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“A Day For Change”

Imagine waking up every day knowing one's opinion does not matter. Imagine being forced into a future undeserved. In the years before and shortly after 1950, African-Americans grew up accepting these things to be true. As the idea of equality began to change, the mindset of African-Americans changed with it. What caused this Paradigm Shift? Some may say the answer to that question lies in the actions of four African-American students searching for change not only in their community, but their nation.

On February 1, 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina a movement began with four people. David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair Jr, and Joe McNeil, later to be known as the Greensboro Four, executed a sit-in to challenge how America treated its black citizens. The Greensboro Four were college students at A&T State University when they staged the sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro. One antecedent to this sit-in was the brutal murder of a young black boy (Emmett Till) accused of harassing a white woman (History.com). These four men arranged a peaceful sit-in knowing in advance that they would not be served, and their presence would be opposed. Within four days they were joined by three hundred students (History.com). Their movement later spread to 55 cities in 13 states (History.com). They wanted to expose the injustices that white Americans treated them with every day. The sit-in endorsed public non-violent protests following in the footsteps of Mohandas Gandhi, Journey of Reconciliation (also known as “First Freedom Ride”) and Martin Luther King Jr. The four were influenced by the nonviolent tactics that King used to get across his point. King's affiliation with the organization SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) influenced the formation of an organization meant to carry on the Greensboro Four's legacy of using peaceful sit-ins to stand up for what's right, SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee) (History.com). At the time, the civil rights movement was in dire need of a group centered around young adult/student intervention, SNCC aided this issue. The four were also influenced by Journey of reconciliation, “An act to test compliance with US Supreme Court ruling barring segregation on Interstate buses” (NCpedia.org). The biggest influence that these civil rights activists and movements had on the Greensboro Four sit-in was their nonviolent ways.

It was inspiring to me that the Greensboro Four put up with so much, just so they could show how they were being treated was wrong. The passion for equality in their hearts outweighed the fear that comes with wanting something different than what is normal in society. Giving up can seem so appealing in a time of struggle, but their endurance inspired others. Applied to my own life this mindset kept me going during my cross country season. Season was going well until I was faced with a hip injury that was not only a struggle physically, but also mentally. I was constantly doubting my potential, but thinking about the end gave me hope. Learning about these men now just shows that there are going to be longer, and harder trials to come, but giving up will always leave me wishing I would have kept going. These four men taught all of America that fighting for what is right is ten times more worth it than giving up trying. The Greensboro Four taught me that one person can change the view of thousands, and that is exactly what they did.

A movement need only begin with one person who wants to see change. On February 1, 1960, a movement began with four people. The Greensboro Four are responsible for starting the change in America that continues to teach endurance generations after. When the awareness for African-American rights began to get traction the Greensboro Four were the catalyst that accelerated awareness. The sit-in hosted by the Greensboro Four was just the beginning of a movement that changed the lives of many. It is with immense reverence to remember the monumental impact that the lives of these four had on America. "Never request permission to start a revolution." (cnn.com), said by Franklin McCain, a man who saw the need for change and leapt.

Works Cited

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