

## **Black History Celebration “Invigorated By Victory”**

February 4, 2015

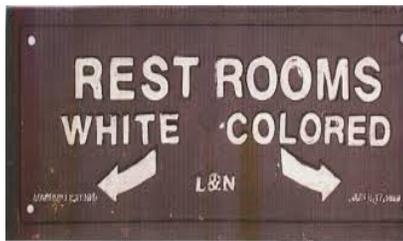
The Civil Rights Movement was a powerful evolutionary battle in which African Americans across the United States of America fought against segregationists who endeavored to keep control and power over the African Americans, especially in the south. African Americans were continuously oppressed and restrained by racism, segregation, discrimination and inequality. The Civil Rights Movement was a pivotal historical movement that won many victories at a great price. Today African Americans, along with other nationalities, celebrate Black History month aiming to help us realize our struggles and accomplishments as a people. Countless racially motivated events occurred, especially acts of violence, including beatings, lynching and murders. Many people lost their lives to bring forth positive changes aimed at equal opportunity, desegregation and basic human rights. This was a passionate and difficult struggle for African American people.

This is a uniquely passionate story from a woman of God, born and raised in Mississippi during the Civil Rights movement. She has shared a part of her life story that will bring to reality the depth of the Civil Rights Movement from her standpoint of view. Vivian Williams (Green) was born and raised in Belzoni Mississippi, the heart of the Mississippi Delta, in 1950. As a child, she experienced segregation in the south. She recalls several differences between the whites and the blacks. The norm for her was seeing the separate restrooms and water fountains labeled, “Blacks Only” and “Whites Only”. The “White’s Only” restrooms and water fountains were the ones with the better running toilets and sinks, and were cleaned regularly while the “Blacks Only” restrooms and water fountains, if they worked were not maintained.



**Vivian Williams**

Restaurants had separate areas where blacks entered through the back door to order their food, while whites could come through the front. Blacks were not allowed to sit in the restaurants. She also recalls as a little child in the grocery store, a “white folks line” and a “black folk’s line” where the whites were always served first and the blacks were last and often ignored. In Mississippi, there were some black families that were well off and could maintain a decent livelihood. So their children didn’t have to work in the cotton fields or work at all. Vivian’s mother, Luberta Green, worked as a domestic (house keeper) for a Jewish family. She was paid \$15-20 per week for 8 or more hours per day, on the job. This is the money that took care of their family. Vivian lived in a household of eight other siblings with her mother and father. The children had to work to help the parents. Vivian started working at the age of nine. She picked cotton in the cotton fields until she was a teenager. This was the only kind of work available for African American children over the summer and after school.

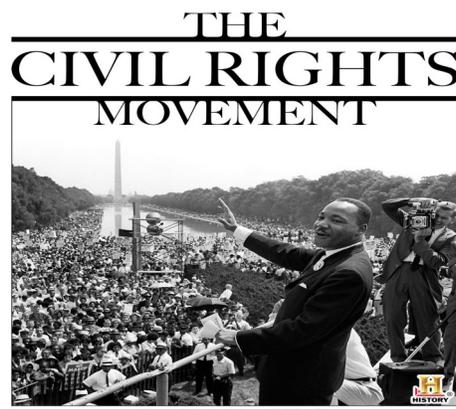


Vivian had to get up early in the morning to catch the field truck at 6:00am. She would work all day standing on her feet until 5:00pm in the evening. The goal was to pick at least 100 pounds of cotton so she could bring home at least \$2.50 for the day of labor. Vivian’s mother, Luberta, was not only a housekeeper, but also was responsible for the Jewish families children she worked for. She was the Nanny for their 3 sons. She nursed the children from babies through college. She was responsible for housekeeping, food preparation, grocery shopping. She also took care of their children’s laundry, dry cleaning. She prepared the homes for dinner parties and special Jewish feasts, as well as assisting the children with their homework. Vivian said “this is where my sister, Jewel, learned to serve and decorate so well.” Her mother would take Jewel with her to decorate and serve at the dinner parties.

There was an alley in their neighborhood that separated the white homes from the black homes. The kids would play together, and when they were thirsty and wanted to come in for some water, the black families welcomed the white children in their homes for water.

The white families made the black children stand outside on their porch for water. They weren't welcome in their homes. Vivian recalls many black people secretly holding meetings at their local churches to strategize on how to combat segregation. Many people lost their jobs and lost their lives fighting for equal rights, desegregation and the right to vote. Vivian remembers the Montgomery Alabama non-violent march where Rosa Parks and other activists fought against bus segregation with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Vivian's father Oscar Green went to Montgomery Alabama to march with Dr. King. Things were slowly beginning to change in the south. Vivian remembers when desegregation in the schools started. Blacks were now able to attend school with the white children however, they weren't able to swim together. The black and white schools closed their pools to prevent the blacks and whites from swimming together in the same pool.

Even though in 1868 the Civil Rights actually became the 14<sup>th</sup> adopted amendment in the U.S. Constitution, which granted each citizen "equal protection of the law", it actually took the Civil Rights Act, of 1964 to begin to address many issues such as voting rights racial discrimination, desegregation of public education and facilities. This act paved the way for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to investigate complaints of discrimination, and opened the door for Affirmative Action. There were other groups and coalitions advocating freedom and fighting to end police brutality, murder and the oppression of the African American people. Some of these issues still exist today, sometimes blatant, and sometimes hidden. However, they still exist! African American's should keep fighting for equal rights and become activist in their communities where they must continue to celebrate the victories won and continue to fight for the ones yet to be realized!



Article written By  
Kimberly Ferrell

Revisions by  
Messias Publication Staff