members, students and international visitors went down to these stores and attempted to be served. They were refused service and the course of action that must be followed became clear.

The statement of purposes and principles of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council which had been adopted some time before, included the following statement: "If we are to see the real downfall of segregation and discrimination it will be because of a disciplined Negro Christian movement which breaks with the antiquated methods of resolving our fears and tensions and dramatically applies the gospel we profess." In this statement was the suggestion of the next moves which would have to be made.

By now it was the fall of 1959 and the workshops had been resumed in earnest. Interestingly enough, students from the schools and colleges of Nashville became interested both in the projects which had been adopted and the workshops which were providing discipline in the methods of nonviolence.

In the meantime, the NCLC was gradually becoming known in the community as an organization that was concerned about the many instances of discrimination and injustice prevailing in Nashville. It was during this time that someone called the president of the NCLC informing him that a nationally known evangelist and faith healer was conducting a meeting in the city and that they were requiring Negroes to go to the balcony. Certain leaders of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council decided to visit the meeting and attempt to be seated on the main floor. The members of the group all found seats on the main floor, although they were not seated together. They were each approached by an usher who attempted to make them move to the balcony. The group insisted upon remaining in the seats which they had found in spite of threats both of arrest and of physical harm. An attempt to follow this up with discussions with the persons responsible for such a policy proved virtually fruitless, for no one would admit that they had made the decision. The local sponsoring group said that it was the policy of the visiting evangelist to have segregated congregations. On the other hand, a representative of the evangelist said that the decision was made by the local sponsoring group.



In order to facilitate the action now being taken with regard to the downtown businesses, the Leadership Council gathered certain economic information pertinent to the project. It developed that although Negroes were approximately one third of the population of the city of Nashville, they represented only about twelve percent of the wealth. Yet, one of the stores being approached was receiving at least fifteen percent of its business from Negroes. This meant that statistically they were receiving more than their share of the Negro business. Further, it was shown that Negroes alone spent millions of dollars in the downtown area each year. This underscored the unfairness of the practices of discrimination which denied Negroes the opportunity to purchase a meal and eat it in the restaurant or at the lunch counters of these stores.

The main emphasis of the Leadership Council, and now the students who had joined with the group, was upon the moral implications of the positions of all parties concerned. The position of the merchants was obviously morally untenable. Some of them freely admitted this, asserting that their concern was economic, not moral. It was the feeling of the Negro group that actually the entire community was morally liable for the conditions which existed. Those who purchased goods from these firms without protest against the system were actually lending tangible cooperation to an evil system. All were morally guilty for not doing whatever was possible to correct this system.

During the workshop sessions it was continually emphasized the interest being manifested was a moral one. The planned sit-ins were calculated to make the conditions an issue in the thinking of the people of the community. It was recognized that there were many well meaning persons of the community for whom the matter of segregation was not an issue. They simply had not thought of it one way or the other. With literally hundreds of students, and on occasion adults, of the community seeking service in an atmosphere of hostility and physical brutality without hatred or retaliation the moral consciousness of the community was certain to be alerted. They would then have to take a position on the matter one way or the other. Workshop sessions and other meetings gave emphasis to the fact an economic withdrawal would not be a deed of vengeance, but the acceptance of a moral responsibility to refuse to cooperate with evil. Although the term "moral issue" came to be considered by some something of a hackneyed expression during the months of the negotiations and sit-ins, it was of basic importance in the entire movement.

#### Report I

On February 13, 1960 approximately 124 students from American Baptist Theological Seminary, Fisk University and Tennessee A and I State University staged their first sit-in demonstrations at three stores in the Nashville downtown area. On February 18th approximately 200 students, and on February 20th approximately 300 students sat-in again. On February 27, 1960 another sit-in was staged. By then the number had grown to over 400 participants and the number of lunch counters being visited had grown to over ten.

On February 27th students were called vulgar names, cursed, kicked, beaten, rolled down steps and arrested. The warrants for the arrests of the white and Negro participants were sworn out on the charges of disorderly conduct and trespassing. The students had no fear of the unknown, but had love for their oppressors, and strength in the belief that no sacrifice was too great in order to attain freedom. The emotions coursed through the minds and hearts of the students and so as one group of students was put into the paddy wagon other students "stood on the sunny sidewalks of Nashville waiting their turn". The same fearlessness, love and strength caused the students to decide that if any students were arrested then the remaining students would fill the jails. Of the approximately 400

students who, on that day, made that decision only 91 were able to be placed under arrest, the others sat-in and were subjected to verbal and physical abuse with no police protection.

The arrests performed the tasks which the students wished them to. They aroused a sleeping community and nation and revealed the seriousness of the problem of segregation to the extent of eradicating the idea that the Negro was content with his second-class citizenship.

When consulted by attorneys who were at the Nashville City Jail upon the first arrival of students, the students refused bail. At approximately 11:30 P.M. the students were released on no bail in custody of the schools. On March 1, 1960 at 9:00 A.M. the trials of the students began. The trials could only be described as extremely farcical. Fifty dollars (\$50.00) fines were imposed on each of the 91 students and each refused to pay his bail -- the other alternative of jail was chosen. Students went to the county workhouse and with every floor that was mopped, window that was washed, bar that was polished or wall that was washed came the replenishment of faith, determination, love and hope rather than a need to scoop into the hidden reservoirs of strength. Love reigned supreme.

On March 3, 1960 the students who were not incarcerated staged sit-ins while the trials were still going on. 76 students were arrested and went to jail showing their lack of fear of jail and their support of the other students who were in jail "for the wrong reason".

