



King Middle School ~ Portland, Maine

Small Acts of Courage

Memories of the Civil Rights Movement

Volume I

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Introduction

About one year ago, a determined woman walked through the doors of King Middle School with her head held high. Claudette Colvin, a woman who refused to give up her seat to a white person when she was young, visited our school to share her memories with us and with her biographer, Phillip Hoose. In July of 2009, Karen MacDonald and Caitlin LeClair, two teachers in our house, attended the Civil Rights Learning Expedition for Educators, organized by Ron Berger and Gladys Graham, which was held in Little Rock, Arkansas. Upon arriving, they went straight to Central High School and the Little Rock Central High School National Historical Site. They spent the week learning about the Little Rock Nine and recording the civil rights experiences of local residents. In the fall of 2009, Windsor 7 witnessed together the inauguration of Barack Obama, our first African American president. All of these events came together to inspire our spring 2010 expedition, *Small Acts of Courage*.

For the kickoff to our expedition, we had a civil rights conference where we focused on sit-ins, music of the time, and how it might feel to be segregated. In social studies classes this winter, we studied six major events of the Civil Rights Movement: Brown vs. the Board of Education, the Little Rock Nine, the Freedom Rides, the Sit-Ins, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the March on Washington. In addition, we went to USM to visit the Gerald E. Talbot collection and viewed artifacts and photographs. Finally, we interviewed local citizens who had important stories of their experiences during the Civil Rights Movement. We worked hard to tell the stories of these interesting and amazing individuals.

As students at King Middle School, it is sometimes difficult to imagine a place in which anyone could be hostile towards another person because of the color of his or her skin. Even as we learned about the Civil Rights Movement and what happened then, it still seemed to be a separate world. Yet the people we interviewed reminded us that, not long ago, in a state as far from the South as one could get, racism was a reality. It was a reality across the country. And, to a lesser degree, it is a reality today. Small changes, like the many demonstrated by our interviewees, can be permanent ones. Their stories remind us that only by our small acts of courage can we turn an “undercurrent” of hatred and fear into “an altogether different climate.”

By Annika, Katherine and Maddie, Windsor 7

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Anita Talbot

Anita Talbot's involvement in civil rights and in helping others in her community has had an impact on Portland. The stories of her involvement are inspiring to my fellow classmates and to me. She has raised her family to always fight for equality. Even today, Anita's children have stepped into her shoes to help the progress of civil rights.

“Civil rights to me is like the Golden Rule.”

Anita Cummings Talbot's family has lived in Maine for generations. The Cummings family was one of the few African-American families in Portland. Maine was not a very diverse state. In fact, it was almost all white. She grew up in Portland and attended the old West School. In Maine, the schools were not segregated, but in school she did feel some discrimination at times. There were very few black children attending her schools. In her graduating class at Portland High there were only two other black students graduating with her. She recalls being close friends with them and as the future Mrs. Talbot grew older, the Civil Rights Movement grew larger.

Anita Talbot was twenty-five years old when she registered to vote. After voting, she slowly became involved in the Civil Rights Movement and politics. The NAACP would help black people register to vote. She got involved through her parents, her neighbors, her teachers and her schooling. Mrs. Talbot remembers being very involved in the community and school activities. She was not involved with the events in the South, but would read about the events in the newspaper. Mrs. Talbot told us that she was involved in her community, but didn't realize it.

Anita Cummings married Gerald E. Talbot, who was involved in the Civil Rights Movement in Maine. One day two close friends, Mr. Larry Conley and Mr. Mores Beesley, came to their house and told Gerald Talbot that they wanted to help him run for the Maine State Legislature. “I said no way. He didn't know anything about the legislature; he didn't know one thing,” said Mrs. Talbot. Later she learned, “If you don't know anything it's okay. You can learn.” In the end, Gerald E. Talbot decided to run for the state legislature. At the time the legislature was voting at large so anyone could run. To get your name on the ballot, you were required to get a certain amount of signatures. Mr. Talbot collected signatures and he got his name on the ballot. In the end Gerald E. Talbot won a seat and was the first African American person in the Maine legislature. Through his experiences, Mr. Talbot learned some important life lessons. One was that appearance is important. Gerald E. Talbot was very dedicated to stopping derogatory name-calling towards blacks in Maine. His wife was supportive when her husband was in the legislature, but she was not involved as much because Mrs. Talbot was the one at home taking care of their growing family.

Anita and Gerald E. Talbot had a family of four daughters. With their family growing, they needed a bigger house. In that time

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black people were not able to live where they wanted to. Gerald E. Talbot went to look at a new apartment that was for rent. Mr. Talbot is lighter skinned than his wife, so when he went to get the apartment the landlord said that he could move into the house right away. When Mr. Talbot brought her to see the apartment the landlord turned them away and said that the house was rented to someone else. Housing was not the only place people felt discriminated against in Portland. At that time, department stores had problems, too. Back then, Congress Street was full of department stores. Anita Talbot recalls, "Black people were able to work, however, they had to work as elevator operators. We were **never** trained as a salesman."

Mrs. Talbot recalled that the local NAACP "connected us nationally as well as being involved locally." NAACP members like Mr. Roger Ray would organize members to go up to Augusta and speak on the behalf of the committee. The NAACP also had marches. One march was up to one thousand people. The marches in Portland were very different from the marches in the South. They were non-violent. The Fair Housing Law passed in the state legislature through the support of the NAACP. However, there were people in Maine against the organization. When Gerald E. Talbot was president of the NAACP the Talbots would get nasty phone calls. Mrs. Talbot chuckles, "They used to call us radicals, anytime we wanted a change,....it was radical behavior." In other words, she tells us that when people say radicals, they mean people of change.

Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer was an idol to Anita Talbot. People called Mrs. Hamer *unlettered*, because she didn't have a proper education. Even without an education, she still spoke elegantly. She had a passion for helping black people in the U.S. She fought to integrate the National Democratic Party. Mrs. Hamer became the first black delegate president and was the first African-American person to attend the delegate convention.

Fannie Lou Hamer also wrote a book named This Little Light of Mine, and Mrs. Talbot still reads it today.

Anita Talbot mentions some important people visiting Portland's NAACP like Martin Luther King, Barbara Jordan, and Jessie Jackson. They all paid important visits to the people of Portland. Barbara Jordan was the first African-American senator and Jessie Jackson was involved in sit-ins and many protests. That shows how significant the local NAACP was; it was so important, famous people came to Portland to visit with them.

Today, Mrs. Talbot attends Portland High Football games. At one game she noticed the cheerleaders and she saw a black cheerleader and that made her happy because that's what she always wanted to do. " I don't even think that I tried out.....because I knew my place." She recalls "We weren't told



that we couldn't do things. We, again, knew our place. It was a big unspoken rule." Today Anita and Gerald E. Talbot still live in Portland, and they have four daughters that are grown up. Anita told us that the daughter that really took after her parents is their second daughter, Rachel Talbot Ross, who works with the NAACP today. She remarks, "I would say that we still have work to do!" Even today Mrs. Talbot

remembers those days. She told us, "I still carry a little hurt, as old as I am. I still feel even today a little pain or a little hurt, but I do think that it has an effect. You do overcome it, but yet, at times, it does come back to you."

--by Sam D.

Harold Pachios

Harold Pachios played a role in the Civil Rights Movement. He joined with protesters and took part in the March on Washington. He also worked in the White House. Working for equal rights and helping others is a goal in his life.

“It was a day American society changed.”

Harold Pachios is from Cape Elizabeth, Maine, and he went to high school there. He graduated from Princeton University. His parents emigrated from Greece. He was in the Navy and was a Naval officer. Harold was off the coast of Greenland on election night in 1960. He was trying to know who won the election, and in the morning found out John F. Kennedy won. It was then he went to Washington because he wanted to be a part of what was happening.

Harold went to the March on Washington. He worked for a newspaper, and the editor told him if he was going to the march to write a story on it. He saw people that were linked together. Harold said, “It was a day when American society changed.” He marched all the way to the Lincoln Memorial. Somehow, Harold got up to the front near Martin Luther King Jr. He heard people sing folk songs. This is the connection that Mr. Pachios had to the march.

Buses came from everywhere in the United States. The Civil Rights Movement could not succeed without the whites. White and black people were together. He says, “It was one of the most important marches for change.” In one day, America changed a little. This was the importance of the march.

Harold Pachios worked for an organization called the Peace Corps, and his boss was named Sergeant Shriver. Sergeant Shriver’s wife was the sister of John F. Kennedy. At that time mostly young people would apply for that job. In the Peace Corps, they would teach you different languages, and take you to different parts of the world like Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Harold Pachios had never been in the White House before the assassination of John F. Kennedy. There was a meeting to discuss the funeral of John F. Kennedy. Harold was going to a pharmacy when he heard the President was dead. He then went back to his office and saw Sergeant Shriver and his wife running out to go to White House. He got into the White House because he had to bring a tie inside to Sergeant Shriver. Harold Pachios saw the flag on top of the White House lowered down. Mr. Pachios went to deliver the tie and found himself in the meeting to plan the funeral of John F. Kennedy. He was there because his boss told him to stay in case they needed him to run an errand. It was the most dramatic day of his life. It was a very sad mood in the White House.

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After the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson became the president. Mr. Pachios began working in the White House. Before becoming vice president, Lyndon Johnson was a senator from the South so segregation effected him more. He worked hard to get the Civil Rights Act passed. After the Civil Rights Act was passed more African Americans were elected. Harold said, "We have gotten somewhere." It has had a impact on America today because now we have elected an African American president. People don't have to worry about segregation or discrimination as much anymore because schools are diverse. Harold Pachios says, " Education is important." It was amazing to listen to Harold's stories of his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.

--by Luis R.



John McCall

John McCall has had a very unique life. During the Civil Rights Movement John wanted to help black people gain the right to vote. He attended the Second March in Selma, Alabama. John McCall's bravery and his belief in helping others has made him a positive leader in the Portland community. Now, John McCall continues to work as a civil rights worker and serves as a minister at a church in South Portland.

"The more likely there are white people in a march the less likely there is violence."

John McCall grew up in suburban Chicago in an all white neighborhood. He attended high school for only three years. He went to college in Beloit, Wisconsin, and started when he was only 17 years old. He got married on the same weekend he graduated from college. Mr. McCall serves as a senior minister of a church on Meeting House Hill. John has been working there since 1989. He has a wife and two children named Ben and Andrea. This civil rights activist was involved in the second Selma March.

