

BREAKING THE MOUNTAIN OF DESPAIR



George Wallace leads a group of people in a march to support the proposed Civil Rights Bill in 1964. (Source: Museum of the South)

Wallace Labels Civil Rights Bill 'Involuntary Servitude'

Debating Civil Rights in Appleton

Many local whites still supported segregation nationally and within the Free Class. On March 17, 1964, Alabama Governor George Wallace, a staunch segregationist, arrived in Appleton to launch his political campaign. In front of the Appleton High School, Wallace spoke at the corner of 11th and 12th streets, where he delivered the proposed Civil Rights Bill as "The Involuntary Servitude Act of 1964."

In response to Wallace's visit and to support the bill, the Student Executive Committee (SEC) at Lawrence hosted a Civil Rights Week on campus. In April, several Black students spoke at the program, including NAACP leaders Charles Evans and William Smith.

Wallace visited the Free Class on two occasions. In 1972, he spoke by invitation at the Lawrence University Chapel. Black students attended the program and held out all of the books to demonstrate their opposition.

King Foresees Areas Like Valley as Havens for Negro

Increased involvement by activists helped draw attention to discrimination and violence toward Blacks. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson pushed forward the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which "prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin." Before the bill's passage, Appleton residents debated the merits of the Civil Rights Act and invited national leaders to speak in favor of or against the legislation.

A Haven for Black Families

In 1965, the Martin Luther King Jr. movement plans to expand the Civil Rights Movement to challenge racism in universities. Dr. King called for Southern housing discrimination and widespread racist employment practices. He launched a letter campaign in the summer of 1967 to reach all white Southern communities, including Hawaii and New York Valley.

Dr. King said the Free Class could become a haven for Black students, but if it consistently refused racial inclusion. He encouraged efforts to provide opportunities for housing and jobs. He also challenged others to judge Blacks by their work and merits, not by their color.

Citing his strong faith, Dr. King believed that the Fox Cities could emerge from a "mountain of hate" as "a stone of hope."



When ABC students, shown here in the 1960s, started with best intentions, they also had confidence in the Lawrence campus. Some of Appleton's middle schools include scores of these Appleton High School students. (Source: University of Wisconsin)

A Better Chance: Access for Some

With King's visit, voices against racism grew louder and more organized. Appleton's first anti-discrimination office, The A Better Chance program, started in 1964, provided college preparation courses for disadvantaged high school students of color throughout the United States. The program came to Appleton in 1968 and was the first ABC chapter in Wisconsin.

Many students of color continued to face racism and were further discouraged by the lack of Black social institutions and cultural institutions.



Racial Injustice: Negro Burden:



King's visit inspired a wave of anti-discrimination in the campus of the Free Class. This message of defiance and defiance inspired new anti-discrimination efforts in the community.



Students who participated in the protest to support King's vision against the Vietnam War, which they publicized across the campus for King's visit. (Source: Free Class Library)

Open Housing Act

The passage of the National Fair Housing Act of 1968 reinforced the structure of the Appleton Fair Housing Ordinance for some years. The act also provided for housing opportunities for people of race, color, or national origin. In Appleton, the ordinance was pushed through the city council by Mayor George Buckley with a vote of 10 to 1. The ordinance was modeled after the federal housing law, with the exception that all complaints would be investigated by the City attorney.

Three students appeared in a photograph published by the African American Association of Lawrence as one of Black students in the campus in 1970. (Source: University of Wisconsin)