On March 4, 1960 the students left the jail and appealed each case with the more than \$50.00 which was supplied by the Nashville community. On that same day warrants were released for the arrests of the students on the charge of conspiracy to obstruct trade and commerce, the bail for which each student was required to pay \$500.00. The community, again with a realization of the beauty of a glimpse of one step toward freedom, supplied cash and property for the bail money.

Sit-ins were called off for more than three weeks because of an unofficial agreement to a request by the then appointed Mayor's Committee. On April 3rd sit-ins began again. At that time Meharry Medical College, Peabody College, and Vanderbilt University students (the latter two schools are predominately white) and the community participated to publicly show that the movement had become changed to a united one.

More sit-ins were staged and more arrests were made. In April a new pattern was formed. Approximately two-thirds of the seats were filled while the others were left vacant so those of the white race who wished to eat could do so. Progress was seen as some whites sat down to request service. Though the request for service by some whites was heartening, the counters were still closed to all whenever students sat-in.

On April 9, 1960 during a sit-in a high school Negro student spectator was beaten by approximately 30 white youths. The Negro youth, just as the college students who sat-in, was arrested wherein the police offered the explanation that the white youths who also fought were not found, when questioned as to why only the Negro was arrested.

After Easter negotiations were begun with the managers and an economic withdrawal was put into action. Negotiations lasted until the counters opened. During the weeks of negotiations sit-ins were not staged and the downtown area was only reminded of the Negro's refusal to accept segregation by the absence of Negroes. Finally the students with the community combined and managers reached an agreement. On May 10, 1960 there was an agreement to open six lunch counters on an unbiased basis.

Throughout the movement the process of learning took place. Students learned of the method of using non-



violence as a means for social change under the direction of the Rev. James M. Lawson, Jr. and Rev. Cordell T. Vivian. As the ministers underlined the summum bonum of love as seen by the philosophy of non-violence the students saw, through practice, the truth and beauty of the profound words "Love thy neighbor as thyself". Students learned to unite faiths, schools, races, etc. to become one in motive de-segregate so as to integrate and ultimately bring about brotherhood.

Peggi Alexander  
(A student member of  
Student Advisory  
Council)

## Report II

There we were all locked up in jail for what we believed was the most valuable aspect of life, human dignity. After one hour in jail there appeared on the scene 4 lawyers to go our bail, but we refused. Accepting bail we would have been supporting the immoral practice of segregation. Our consciences would never have been free had we come out on bail. Because of the schools' responsibilities to our parents we were released, after 6 hours in jail, into the custody of our deans.

We thought at first that the lawyers had volunteered their services but later we found that they had received a phone call asking them to go down to the jail and see about getting us out. All the Negro lawyers of Nashville later came to our rescue and without fee. And even up until today they have not charged us one cent.

We received cooperation from the N.A.A.C.P. when they gave us their lawyers to take our cases to court. Many other organizations as the Nashville Council on Human Relations, our sponsor the Nashville Christian Leadership Council, the United Church Women and C.O.R.E. They all released statements to the press in favor of the courageous stand that we had taken.

Social clubs contributed funds. Sororities and fraternities decided to forego some of their annual functions to contribute to our cause.

The interest of "outsiders" was marvelous. We, the students, received telegrams from every section of the country expressing their support and sympathy because of the injustice done us by the Nashville police, the judge, and because they believed in what we were doing and because they believed in equal rights.

Student organizations as N.S.A. and N.S.C.C. and students from other schools held sympathy demonstrations which included picketing, prayer vigils, sit-ins, mass meetings on their state house steps, at the stores which had done the great injustice of not servicing us at their lunch counters.

Some students conducted civil rights rallies, others just donated on their own. I remember one young man who organized S.C.R.A.M. at Lehigh University saying "Every normal human being, we believe wants to walk the earth with dignity and abhors any proscriptions placed upon him because of race or color. In essence than this is the meaning of the sit-down protests that are sweeping this nation today".

In March a young 31 year old student was expelled because of his participation in the student sit-in movement. By expelling the Rev. James M. Lawson, Vanderbilt violated the principle of academic freedom. From Lawson the students were orientated in the whole philosophy of the movement, non-violence. On Good Friday, Lawson was arrested at First Baptist Church on charges of "conspiracy to obstruct trade and commerce". This was not a valid charge since he had done nothing but preach the word of God and conduct non-violence workshops, which enabled students to study its philosophy and techniques.

Members of Vanderbilt Divinity School faculty and Lawson's classmates raised \$500.00 to pay Lawson's bond, he refused but came out only when student leaders in the sit-ins thought that he should.

Ever since that time Vanderbilt students from the Divinity School have actively participated in the sit-in protests. Two of their students are members of the student advisory council to the sit-in protest.

E. Angelina Butler  
(A student)

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**FM7352 SENATOR MARGARET CHASE SMITH** interviewed by Howard Langer; the senior Senator from Maine and only present woman Senator discusses her work in the Senate and her views on various issues.

**FM7353 AL CAPP** interviewed by Howard Langer; discussion of American humor and satire by the cartoonist creator of Li'l Abner. Capp tell show he invented Sadie Hawkins Day.

**FM7354 MARGARET MEAD** interviewed by Howard Langer; the noted anthropologist discusses motivations of the American character; an introduction to anthropology.

**FM7355 JIM FARLEY** interviewed by Howard Langer; the noted politician discusses American politics, the machine, religion and the candidate, the presidential candidate, etc.

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## SONGS FROM THE DEPRESSION