John McCall heard about the first march on television on the news channel. The news told him what was happening. It stated that literally the whole world was watching this march on the news. John also heard that the first marchers had been attacked. Mr. McCall joined the second march because he thought that all people are equal to each other. So a group of people met at a church and decided to go to the second march. At this time, John was attending college.

John McCall has strong beliefs and values. He believes that all people are equal. Mr. McCall deeply wanted to go to the march in Selma to help black people gain the right to vote. He is

Christian, and he believes in Jesus. This activist cares a lot about people that are not being treated well.

When John decided to go to Selma his parents were very worried for him. He needed his parents permission to go from Wisconsin to Alabama. His parents knew that it was something he deeply wanted to do. John also was very scared. It was very hard for his parents to make the decision, but they knew he really wanted to go. So, his parents finally let him head to Selma.

John McCall joined the march in Selma because he thinks everybody should be treated equally. For example, black people couldn't vote. He felt bad for the people who weren't getting treated well. He got his parents permission just in time, and he got there by plane to Alabama. John went to the airport in a very old rusty car. A nice man was giving him a ride. After he arrived at the airport Mr. McCall got his ticket and flew from Chicago to Montgomery, Alabama, then took the bus named "To Selma."

When it was time for the march they all walked together. There was a lot of people. As they started to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, there were troops in their path. The troops did not let them go through. John McCall was very heartbroken that he didn't get to march very far. He came all the

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way from suburban Chicago and did not march all the way through. The reason why was because the marchers did not have the permit to march. Later on the marchers got the permit to march. The people wanted to march and exercise their rights. When the people from the march went to court the court gave them the permit so they could march. It was the first time a southern court said that we will let you exercise your rights. That's when the third march occurred. Sadly, John McCall did not get to attend this third march.

John McCall has some deep feelings about this march. During the march he felt very scared. He didn't know what was going to happen next. Something dangerous might have happened during the march. John felt that he was mature and grown up because he was marching for civil rights.

This March changed Mr. McCall's life a lot. It made him feel older, and more mature. It also made him aware of what was happening in the world. This march made him care more about civil rights. It also made him want to drop out of school and work as a civil rights worker. It changed his life by making him more aware, more mature, and care more about the people who were not being treated well by others.

In conclusion, all people should have equal rights and John McCall strongly believes this. The purpose of the march was to help black people gain the right to vote and to put an end to discrimination and unfair treatment. John McCall joined the march because he thinks all people are equal no matter what their race is. It had a big impact on his life and he continues to help others improve their lives. All in all, John McCall's bravery at the march and his belief in helping others makes him a positive leader in our community.

--by Haron H.



Viola Hayhurst

From the moment Viola Hayhurst walked into the King Middle School library, we knew that she had a story. From her bubbly nature to her ability to command our attention, she made us feel how she felt and believe what she believed. Viola played a small part in the overall Civil Rights Movement, but her small acts of courage were the building blocks for change.

“These people did not want to change; they liked things just the way they were.”

Born and raised in Virginia, Viola Hayhurst was aware of the issues of segregation from an early age. She says that as hard as they tried, the people of Virginia could never turn her into one of them. This must have been because of her deep Maine roots. Her family came to Maine with the earliest settlers and were homesteaders in the Capisic Pond area. Viola received her master's from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. During the Civil Rights Movement Viola lived in Atlanta, where she finished up her master's degree thesis in Psychology. During the summer of 1964, she began her work with a Mennonite Mission called the Peace House.

Emory University was an all white institution located in Atlanta, Georgia. The people at Emory wanted to integrate, but if they had, they would have lost much of their funding from the state and private donors. Viola felt that, “A lot of people in the South wanted to integrate, but it was the law of the land.” When she graduated from high school, Viola started at the College of William and Mary but soon afterward enrolled at Western Michigan University in Michigan. During that summer, while at WMU, Viola did a stint in a government-run laboratory. At the end of the summer she decided that the work that she had done at the lab intrigued her so much that she wanted to go to school to study animal behavior. These studies brought Viola to Emory.

During the summer of 1964, Viola Hayhurst went to live at the Peace House in Atlanta. When asked if she was ever afraid there she replied, “Atlanta was peaceful...Atlanta had this facade of being above the rest of the South.” The

Peace House was a part of the Mennonite Mission, and its purpose was to provide lodging for young people and give them jobs doing good work. The Mission was pro-integration. As a result, part of the Peace House's mission was to improve the lives of African Americans in the area. The Peace House was three stories tall and the members all lived in it dormitory style, with more than one person to a room. The house was on Houston Street and it bordered Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s backyard. She talked about going to see him speak at the Ebenezer Baptist Church to say his “I Have A Dream” speech. Viola recalls this experience to be awe-inspiring and unforgettable. She also mentioned that she met Coretta, Dr. King's wife. In the Peace House, some of the jobs that were given to people were to babysit the Kings' four young children. But for Viola, the Peace House would lead her to other work and to the Society of Friends.

As a job for the Mennonite Mission Peace House, Viola was sent to work for the Society of Friends, a religious quaker group that worked for the betterment of the lives of African Americans. Viola's particular job was to look through the “want advertisements” in the newspaper and in magazines and see if there were any jobs for professional blacks. Then she would give the ads to a local radio station so that they could broadcast the ads on the “daily spots”. She told a story about how the Frito-Lay company had an ad asking for professional blacks. Viola had had the station broadcast the ad. So many African American men and woman applied for the positions that the company had the station remove the ad so that they would not be bombarded with any more

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applications. This story is an example of how few jobs were available for African Americans in the '60s.

For the most part, Atlanta was not a highly segregated city compared to some like Jackson, Mississippi, or Birmingham, Alabama. But there was one man who was the king of racism in Atlanta, Lester G. Maddox. He was the owner of the Pickrick restaurant chain. The restaurants served homestyle food at a good price, but Lester Maddox swore on his Southern bible that he would *never* integrate. He was so dead-set in this fact that when he was finally forced to integrate by law, he shut down the restaurants for good. In Atlanta, Viola had many black friends. One day around lunchtime, Viola and one of her friends decided to go down to Pickricks and have lunch. The reason that they could get away with this was because her friend looked more Spanish than African American. Viola and the girl went into the restaurant and ordered a simple chicken dinner. When they finished their meal they went out to pay, but Viola's friend had other intentions. Unexpectedly, Lester Maddox burst from the kitchen just before Viola and her friend left. The friend approached Mr. Maddox and shook his hand, thanking him for the good meal. Then as they were about to leave, she said "By the way, I'm black." Viola's description of Mr. Maddox was one in which "he puffed up... he turned red!" Then Viola remembers a feeling of complete panic as she and her friend bolted from the restaurant. About a week after their run-in at Pickricks, a story in the newspaper was printed with the headline: *Black Girl, White Girl Integrate Pickricks*.

One of the main events that impacted Viola Hayhurst was the Birmingham Children's Marches. Racial discontent and police brutality were what sparked the marches. The African Americans were sick and tired of their unfair treatment and of being abused by the police force under their chief, Bull Connor. The Civil Rights officials in the city decided that the police would be less harmful to the marchers if the marchers were children. The officials were also of the mind that arresting children would send a message across the country telling people just how unreasonable Birmingham's segregation laws were. The other upside to arresting hundreds of children was that they would fill the jails. First, the adults arranged for 500 black students, both in grade school and in high school, to march on Birmingham. The students were met with the same police brutality that their parents had experienced. When it came time for the second march, there were 1,000 children on board. Again, they were beaten by the police, attacked by dogs, and sprayed by fire hoses

powerful enough to blow a grown man down the street. Fortunately for the students, America saw the violence that was being committed against them and took their side.

Viola Hayhurst thinks that the Ku Klux Klan are "nothing good at all" and "it just shows the extent that the 'uneducated' will go to impose themselves on others." During the summer of 1966, Viola was driving down Route 58 in Virginia. As she drove down the highway she spied a large group of cars pulled off to the side of the road. Out of curiosity Viola pulled her car over, which had Maine plates. As she pulled over she realized that she had come upon a KKK rally. She remembers there being a large bonfire and that the klansmen were preaching the so-called wrongdoings of Bobby Kennedy. A Virginia State Trooper pulled off the highway to make sure that the Klan did

not lose control. The trooper approached Viola and advised her to get away from the rally because of her northern plates. Viola, to this day, swears that she shook for 50 miles after she ran into the KKK.



Talking to Viola helped me to have a better understanding of the South during the Civil Rights Movement. Her enthusiasm for life and vivacious nature rubbed off on all of us. To this day, she remains aware of her part in the movement and shared great information and ideas. At present, she lives on Congress Street in Portland, and is an active member of her community. She continues in her efforts to locate the *Black Girl White Girl* integration article and has even contacted the Library of Congress. We are thankful for her help and grateful for her amazing story.

--by Flannery M.

Gerald E. Talbot

Gerald E. Talbot was the first president of the NAACP in Portland, Maine, and the first African-American legislator in Maine. He has spent his life working for civil rights.

“Our first priority is to let our voices be heard.”

Gerald E. Talbot is a man with many accomplishments. He was born in Bangor, Maine, in 1931. He graduated from Bangor High School in 1952. Three years later he enlisted in the army. He would serve from 1953 to 1956. Mr. Talbot then fell in love with Anita Cummings, and they got married in 1954. They raised four daughters together. In 1966 he found a job with the Guy Gannett Publishing Company. He would have this job for a quarter of a century. The part Mr. Talbot played in the Civil Rights Movement in Portland has benefitted us all.

Gerald E. Talbot started to get interested in the NAACP in 1956. In 1964 it was time to elect a new President. Gerald had no idea that anyone would even think of electing him as President. When they announced that Gerald E. Talbot had won the election, he was astounded. After winning he announced, “Our first priority is to let our voices be heard.” He then worked with the NAACP to focus on major problems.

During that time period, as the new President of the NAACP, he found himself with a sea of problems. He soon found out that a good way to bring attention to those problems was to hold local marches. Every time there was a big problem the NAACP would hold a march. The police were very much against these marches. They would say, “You can’t hold any more marches.” But Mr. Talbot and the rest of the NAACP found a way around it. You see, as long as they didn’t disturb traffic they could hold as many marches as they wanted. Mr. Talbot commented, “By marching as one we became a voice.” NAACPs in other areas took notice of Gerald and what he was doing in Portland. In

1968, the NAACP held the first New England Regional meeting. Other places like Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont came to march together. The march was a success, but there were still problems in Portland that needed to be looked at.

Fair housing was an ongoing problem. Blacks were not able to get good housing with space, quality, and at an affordable price. Mr. Talbot was among those people with troubles finding and keeping a house. Mr. Talbot is lighter skinned, and it was sometimes hard to tell if he was black or white. When Gerald E. Talbot went to find an apartment he would usually get it, but as Mr. Talbot talked to the landlord, the landlord would ask him to bring his wife over. Knowing that his wife was darker skinned than him, and it was clear that she was an African American woman, Mr. Talbot would get a tad bit scared. When he would bring his wife over, he would already know in his mind he would not get the rent. And he was right. As soon as the landlord saw his wife, Mrs. Anita Talbot, he would say, “Sorry, we don’t have an available apartment for you.” After the same thing happened over and over again, Gerald Talbot knew something needed to be done. He recalls that “fair housing was a major problem that needed immediate NAACP attention.” In 1964, he joined the voter registration drive in Mississippi, and was a key figure in helping to pass Maine’s 1966 “Fair Housing Bill.”

Mr. Talbot explained to us that despite these efforts, “discrimination has been around for hundreds of years.” He said that “the most important type of discrimination to try to stop is in education.” Gerald

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Talbot told us that “education for blacks back then was a constant struggle.” This was also a problem that the NAACP needed to work on. He commented with a very bold sound in his voice, “People will discriminate against you because they have a *I’m going to discriminate against you to make myself feel superior attitude.*” Gerald recounted a very good example of racism that he experienced. He remembers a time when he was working for his dad as a cook. The customers would always ask him, “Hey you there. Are you Indian, white, black? What are you?” Then Mr. Talbot would say, “I’m an African American.” After hearing that, their attitude would change completely. They would call him the “N” word. At this time other problems and conflicts were just heating up.

“Big problems were just getting bigger,” Mr. Talbot commented. “I would look in the newspaper and see big headlines about the KKK saying they were coming to town. And the trouble didn’t stop there.” Gerald would constantly get calls from KKK saying that they were coming for him, and they would threaten him. Mr. Talbot remembered that when you would get pulled over by a policeman, you would get a ticket, and later on you would find out “that same policeman was a Klansmen.” Also, if you got in enough trouble and had to go to court, eventually you would find out that the judge was a Klansmen.” It was a normal evening when Gerald went to a mini mall where he saw Klansmen walking around the parking lot. Mr. Talbot was sick of the calls, the harassment, and the trouble, so he did something most African Americans were afraid to do. Mr. Talbot walked right up to a Klansmen and pulled his hood right off of his head. Another Klansmen came up to him and told him, “Hey you. You don’t want trouble now do you?” Mr. Talbot recalls with a proud look, “I was never afraid of them, nor will I ever be!”

We asked Mr. Talbot what events stand out most in his memory, and his eyes lit up and he said very proudly, “March on Washington.” He remembers being at that very important day in our history. He remembers an ordinary 1963 afternoon. That afternoon, Gerald E. Talbot got a call from Rev. John Bruce, from Green Memorial AME Zion Church. He had no idea what the call was about. The Reverend called to ask Mr. Talbot if he wanted to attend the March on Washington. Gerald E. Talbot told the reverend, “Sure, but I have no

money. How will I get there?” The Reverend explained to Mr. Talbot that “this march is totally free, all you have to do is be willing to walk. Gerald E. Talbot was definitely on board because he thought that marches were a great way to be heard. When Mr. Talbot told his wife about the march, she wasn’t as excited. She didn’t have a problem with the march, but she was just concerned for husband’s health. Mr. Talbot said, “I wasn’t going to miss this important day that was going to go down in history.” This was too big for him to pass up. He marched with his ‘brothers and sisters’ for miles and miles. and when the march came to an end and it was time for Dr. Luther King Jr. to speak on the



Lincoln Memorial. steps, Mr. Talbot even remembers shedding a tear or two after that beautiful speech. Even after all of Gerald E. Talbot’s successes, something was missing.

After all the work with the NAACP, Mr. Talbot felt like he needed to do something new. One day, an old friend came to him and told him, “You know, you should put your name in for running for Maine State Legislature.” “Are you crazy?” Mr. Talbot explained to him. “Who

would vote for me?” Eventually Mr. Talbot ran for the Legislature, and to his delight he won. He was probably the most surprised of anyone. Gerald E. Talbot then had a term from 1972 to 1978.

Gerald E. Talbot continues to speak out strongly on issues surrounding Civil Rights. He comments, “Our mission is not over, discrimination is still a problem that needs to be addressed.” It just goes to show you, you don’t need to be a big publicized figure to change the world. One small act of courage at a time can do wonders.

--by Jonathan Y.

Bill Browder

Bill Browder is a man that believes in equal rights for all. He also believes that people should get the rights that they deserve. He has spoken up for what he thinks is right for everyone. Whether you are black or white, rich or poor, you should be treated equally.

“If I see something that isn’t right, I’ll speak up about it.”

Bill Browder was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1946, and he has one sister. He grew up in the South until he was older. There were a lot of things happening in the South that he did not really support. Later, when Mr. Browder was older he moved to Freeport, Maine. Bill Browder has worked as a lawyer for the Justice Department.

Bill Browder was not raised as a racist, but he did witness it living in the South. There were white neighborhoods and there were black neighborhoods. The black areas were not as good as the white areas. As a kid, Mr. Browder didn’t really know about the things happening between whites and blacks and was not aware of segregation. Mr. Browder remembered, “I was into my school, my girlfriend, athletics, what I was doing, but it did not involve interacting with African- Americans.” As he got older he started to recognize what was happening around him.

Over the years Mr. Browder has had to deal with family and friends with different values than himself. Mr. Browder’s sister got married, and the man that she married had very different beliefs. He would use derogatory language regarding black people. Every time Mr. Browder heard him, he would tell him to stop using that kind of language, but he couldn’t always stop him. This was very frustrating for him. Another situation was

with one of Mr. Browder’s friends, who was racist. Every time they talked about segregation, it would turn into a yelling match. Eventually Bill could not be friends with him anymore.

There was a lot of segregation going on in the South, but when he was a little kid, he barely noticed it. He went to an all white school and he didn’t even know that discrimination was so bad. As he got older, he started thinking about segregation and how it was not right. Mr. Browder thought that separating blacks and whites was not logical.

There was a lot of trouble with law enforcement in the South. Mr. Browder thought there was racism in law enforcement. If a white lawyer was representing a black man for doing a crime, a lot of people would probably make fun of him and if he had kids, his kids might be talked about at school. Mr. Browder said most lawyers probably wouldn’t represent a black person. People would try to bend the law and hold it against African-Americans.

Sometimes the only way that blacks could get money was to work for whites. There was a man named Fred who was the family yard worker when Mr. Browder was a kid. Fred was a black man, and Fred was friends with Bill, yet Fred would never call him Bill. He would call him Mr. Browder. Mr. Browder did

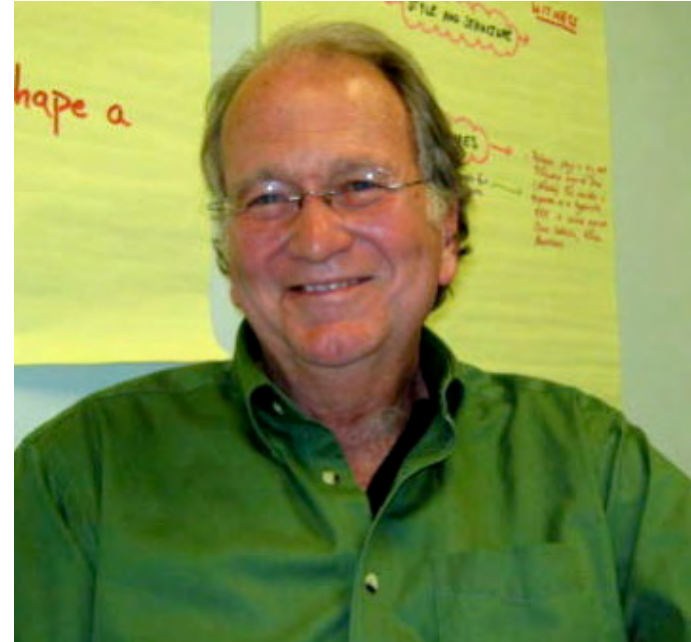
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not like it, because he was a kid, and he thought that name should be for his father, not him. Even when he would tell him to stop, Fred always called him Mr. Browder.

When Mr. Browder was an adult, he moved to Washington D.C.. He had been living in D.C. for about ten years when Fred came to town. He called Mr. Browder and said, “I am in Washington.” Mr. Browder asked him if he would like to go and get some drinks and he said yes. When they went to get drinks they talked and talked, and then they went out to eat. Fred started speaking and he said, “I could never imagine sitting at the same table with you.” Still Fred was calling Bill-*Mr. Browder*. Later when they were done eating they went to the Lincoln Memorial and sat on the steps. Fred burst into tears because of the new opportunity in life and all the things he had right then, especially having the chance to sit at the same table as Mr. Browder.

Today, Mr. Browder believes that he could have done something to stop all the discrimination going on around him. But he couldn't. He was a little kid and he did not even notice all the things happening around him, like black people sitting at the back of the bus. But since Mr. Browder has grown, he has done something about how he feels. He shares all he knows regarding civil rights and about this time in the South with students like us.

--by Sumaya A.



Sharon Bresler

A family visit to the segregated South sparked Ms. Bresler's desire for equal rights, leading her to become a member of the NAACP Youth Council. Sharon has always been strong-willed and determined to fight for what is right.

“ They taught us before we went about being peaceful, about not responding..... to people yelling at us or taunting us.”

As a young nine year-old girl in the 1950s, Sharon Bresler watched Little Rock Central High School being integrated on television. That was her first real experience of the Civil Rights Movement. “ It was upsetting to see soldiers having to protect those kids,” she said. Sharon lived in her hometown in Connecticut with her four siblings and parents at this time.

When Sharon was in high school in the 1960s, her family took a trip to Florida to visit her grandparents. On the way, they stopped at a gas station in North Carolina. It was segregated. The labels read: *Men*, *Women*, and *Colored*. “ It was shocking to me....I could use one bathroom that was clean and was for women, and only white women.” she clarified. “There was another whole (rather unhygienic) bathroom there that was just for people of color, and that was for men *and* women.”

Those two experiences led up to Ms. Bresler's involvement in her local youth NAACP. There is more to her involvement than that. Rabbis and ministers, one of whom had been on one of the Freedom Rides, were looking to get “high school students familiar with what was going on, and maybe get them involved in some kind of civil rights activity.” So they started meeting once a week at their town's YMCA. The ministers and rabbis wanted to

get the kids “acquainted with people who were different from us.” Sharon lived in a small town, but it was next to Bridgeport, Connecticut, which was vastly diverse. When they met once a week, the kids from Bridgeport, some of whom were African American, would be with them and many of them were members of the NAACP's Youth Council. Some students from Sharon's town, including Sharon, joined the group as well.

When Ms. Bresler looks back and thinks about it she wonders, “Well, what did we do?” They had many meetings and were taught such things as being non-violent. When she was an officer in the student NAACP, the members were told that they would be picketing the Bridgeport Board of Education. Picketing is when a group of people protest with signs, or pickets, about something. In this case, the students were protesting against the segregation in Bridgeport schools. Bridgeport was not segregated by law, but by choice or “de facto.”

Obviously, there were counter pickets. Although the counter picketers didn't know what organization the students were a part of, they ran out with signs that had the names of numerous civil rights groups, none of which said anything about the NAACP. The counter picketers were convinced that the students were

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communists, and thought that anyone who didn't agree with segregation had to be a communist. They had signs saying things like: *Get rid of the communists*. According to Sharon, that was supposed to "shut us up" and make the students go away, but it didn't. As she remembers, somebody was taking their photographs, and she thought that it was for some kind of "authority" like the police department, but the photos were fortunately never published and there was no sensation. "I didn't feel like I was in danger," says Sharon, "but I did feel like I was standing up for something I believed in."

A "highlight" of her experience during the Civil Rights Movement was when Martin Luther King, Jr. came to speak in Bridgeport. The students were told that they would be the ushers at the event, and they would be able to hear Dr. King speak. Sharon says that "... it wasn't one of his composed speeches," and that he "... just spoke from his heart." But a few years later, when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, "everything just stopped, classes stopped.... people would walk around crying." People wondered where the Civil Rights Movement would go from there. As Sharon recollects, "It was devastating."

When Ms. Bresler looks at the community today she still sees that "we haven't come as far as we need to," and she still worries about issues of poverty. She was "relieved" when segregation was made illegal, and believes that kids today can make a difference for the better. As Sharon put it, "The work isn't done and I don't think it's done today."

When reflecting on her experiences during the Civil Rights Movement, Sharon finds that she "... probably would have wanted to do more of it [picketing]." She remembers that her parents were very supportive of her. Her family always watched the news, and that is how she got to watch all the demonstrations on the television; she probably watched some of the more violent demonstrations. She remembers that one of her heroes was Fannie Lou Hamer, a civil rights leader, and that she is still one

of Sharon's heroes today. One of the things that Sharon remembers Fannie saying is, "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired." As Sharon puts the events of her civil rights involvement, she says it "really was small acts of protest." Small acts add up to change. Thank you Sharon, for your small acts of courage in the struggle for civil rights.

--by Nicole M.



Rachel Talbot Ross

Rachel Talbot Ross has led a very unique life, surely one to remember. During the Civil Rights Movement, Rachel and her family were extremely involved. Now, even though many of us think that the movement is over, Rachel still strives for true and equal justice. As president of the NAACP, Rachel works hard every day to create a more equal lifestyle for all people.

“I am so emotionally committed to this, I can’t imagine doing anything else.”

Rachel Talbot Ross had a childhood unlike any other. Growing up during the heat of the Civil Rights Movement, her parents involvement in the NAACP in Maine had a great impact on her life. Rachel remembers everyone in her family and all close family friends were involved in the movement. This had a great influence on her take on the world and what was going on around her. As Ms. Talbot Ross remembers, “At the dinner table we would talk about my basketball games and my lacrosse games, but we would always end up talking about what was going on in the rest of the world.” She had the privilege to be asked her opinion frequently, even at a very young age. This is what gave her the urge to pursue a career in civil rights.

Going to Longfellow Elementary School and to Waynflete for middle school and high school, Rachel was the only African American, finding it hard to find people like her. “It was hard to find places in the city and people in the city that looked like me,” Rachel told me. These childhood experiences paved the road for her to pursue a career in the NAACP. Always being asked for her opinion gave her the skills to become the current president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Portland. She thought that one of the reasons that her father was involved in the movement may not have been for himself, but for

a better future for her. Rachel said that her motivation is to create a better future for her son.

During Rachel’s experience working with the NAACP, she has accomplished many things in her community, in Maine, and for others all over the country. She works with the criminal justice system to protect the rights of prisoners-such as prisoner voting rights and religious rights. She looks at laws to see if they are working well, then sees how they are being maintained. This year on March 21st she marched on Washington for equal civil and human rights for immigrants. Her work in the NAACP has afforded her many great learning opportunities. This year, the NAACP will also be creating a park dedicated to Martin Luther King, Jr. in Portland. As you can see, Rachel has achieved many things within the NAACP and has met many people from all over the globe.

Rachel Talbot Ross was greatly influenced by her father, Gerald E. Talbot, the first African American legislator in Maine. Being brought up in a home that believed in community service, volunteering, and creating a better life for people that surround you, both Rachel’s personal and professional life revolve around creating better lives for others. She works towards making a

better life for her son, immigrants in the US, and for people being discriminated against overall. As her father would strive towards creating a more diverse and equal future for her, she now works for the same goal for her son. In Rachel's household she would constantly be told that: "We are our brother's keepers."

Since the Civil Rights Movement, Maine has come a *very* long way, but even though we have come far, we still have some room to improve. According to Rachel Talbot Ross, Portland has a very good school system and is very diverse. But she would love to see more people starting their own businesses, and less profiling. She believes that you have to think about where you are spending your money and what the cause is. For example, why spend your money at a chain store where there may have been no health care for their employees and there is low pay, when you could spend your money at a local business in Portland for someone that needs it and has good policies for their employees? So, we have progressed from the time period where racism was at its highest point, but we still have room to grow.

Lastly, we cannot think of the Civil Rights Movement as a thing in the past. As Rachel believes, "Civil rights is now." It isn't a thing in the past, and you can express it today. She thinks that you can take something that you're good at and use it for the movement. Whether it's art, music, or science, you can use it to express what your take is on the world. People still march for their rights and some people still discriminate against others. Rachel was pulled over on a Maine highway because a police officer thought that she stole the car that she was driving, only because she was African American and it was a new car. Even though an actual bill called the Civil Rights Act was passed to prevent segregation in America, it can't change how people feel and stop them from being racist. We truly are a work in progress and we are lucky that people like Rachel Talbot Ross have not given up.

--by Audrey W.



Phil Shearman

Phil Shearman has spent most of his life helping people. He believes in fairness and equality, and he worked during the Civil Rights Movement. One of his main goals was to build trust among the races, especially African Americans and whites. Mr. Shearman had many experiences both positive and negative in fighting for equal rights for all types of people.

“I felt bad for both sides in a way, especially the people who were beaten on and the people doing the beating because they didn’t seem to know any better.”

Phil Shearman is 83 years old. He used to live in Dorchester, Massachusetts, and Toledo. Now he lives in Gorham, Maine. He is a chaplain now, and he used to be in the navy on a ship. When Phil Shearman was in the navy there were black sailors, and their only jobs were to serve, cook, clean and carry the ammunition during the battle. The African Americans had a little place on the ship that was separated from the whites. Sometimes when there would be an emergency on the ship, African Americans were killed because they didn’t know what to do. They were not allowed to be trained.

Phil Shearman watched the news in the 1950s, and heard about four little girls being picked on in a church in Birmingham, Alabama. Rev. Shearman wrote a letter to those four girls because he felt like he had to do something. He felt badly for them because adults were picking on them. He also sent a copy to a Boston newspaper. Phil thought it was important to let them know that someone cared about them.

Rev. Shearman helped an African American friend get an apartment. His friend, who attended his church, came to him and said “The apartment manager won’t let me get an apartment. Can you help me get one?” Phil Shearman cared about this man and wanted to help him because his friend had been picked on a lot.

The apartment manager wouldn’t give an apartment to an African American until Rev. Shearman went to the apartment with his friend. The apartment manager didn’t want to say no to the friend with Rev. Shearman there, so his friend got the apartment.

Rev. Shearman also saw discrimination in stores and in real estate. There was a store that charged African Americans higher prices than whites. The store was gouging the price in the area and the store could get away with this because the blacks couldn’t do anything. Some real estate people separated homes from whites and blacks so neighborhoods were separated.

As a chaplain Phil Shearman worked to build trust between African Americans and whites. One day, Phil Shearman went to a fire where a black man died in a building. Some African Americans didn’t trust the firefighters but Rev. Shearman thought that they tried to save the man who died in the fire. Rev. Shearman went to the hospital, and so did the people from the neighborhood. So Rev. Shearman spoke to all of them to calm the situation.

He also brought both sides to his church. He preached in black churches and met a lot of people. Someone Phil knew wanted to

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join the Ku Klux Klan because there was too much chaos in his city.

When the kids in the area heard about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death, they bought a tree and a stone. Phil called a man to see if he could get a plaque on it. Everyone came to see it. The kids felt good about this because they brought everyone together to see the plaque and the memorial tree.

Phil Shearman did a lot throughout his life to help people. He did not care what color their skin was; he just wanted to help. Phil wrote a letter to four African American girls to show them support. Coming to the aid to his friend to find a place to live is also how Phil showed he cared about people. Mr. Shearman is a man who helped to bring both sides together.

--by Mack T.



Leonard W. Cummings Sr.

Leonard W. Cummings, a Civil Rights activist, grew up in Portland, Maine. He was affected by discrimination most of his young life. Mr. Cummings has played a pivotal part in the success of African Americans everywhere. Mr. Cummings is a leader.

“Don’t take no, put your focus on what you can accomplish and what you can do.”

Leonard W. Cummings Sr. grew up in the West End in Portland, Maine. Leonard remembers having a railroad station across the street “which was dynamite.” Leonard remembers growing up and how segregation and discrimination affected him. “Was it segregated? Yeah, it was segregated, no question about it. Was there discrimination? Yeah there was, no question about it.” Leonard W. Cummings has been married to Mary Jane Hill now for over 50 years. They have three daughters, one son and eight grandchildren.

“Let’s tell the story the way it was, let’s talk about discrimination, because it was here. We have marks of it,” recalled Mr. Cummings. As hard as it may be to understand now, discrimination was a huge problem in Portland during the Civil Rights Movement. Even though Portland didn’t call itself segregated, there was some discrimination happening. It was after graduating from high school that Leonard and Mary Jane truly faced discrimination. When Leonard W. Cummings and Mary Jane Cummings were first married, they lived with Mary Jane’s parents. The young couple wanted to get their own apartment. Leonard’s wife thought it would be nice to get an apartment by her parents. They were denied. They looked everywhere they wanted to live, but over and over they were told no. They even told the Cummings they couldn’t get an apartment because of their race. It was what really made them realize that there really *was* a problem right here in Portland.

Of all the events in the Civil Rights Movement, a few stand out to Mr. Cummings: the March on Washington, John F. Kennedy’s assassination, Malcolm-X’s assassination, Robert Kennedy’s assassination. Then there was Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination. This event greatly affected Mr. Cummings. “You remember just where and what you were doing at that particular time [he died].” To Mr. Cummings Dr. King was their driving force, their main leader. Everyone wondered who would take over for him. “It forced you to be better than you were. It forced you to focus on the lesson that he said.”

Leonard Cummings played an important role in the Civil Rights Movement. He started by opening an office on Forest Avenue called *Positive Awareness* and conducted a weekly radio show. It was then that he conducted the first census in Maine that included the black population of Cumberland County. On his list of achievements there is also a small newspaper, *The Bridge*. “Some were good, some were bad, but it was all an attempt to tell a story,” he recalls. Leonard and his wife were also the first ones to arrange the Dr. King breakfast. Last, but certainly not least, he was President of the NAACP from 1976 to 1978.

One way of combating discrimination was with marches and protests. Both Mr. and Mrs. Cummings participated in the marches despite the fact that some members of the black community did not want to march because they feared losing

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their jobs. The local NAACP held a meeting to address the matter, and decided to demonstrate.

Mr. Cummings was the president of Portland's NAACP from 1976 to 1978. The NAACP was the main group for fighting back at discrimination. One example of what they did was the African American Teenage Pageant. You see, the other pageant would not let the African Americans enter. So, they held their own pageant.

Mr. Cummings helped begin the Martin Luther King Breakfast in Portland. The first breakfast was held in 1981. On the day of the first breakfast there was a huge snow storm the night before so they were thinking, "Who was going to show up to the breakfast?" The speaker for that breakfast was Tim Wilson, who lived in Augusta. He showed up, despite the snow, at 10 o'clock. About 20 people came to the first breakfast. Mrs. Cummings and a few other women did all of the cooking. They swept the floors, cleaned the dishes, and shut the doors. Leonard later said, "Each year it's grown; every year we have done this, it's grown."

The Cummings are not as active in the NAACP as they once were. They still are supportive but think it's the turn of the younger generations. "Our energy is mostly focused on the Abyssinian Meeting House, because it has quite a story to tell." The Abyssinian Meeting House is the third oldest African American Meeting House in the United States. When asked how he first discovered the old Meeting House. They replied that his daughter saw it one day driving to church. The whole building was purchased for 250 dollars. Leonard told us that the city would only sell the building to them if they promised to refurbish it. When asked why he did this he replied, that the objective was "to gain the recognition that the African Americans deserve."

Both Leonard and his wife have a very positive attitude. They made sure to mention to us that everything that they have done has been to make it easier for the next person. Their overall

objective was to make it clear that the African American community was here. "You look for a mark, you look for a statue, you look for a picture, you look for anything that tells you that African American people participated in any level of government in any level of living. You would never know that," Leonard told us. That was his driving force, to reach his goal.

I think that all Civil Rights leaders are heroes. Just a small act of courage can change the world. From being president of his graduating class at Portland High School in 1952, to being a Civil Rights leader, Leonard Cummings has made Portland a better place.

--by Renata S.



Mary Jane Cummings

Mary Jane Cummings has worked to rebuild the Abyssinian Meeting House in Portland, Maine. This is very important because it is the third oldest meeting house for African Americans in the country. Mary Jane and her husband, Leonard W. Cummings, have worked to help others in the Portland community.

“Good better best, never let it rest, until your good is better, and your better is best.”

Mary Jane Cummings is an impressive woman. She has lived in Portland her whole life. Mary Jane was in the first class to graduate from our own King Middle School. She was involved in the local NAACP in Portland. Mary Jane was very active as the Vice President of this organization. Leonard W. Cummings, her husband, was the President of the local NAACP, and also a civil rights leader. Today, Mary Jane still lives in Portland and one of her favorite things to do is read.

Mrs. Cummings has a family that has faced discrimination. In 1921, Mary Jane’s aunt graduated from Gorham State Teachers’ College to become a second grade teacher. No one hired her, even though she graduated as a second grade educator. She was not hired because she was an African American. Mary Jane’s dad and mom worked, but because of the discrimination going on at the time it was difficult. Mary Jane married Leonard Cummings in 1956. They have three daughters, one son, and eight grandchildren. Her husband graduated from Portland High School and he was the class president. Mary Jane Cummings told us, “everything Leonard and I did was to help upcoming generations.”

In 1958 Mary Jane and her husband Leonard Cummings faced the most discrimination. They were looking for housing in Portland, but found it difficult to find an apartment because of their skin color. They were denied living in an apartment because they were black. Mary Jane felt discriminated against when she worked for a bank. She was hired at a bank as a teller, and was fired shortly after. Mary Jane believed that she was fired because she was black, and she filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission. The appeal was denied, but it helped to change things for women working at the bank. Leonard said, “I am very proud that my wife stepped up to the plate when she was discriminated against at the bank she worked at.”

Mary Jane Cummings and her husband were involved in the local NAACP and they were very active. The death of Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired them to get more involved. That’s when Mary Jane became the Vice President and a secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Mary’s spouse was the president of this organization. They both wanted to stop discrimination against people of color. Martin Luther King, Jr., a civil rights activist, inspired them with his outstanding speech, and helped them to make a change in the black community. They even did a Miss Black Beauty Teenage

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pageant because the whites didn't include black teens in their pageants. Mary Jane and Leonard exclaimed, "We are not active today but we still are supporting those who want to have a chance to be involved in the NAACP."

In January of 1981, Mary Jane and her husband organized a very important breakfast to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. It was a very emotional experience for her. Mrs. Cummings and her husband held the first breakfast in Portland. They had a guest speaker, Tim Wilson, who was Chairman of the Human Rights Commission in Maine. The breakfast brought so many people together and still is happening today. Dr. King means a lot to Mr. and Mrs. Cummings because he was one of their role models while growing up. The day of his assassination was powerfully emotional for them. "It was like the whole world and their dreams ended," Mrs. Cummings said about Dr. King's death. This breakfast honors Dr. King's memory and takes place every January.

The Abyssinian Meeting House in Portland, Maine is a big part of the Cummings' story. It was built in 1826. Also, it's the third oldest African American meeting house in the United States. The African Americans struggled to save the meeting house. Leonard said, "Don't take no. Put your focus on what you can accomplish." The meeting house means a lot to them. The story of the Abyssinian Meeting House is the untold story of historical events that happened back when blacks were discriminated against because of their color. Mr. and Mrs. Cummings are the caretakers of the Abyssinian Meeting House. "We share with you, we share with the community, a building that belongs to you," Leonard said. The Abyssinian Meeting House is still standing today in Portland. The Meeting House will educate the youth about history.

In conclusion, Mrs. Cummings was involved in many ways with the Civil Rights Movement in Portland. Mary Jane Cummings has done so much for the community over the years. Most

importantly, she helped start the first breakfast for Martin Luther King, Jr. This breakfast is still going on today, and currently the restoration of the Abyssinian Meeting House is where she is most focused. Mary Jane is a great role model in the Portland community, and it was a pleasure listening to her story.

--by Maimun A.



Wayne Cowart

Wayne Cowart grew up with segregation, but it took his experiences at his job at UPI for him to realize how segregation really could affect anyone, whether it is just by observing or experiencing it.

“When you turn to violence, from my point of view, the bad guys win. Because there’s nothing more effective that they can do to recruit people to their side than to show them that you’re being violent.”

Born in Jacksonville and raised in Miami, Wayne Cowart was surrounded with segregation throughout his youth and well into his later years. It was only in his undergraduate years that the Civil Rights Movement was “blossoming.” For the duration of his college years, he had a job at UPI (United Press International) working as a photographer, an occupation he got excited about in high school. Through his work, he saw many things that have impacted him in a way that he will never soon forget. For Wayne Cowart, nothing could prepare him for the summer of 1964, and nothing but experience could open his eyes to the real life problems of violence, hate, and segregation.

Growing up in Florida, segregation was strongly visible as a kid. Even going to grocery stores gave him a small taste of what segregation looked like, particularly the one he went to as a child, called Fredrick’s. One thing that was commonly segregated in that time was water fountains. The colder, more attractive looking fountain was reserved for Whites Only. In Fredrick’s, there was a good-looking water fountain in the middle of the store, of course, labeled for “Whites Only.” Way over to the far side of the store, there was a sign that hung over a water fountain labeled “Colored Only.” This was never second guessed by common people during that time, because it has always been “the norm.” Even young Wayne had a colored cleaning lady, Lola, that cleaned his family’s home every week or so. Growing up with that environment, for most people, impacted their view of segregation,

putting the thought in their minds that since segregation has always been acceptable during their youth, that is the way is should stay. Period.

In high school and throughout his college years, he had an interest in photography, and during college got a job at UPI (United Press International) through his connection with a friend. His friend, who was the “stringer” as they were called, worked for UPI in Tallahassee. Wayne assisted his friend on occasional assignments. In 1964, his friend recommended Wayne for an internship at the Atlanta bureau of UPI.

During the summer of 1964, his job at UPI brought him face to face with one of the biggest stories of the summer as far as the Civil Rights Movement was concerned. That summer, three civil rights workers were found dead, buried under a dike in Mississippi. The two white men from New York and the black man from Mississippi were arrested for a fake traffic violation and taken to wait in the small jail until 10:00 PM only to be released to a gang of Ku Klux Klan members. They went missing for 44 days until a paid informant in Philadelphia, Mississippi, tipped off the FBI as to their whereabouts. Finally, their bodies were found buried under a dirt dam on a local farm. They were led to the woods by Cecil Price, the officer who took them to the jail, and they were then shot down by the KKK members. “That was really hard,” Wayne choked, the memory in his eyes swimming. “It came as a shock, as I was just a little Methodist from Miami.”

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During that same summer, he and a group of photographers were sent to a segregationist rally led by Ross Barnett, former governor of Mississippi, and other big-name racist leaders. “None of us wanted to go!” Wayne chuckled. “We knew at those types of rallies there could be violence, and the press was already known as the ‘Bad Guys’ or the ‘agitators.’” When they got there, they were in the middle of a pro-segregation speech. “I can’t remember what they were saying; I can just remember I didn’t like it,” he recalled. Then, a group of mixed students walked peacefully into the stadium. As he remembered, “The crowd went wild.” As the students walked in, the spectators started picking up wooden folding chairs and hitting the students with them. The students, staying faithful to non-violence, were only using their arms to defend themselves from serious injury, which, for most of them, was already inflicted within minutes. “I had never seen anything like it. I had never seen a human being behave so violently against another human being.” The police finally intervened, but not in the way anyone had expected. Once the mob of angry spectators got the students up against the chain link fence separating the stands from the track, the police, instead of taking the kids back from where they came, made them climb the fence to get out. The memories of this event have stayed with him to this day.

Throughout his life, he has had several more experiences with hate, along with witnessing change in himself and in America. Not only experience, but also inspiration from leaders all over the world such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi changed his view. Even a documentary on Gandhi had an impact on his later decisions in life. “It really speaks to the power of your own commitment,” he expressed. As well as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. also took his place in history with his non-violent approach, and was also a leadership figure in Wayne’s experience. “When you turn to violence, from my point of view, the bad guys win. Because there’s nothing more effective that they can do to recruit people to their side than to show them that you’re being violent.” Wayne, who witnessed segregation for much of his life, had no idea how his childhood environment affected his racial views. As he recalls, there was one incident on a bus going back home on a school vacation when the only free seat was next to a black passenger.

He had a friend also on the bus, so he sat on the arm of the seat and talked to him for a while. When the bus driver assumed that Wayne was sitting with his friend for the sole purpose of not sitting with the black passenger, he stopped the bus and arranged for him to sit next to white passenger. Wayne told us that he wished he could truthfully say that the bus driver’s assumption wasn’t the case.

Wayne is now currently working as a linguistics professor at USM in Portland, ME, and lives in a very different society. Although segregation is a lot less common, not to mention illegal, it is still very much alive in many parts of America. Now living and teaching with the environment of integration, Wayne can now reflect upon how affected he was by the childhood that at the time was one that many people had, and how he and the people around him do things differently now in a peaceful, more accepted way.

--by Chiara M.



Gina Cressey

Gina Cressey played a small but vital role in the Civil Rights Movement. Beginning when she was a young adult, Gina Cressey dedicated her life to civil rights for all Americans. With passion and enthusiasm, Gina told us about her incredible journey in the era of the Civil Rights Movement at its peak.

“I wanted to show that I was on the side of right.”

Gina Cressey has lived a full life with amazing stories. Her story begins in Long Island, New York, the place where she was born. Gina was taught to be fair to everyone. She grew up in a town with no people of color. Then in 1954 she heard about the famous case, Brown vs. the Board of Education, which opened her eyes to segregation. From what her parents taught her, “You’re supposed to be fair.” From then on Gina was committed to making life for African-Americans better.

As a young girl, Gina was taught by her parents and grandparents to treat people fairly. She heard that other parts of our country were segregated, and she thought, “that just wasn’t fair.” Then Gina wanted to show her parents that she was on the side of fairness like they taught her. She joined organizations that were deeply committed to helping others like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ).

Gina joined the NCCJ in high school. It was an early civil rights group. It was founded as a way to bring Christians and Jews together, but later it brought blacks and whites together. During her time in the NCCJ, Gina went on camping trips with the group. In addition, she joined the NAACP in college and Gina’s

goal was to “change people’s hearts and minds about segregation.” One goal of the NAACP was to get black people to vote.

Gina participated in one of the most famous events in all of the Civil Rights Movement, the March on Washington. The night before Gina and her friends went they couldn’t sleep. Everyone was just too excited. They sang songs to pass the time driving from New York to Washington D.C. They arrived early in the morning in Washington D.C. and everyone was feeling euphoric. Gina recalls this memory emotionally. “People were greeting me, giving me food and cold drinks because it was so hot. Bus after bus of people came to march.” It showed Gina that most of America wanted to help and free others of their misery, which made her cry when she was telling the story. Soon afterwards, everyone started marching for jobs and freedom. Gina believed, “You can make a difference just by your presence.”

When she began marching, Ms. Cressey was separated from her friend. She began walking with a pokey elderly black minister from Mississippi. They had trouble understanding each other because he had a deep southern accent, “but we were for the same cause so it was okay.” Everyone stopped to listen to the

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best speech they were ever going to hear. They stopped to hear Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *I Have A Dream* speech. Gina emotionally recalls this historic memory, not with sadness but with the joy she felt. "He was an absolutely moving speaker." He made Gina stronger and more willing to help others to be free. Back then no one knew how famous that day would be. Every year on the reunion of the march Gina and her friend send each other e-mails and phone calls remembering the march and what they felt that day. After the march Gina came back to New York a more determined person.

The march made Gina even more committed to civil rights. The NAACP was trying to get black people to register to vote. "It was hard, but someone had to do it." She believes the only way to start to change things is through the ballot box. Many southern states weren't going to go down without a fight. They would make blacks take literacy tests to prove they could read at a high level. Another way was the grandfather clause. You could vote if your grandfather voted. Gina believed that all Americans had the right to vote. Finally, in 1965 President Johnson passed the Voting Rights Act, letting all Americans vote.

In college, Gina and others wanted to change the mind of Mr. Strom Thurmond, the senator from South Carolina. He was giving a speech at the University of Illinois where Gina attended college. He was absolutely against civil rights. Gina said, "He would use religion to back up his statements." But still Gina wasn't going to give up so easily and was determined to change the senator's mind. He had been senator for a long time and gave speeches in favor of segregation. So Gina and other protesters went politely in to hear what he had to say. They couldn't change the senator's mind but they did something to try and change it.

Later in her life, Gina and her husband Bill lived in Washington D.C and they had a little girl named Sally. They were going to integrate Sally's school, Chevy Chase Elementary with Rosemary Hill, an all black school. They were going to integrate them by

changing busing routes. Sally was in kindergarden at the time and Gina and Bill walked her to the bus for the first time. Then a news crew came and wanted to make a story and Gina spoke her mind. Saying, "that it was just wonderful." Gina said that what she loves about walking around King Middle School is seeing the diversity.

All in all, Gina has accomplished many things in her lifetime. She has lived a glorious life filled with amazement, excitement and courage. Her involvement in the March On Washington, NAACP and the NCCJ shows her great dedication to civil rights. She has accomplished her goal of helping all Americans have a better life. In the end, Gina said, "What a soft life I have led." Gina realizes that she was fortunate in her life but wants equal rights for all.

--by Mohamed N.



Douglas Guy

Douglas Guy was a protector of his country. He was a loyal American soldier in the 5th Air Force. Believing that you can make friends anywhere, he made friends and learned new things while island hopping. When not serving his country he was providing for Elizabeth Guy and their son. Thank you for sharing your incredible life experiences and your impact with us, the students of King Middle School.

“You can make friends anywhere.”

Douglas Guy grew up in Sandpoint, Idaho. During all those years he spent in Sandpoint, Idaho, he “never met a black person till he went east.” He graduated from University of Idaho in 1937. He took ROTC for two years and calvary for two years. Then he moved to Waterbury, Connecticut, then to Portland in 2005. Now Mr. Guy lives at Seventy Five State Street in Portland, Maine.

When he lived in Sandpoint, Idaho, there would be tribes of Native Americans called the Salish, the Kalipsel, and the Kootenai that would come into town and get food and supplies in the summer. Mr. Guy never knew any of them personally, but “they were treated like any other townsmen” that lived in Sandpoint, Idaho. Then later in his life he found out that one of his relatives had married a Native American. So even though growing up he had never seen an African American, there was another “minority” group nearby.

Douglas Guy spent four years in the South Pacific during World War II. He was a communication officer in the 5th Air Force. The Japanese “had a diehard will to win.” He followed Douglas MacArthur to Australia, the Philippines, Okinawa Island, and Japan. Two weeks after the surrender of Japan his unit was sent to an air base outside of Tokyo. When they got there “there was

no evidence of military presence.” The Japanese either rapidly became friends or went into hiding because they were ashamed of what they had done.

There were no African Americans in Mr. Guy’s unit. According to Mr. Guy, they were all sent to the European theatre and Africa. “They did their good duties in Europe.” They couldn’t integrate the units because most of the southern soldiers would oppose it, causing problems for making progress with whatever they had to do. Back in the states, Japanese Americans were being put in internment camps, supposedly because they couldn’t tell the difference between a Japanese enemy and Japanese American. They started the Japanese internment camps because there was evidence of Japanese submarines off the West Coast and America didn’t know what plans they had to invade.

The war in the Pacific was nearing the end. The Japanese were being pushed back closer and closer to Japan every day. Then two atomic bombs were dropped and the war was over. As soon as the bombs dropped, the Japanese surrendered and “they were ashamed of what they had done.” Mr. Guy remembers that he thought that the most drastic step to winning the war was dropping two atomic bombs over Japan.

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Mr. Guy's emotions were very private. "When in the army, you had to represent your country." Even if you weren't out on the front lines, "you're in the military, your emotions are very private." When he was in Australia, he learned about their culture, and as he kept island hopping he learned about life and its values. So in the time he spent in the military he learned a lot.

After the two atomic bombs were dropped and the Japanese surrendered, they "rapidly became friends." Doug Guy was positioned at an Air Force base outside Tokyo. When he arrived there, there was no evidence of military presence because they were either ashamed of what they had done or they wanted to become friends. After he left the military and got married he went to Hawaii and ran into a young Japanese couple. It amazed him to see them go to the place where their forefathers had bombed. While they were watching a show, the Japanese women and Douglas started to talk and eventually held hands. "You can make friends anywhere."

After the war he moved to Waterbury, Connecticut. There was a non-segregated dance in Waterbury Connecticut for veterans. He went to the dance with his wife, and she had danced with a young man. The stranger was so thankful that she danced with him because she didn't care about the color of his skin. Doug couldn't see why he felt inferior, it was a non-segregated dance and he was really thankful for what Douglas's wife did.

Another story Mr. Guy remembers relates to Marian Anderson. Marian Anderson was an African American singer that was supposed to sing in the D.A.R. Hall, but ended up singing outside because the D.A.R. wouldn't let her sing in their hall. Mrs. Guy joined the Daughters of the American Revolution because her grandparents or great grandparents were members of the D.A.R., too. To join the D.A.R. you had to have a family member in the D.A.R. or in the American Revolution. The newspapers announced that Ms. Anderson wouldn't be singing in the D.A.R. Hall. Mrs. Guy was disappointed and resigned because Anderson

was denied the right to sing. Douglas didn't have anything to do with her decision. It was her choice and he was not aware of her intentions. He does agree however that it was a good idea to quit the D.A.R.

Douglas was a dedicated soldier. He is dedicated to his country and wife, and he is proud in 2010 of what he has done with his life. From his childhood he was a optimistic person, about making new friends and learning new things. As a communication officer for the army he served his country for four years. When his wife decided to resign from the D.A.R. he stood by her side and, "It was her own decision." Thank you, Mr. Guy, for sharing your story.

--by Angelo M.



Carolyn Sloan

Carolyn Sloan has witnessed discrimination towards African American people first hand. She grew up in North Carolina at a time when racial tensions in the South were very high. She enthusiastically shared her experiences and memories about the Civil Rights Movement, and the impact they have had on her.

“If you were black, just going into a store was a brave thing to do.”

Carolyn Sloan grew up in a segregated neighborhood. She was born in Atlanta, Georgia, but grew up in North Carolina in the 1950s. She has lived in many places, including in the mountains of Virginia, and Memphis, Tennessee. When she went to school in North Carolina there were no black students. At home, her family was not very discriminatory, but they were uncomfortable with the idea of integration. She went to churches that were segregated, yet there was nothing written that black people couldn't go, they just chose not to. Carolyn saw many examples of discrimination during her youth.

Growing up in North Carolina in the '50s, is much different than living in North Carolina today. There were many places that were segregated. It wasn't as bad as lynching, but some white people weren't treating people of different races quite the same. Segregation was very visible in public places, such as restrooms, water fountains, and even movie theaters. “Everywhere you went that was public, there were white restrooms, and black restrooms,” she remembered. As you can see, there were many forms of segregation in the area where she grew up.

Carolyn learned a lot about racial issues through her church experiences. She went to an all white church, yet there was no law that it had to be. She was brought up a Presbyterian, and her father

was the deacon of the church she attended. “One of the ways that brought the Civil Rights Movement to my attention was what happened in church.” Carolyn didn't know of any church that wasn't segregated, and everyone she knew went to one. The big question in church was, “Are we going to let blacks in our community?” African Americans were saying, “We have rights, we should be able to go where anyone else goes.” So this was a debated topic in her community. All of the leaders at the church had to make the decision whether they were going to let black people in their church or not. “There was a big discussion between my father and the elders, and they had to make this decision, and this is when I started feeling really uncomfortable,” she recalled. “Because people said things like, ‘Well, we'll just take them down front, and see how they like that.’” Yet, her father was one of the people that said, “Just treat them like everyone else.” She wasn't sure if this was an act of courage, but she would like to go back and ask him why he did that. Carolyn thinks that many black people didn't know how to act when they were in a place designated for whites, and whites didn't know whether black people wanted them to be nice or to try to join in. It was an “awkward” situation for both sides. All in all, church really opened her eyes to the struggles that were part of the Civil Rights Movement.

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Growing up in a predominately white neighborhood, there was a type of racism that was “sitting in the background.” There was a middle school down the street and the people who lived in her community generally went there. If a black family moved into the neighborhood, a white family would put their kid in a “Christian” school, just because they thought it was safer to attend an all white school. Carolyn had no African American students in her school, but eight years later when her sister went to that same school, there were only about 2-3 white children in a grade. Their whole neighborhood had changed because of the white parents moving their kids to a different school. Carolyn’s parents were able to afford the “Christian” school, but they felt it was right to keep their children in an integrated community.

Carolyn attended Duke University at a time where there were very few black students there. Carolyn remembers speaking to a black housekeeper who cleaned the dorm rooms. She spoke to Carolyn about how she was afraid that she wouldn’t be able to support her grandchildren, and that she would lose her job. “Our conversations had been about how you want your children to grow up in a more equal environment and have more opportunities, and you’re doing your part to move things forward.”

After graduating from college, Ms. Sloan started teaching. One of her first teaching jobs was in northern Mississippi. In Mississippi racism was very visible. When she went to her first faculty meeting, there were white teachers on one side of the room, and black teachers on the other side. Carolyn overheard one of the white coaches making racist jokes. There was a black man from Oklahoma, and the both of them couldn’t believe what they heard. She was stunned that it was still like that in 1975. In addition, 60% of the students were black, so maybe the teachers were racist to them, too. “It was a very strange thing to teach in Mississippi,” she told us.

When she started teaching, she noticed that there was more integration, but whites and blacks rarely interacted. Usually she would see black students all in one group walking down the halls, or eating

lunch together. She thought maybe they felt pressured to do something, like be the first black president of their class. It was the pressure of this whole time period that made this time period difficult. In Carolyn’s school there were very few black people who would consult, or be friends with, a white person, or vice versa.

Later on, she and her former husband moved to Memphis, Tennessee. It was a nice, middle-class neighborhood, and they were the only white family that lived there. It didn’t seem the least bit different from any other neighborhood. Some of their friends came over to their house one night. She remembers them saying, “Aren’t you afraid to live here?” Carolyn couldn’t believe that someone would say that, especially after the progress that had been made in the Civil Rights Movement. It was very surprising that there was still racism sitting in the background.

Carolyn Sloan grew up a Southern girl, living in a segregated community, and now she lives in Portland, Maine, where there is a very diverse population. She was brought up witnessing segregation, and it is something that has impacted her life. It was very interesting to hear Carolyn’s story and it helped us to learn more about the Civil Rights Movement.



--by Ella C.

Richard S. Bowman

During World War II Mr. Richard Bowman, a commanding deck officer, faced a challenge regarding segregation. He had to decide whether or not to grant the wishes of black soldiers to segregate his Navy cruiser. He chose to help the blacks, segregate the ship, and to make the best of the situation.

“Instead of protesting segregation, the blacks were requesting it.”

Richard Bowman was born on June 4, 1917. He says he was an “early participant in war.” At Cooper Union, Richard Bowman was a professor of architecture and engineering. After four and a half years in the Navy, he returned to Cooper Union where he was a teacher for a total of 43 years. Richard Bowman was recognized with an award for his work in the Navy as a commanding Deck Officer. After retiring and moving to Maine, he was one of the founding fathers of the first chapter of Veterans For Peace here in Maine.

Mr. Bowman was recruited for the Navy while working at Cooper Union in New York. While training for the Navy in Chicago, Illinois, the attack on Pearl Harbor happened, and Richard marched in Chicago to honor the men who died in the attack. While Mr. Bowman was a teacher at Cooper Union, the U.S. government came to the University and said that if they appointed a member of the faculty to the Navy then the government would give the students the chance to complete registration in around an hour instead of taking a whole day running around New York. When the government came to Cooper Union and asked for a teacher to recruit for the Navy, the

rest of the faculty said that the only teacher who knew anything about the Navy was Professor Richard Bowman. So they requested Richard Bowman to report to the Navy as a Deck Officer.

When Mr. Bowman was only six weeks old his father, who was a U.S. medical officer in World War I, had taken Richard all the way to California in a grocery basket so his father could help aid the incoming troops from war. Thus, Mr. Bowman states that he was an “early participant in war.” While serving for four and a half years in the Navy, Mr. Bowman was a commanding deck officer in the first division on a heavy Navy cruiser that was sunk by torpedoes in World War Two. After the war, Officer Bowman was given a New York City Legislation tribute for all his hard work done in the Navy.

The Navy was integrated, which meant the black and the white soldiers were marching together, eating together, and sleeping in the same quarters together. This wouldn’t be a problem except the whites were taking advantage of the blacks by throwing trash on the floor and expecting the blacks to clean it up for them. The

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African Americans came to Officer Bowman, a deck officer, and “instead of protesting segregation, the blacks were requesting it.” The African American soldiers did not like the treatment that they were getting from the whites.

-- by Ian C.

Although the blacks were requesting it, segregation was still a huge problem on the ship. This had a big impact on the jobs that were assigned to the men who worked on the ship. The whites were the ones who were fighting and working on the deck. So the blacks were the ones who had the jobs as cooks and working near the machinery and the engines, which were considered less respectable positions. There were about five times more whites than blacks on the Navy cruiser. Officer Bowman was very surprised that the African Americans were requesting segregation but he granted their wish and segregated the bathrooms and sleeping quarters.

After being in the military, Officer Bowman returned to Cooper Union and then went on to be a teacher for a total of 43 years. At Cooper Union there wasn't very much diversity throughout the school. The men and women were separated based on sleeping cabins. At the university, the blacks and the whites always got along with each other and never seemed to have many problems.

Professor Bowman moved to Maine in 1982 when he was 65 years old. Along with a few other veterans, he founded the first chapter of Veterans For Peace in Maine. Richard Bowman is the oldest founder of Veterans for Peace. All of this happened after retirement.

All in all, Richard Bowman was faced with a predicament and made the best of the situation. Though the blacks were requesting segregation, Richard still held his head high and made things comfortable on the ship for blacks and whites. Today, Mr. Bowman remains a member of Veterans For Peace, and looks back and reflects proudly on his life with many awards and plaques.



Patti Brinkman

Patti Brinkman worked hard to improve the lives of African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement. Throughout her life she has showed great courage as she worked to help African American students that were discriminated against. With an appreciable smile throughout the interview, she shared many events that happened to her and how all of this changed her life.

“When you see something wrong, even if it’s a school, you should stand up.”

Patti Brinkman grew up in the city of Dayton, Ohio, in a family of five. At the time, the city of Dayton was changing since cities and schools were trying to integrate. “It was a wonderful time to be growing up,” she exclaimed. Patti thought that it was good to be a part of a change. The ratio of Dayton’s population was fifty percent black and fifty percent white. Her parents thought that it was an exceptional idea to make their kids a part of this movement. Soon, they started to become part of neighborhood programs that taught social justice. She did not know that she was going to be a part of something bigger and an event that would change schools where she lived.

Patti used to go to a private school. Then her parents decided that they wanted to be a part of the change in schools of the city. The school board of Dayton made decisions that made African American families be segregated and discriminated against by purpose. They would segregate neighborhoods. “We accused them of planning the map on purpose,” she stated. Patti Brinkman’s family knew that the school board was trying to segregate the students. It turned out that the high schools that African American students were sent to were underfunded. They did not have a sizable gym, textbooks, and videos, among other things. Patti went from a private superior school to an integrated high school. It was a noticeable disparity. “The private school was not integrated. It was all white.” In the new high school, everyone looked different, and people came from different backgrounds. There was a lot more variety. Ms. Brinkman felt marvelous because everyone at her new high school was different from her.

When the changes in Dayton began *white flight* started to happen. The phrase *white flight* refers to when white people started to leave the community. While Patti was going to high school, a lot of this was happening. Many whites did not want to participate in the integration of the city so they just left the community. Patti knew that they left because they were scared of being around different people. “The conflict that was happening was because of white people being scared of being around a change.” As soon as whites realized that the city was going to change and black students would get to go to better schools, then they would leave the community as soon as possible. Soon it was a problem that came into the hands of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Patti Brinkman’s family was one of the thirteen families to assemble with the NAACP . It was a problem that was very important in terms of education and race. The families got together, most of the families were black families, but there were two white families. Together they sued the Board of Education for violating the law. They believed that they were drawing these lines on purpose to keep schools segregated.

The case was called *Brinkman vs. Giligan* because alphabetically, out of all the families’ last names, Brinkman came first. It took a few years to get to the Supreme Court. First, it went to the District Court, then the State Court, and finally they made it to the Supreme Court. At that time, Ms. Brinkman was living in Washington D.C. Since she was living there, she was able to go see the case in person. She could even hear all the justices ask their questions. At the end, it was a mixed success. The justices

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said that the solution they were looking for was too broad. There already was a law about segregated schools, so they had to go to specific schools and change individually.

Throughout this event, Patti and her family were harassed numerous times. Since their last name was on the case, many black and white people harassed them because they were trying to make schools integrated. They received hate phone calls, threats, rocks were thrown through windows, eggs thrown at their house, and her mother's tulip garden was demolished. "We were harassed repeatedly," she mentioned. Patti was a Junior in high school at the time. At first she felt scared but then she felt braver and stronger. There was one time where she was beat up in high school. In her high school a lot of fights occurred because the school was integrated. She was a victim of one of these fights. She remembers her teacher coming out to help by pushing her to the wall and putting himself around her to protect her from the punching. "It didn't make me sad, it made me more determined." She felt stronger every time that she was harassed. Not only was she harassed, but so was her boyfriend.

"I had a boyfriend who was black," Patti shared. Patti Brinkman dated a black man when she was young. Whenever they were on a date, they would be harassed or threatened because people did not like to see a white girl and an African American boy together. For instance, when they would walk down the street together people would yell at them because they were holding hands. The boyfriend also felt harassed because even his family was disappointed that they were dating. He was hassled by his family saying that whites had done so many distressing things to them: "Why would he date a white girl?" There was one time where they were driving and wanted to get gas and the owner of the gasoline station was so mad that he pulled out a gun and chased them away. They were intimidated and they never went back. The next step was to now get with the job and start integrating the schools through buses.

One of the remedies to integrating the city was to start bussing. It was a plan that they thought would work. It did work a bit, but then more parents and other white people started to leave the community. The phrase *white flight* was starting to happen more than before. That is what Patti and other people started to think was happening and they felt that they needed to let people know what bussing is and what it's not. Soon, they went door to door, handing out brochures, and talking to people. Some people did not

want to listen. They would slam the door, and yell at them. All of this just because they did not want their kids to ride with other students who did not have the same skin color. "I was scared because I was talking to adults who were very mean." The bussing-idea did not work. In the end, they created a new plan: it was called magnet schools.

Having been involved in trying to desegregate Dayton public schools certainly had an impact in her life. She recalls that her parents involved her in this because they thought that it was the right thing to do. She also remembers how cool and brave she felt with her siblings because they were suing the school board. It was something that in a way gave her confidence to keep going. She never thought that she would be a part of the Civil Rights Movement. It was really helpful to learn social justice and apply what she learned to her life skills and her job.

At a young age, Patti became a student of an integrated school. Then together with her family she helped families feel equally treated by suing the school board for planning the segregation of schools. She had many challenges that helped her in her life and the way that she has lived. Now she works at Lyman Moore Middle School as a school counselor. She loves to help students in need at any time. She truly has dedicated her life to help people be treated equally.

--by Keyly M.



Dana McDaniel

Dana McDaniel was involved in an important part of the Civil Rights Movement, the integration of schools. Even though she was young at the time, this had an impact on her life. Dana's experiences were very interesting, and helped us to learn more about the Civil Rights Movement.

"I remember this one girl saying 'I would never go to that school, it's 100% black,' and I said, 'Well, you know what, if you went it wouldn't be!'"

Dana McDaniel found herself involved in the Civil Rights Movement at a very young age. She grew up in Brooklyn Heights, New York, in an all white, middle class neighborhood. The neighborhood next to hers was called Farragut, and it was all poor African Americans and Puerto Ricans. In 1965 the school in her neighborhood started to integrate, and she found herself in the middle of a difficult situation. The school tried busing to integrate, which meant that from kindergarden to 4th grade all of the Farragut kids were bused into Dana's neighborhood, and in 5th and 6th grade the Brooklyn Heights kids were bused into Farragut.

In the school that Dana went to each grade was split into two classes. The 'smart class' and the 'not as smart class'. The smart class was called the IGC class, intellectually gifted children. They determined what class you were in based on tests and how well you did the year before. Although the second one didn't apply as often because everyone, for the most part, stayed in the same class every year no matter how smart they were.

Dana said that the busing didn't work for two reasons. "The first was the way they did it." When they started to integrate Dana's school, they put all of the white kids into the 'smart class' and all of the black and Puerto Rican kids into the 'not as smart class'. "The school may have been very mixed up, but the classes weren't." The school then decided that they wanted to make the classes look mixed. Based on her early childhood memory Dana thinks that what they did was select black and Puerto Rican kids they thought were really smart and white kids they thought

were not as smart. The kids they chose were called the token kids. They took a few token black kids and put them into the 'smart class', and they took a few token white kids, and put them into the 'not as smart class', so that the classes would look like they were mixed.

Dana believes that the second reason it didn't work was that around the time the school started integrating, a new school opened up. A great deal of white parents were mad about integration, "They were boycotting, they had picket lines, they were saying we're not sending our kids to school." Dana also recalls that "They didn't actually say things like "We don't want our kids going to school with black kids," they said things like "We don't want our kids having to be bused into another neighborhood. It was like they were against the busing... But clearly it was a racist thing." Also, many of the parents in the poor white neighborhoods did awful things like throwing rocks at the school buses and keeping their kids home. Many of the adults in Dana's neighborhood put down the poor white parents and talked about how awful they were. So when the new school opened up parents saw it as a way to solve the problem. As Dana explains it, "This guy thought this was the perfect time to open a private school." The school was called St. Ann's and it was very expensive. "The director of St. Ann's... made this announcement about his wonderful new school, and he said, "My private school is for very very smart kids, you know some kids are so smart that the public schools are just not the place for them." There was a test to get in to St. Ann's, you couldn't just go. A lot of the parents started sending their kids to St. Ann's, saying that their kids were too

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smart for regular schools. “It was such a nice out for these parents,” Dana recalls. In fifth and sixth grade, when all the kids had to be bused to the black neighborhood school, many more parents sent their kids to St. Ann’s. “It was just too far to have your kid actually going into the black neighborhood.”

Dana was very shy in kindergarden. So shy in fact, that her teacher thought she was deaf. When her hearing test came back fine, the teacher decided that she must not be smart. So Dana, along with some other white kids was one of the tokens in the ‘not as smart class’. The next year the teachers decided that Dana really belonged in the smart class. Even though Dana got a chance to leave the ‘not as smart class’, the other black and Puerto Rican kids never did. The teachers never gave them the opportunity to learn enough to move into the other class. “It was really awful because this would have affected the rest of their lives.” In second grade, when Dana was in the smart class, she said that one of her best friends was black. She believes that her first grade class may have had an effect on her, and that it made her more open to being friends with black kids. She recalls that in 2nd grade her best friend was René, and René was black, “It could have just been absonant, I could have just happened to be friends with her, but it could also be that I’d had a lot of black friends in 1st grade, so there was nothing odd about having a black friend.” Dana’s experiences that year had made her more open to the people that she befriended.

Dana says that she thinks she was disturbed by racism at a very young age, but thinks that she didn’t realize it at the time. Her mother also told her that she thought she was bothered at the time. When Dana was in 1st grade she wrote a book, the book was called Mary and Joe, and it read “Joe came to Mary’s house. And he saw a sign that said “no negroes.” And then he did the same thing to her except “no whites.” But later on when they were a little happier they liked each other and played ball. And then when they started home they started crying. And then they were home and they found themselves in their bed. The End.” “My mother says she remembers me writing this little book, and that she thinks I wrote it because I was sort of aware of it, and it bothered me, something was bothering me about the whole thing. I don’t know even if I knew something was bothering me, I just thought “oh, I’ll write a book.” Dana said that she only really realized what was going on when she was in 5th and 6th grade. She was affected by the busing in 2nd grade, when she had

to leave her 1st grade friends behind, and she felt sad that she couldn’t be friends with them anymore. “I thought about them a lot, and it really did bother me because I was thinking they were fine, they weren’t stupid, and now they’re probably not gonna have the same opportunities that I have,” and “why did I get into this class just because I’m white?”

Most of the kids in Dana’s neighborhood, when it came time for middle school, went to a private school or a school in a different neighborhood. Many refused to go to the neighborhood school because it was all black. Dana decided that she and her friend were going to go to the black school that year. “I remember this one girl saying “I would never go to that school, it’s 100% black!” and I said “Well, you know what, if you went it wouldn’t be.” Their last year of elementary school they had all taken a test to try to get in to a school called Hunter. Hunter was a middle school and a high school, and it was extremely hard to get into. Dana said that she thinks only one kid got in from her class. She didn’t get in to Hunter and she was alright with that because she was all set to go to the black school. But around May she got a letter from Hunter and it said that they had a waiting list that they hadn’t told her about and she was accepted. Dana



decided that she was going to go to Hunter instead because Hunter was a really great school and a once in a lifetime opportunity. “There was no way I was going to go to this public school. It wasn’t because it was black, it was because it was Hunter versus anything else.”

Dana’s experiences in school had an impact on her life, and although she was young, she played a role in an historical event—the integration of schools. Without the willingness of young people to integrate, it most likely would never have happened.

--by Isabel T.

Evelyn Scribner

Evelyn Scribner has lived in many places in the United States. Her time in Memphis showed her some of the discrimination that African Americans faced in the South. She is determined not to judge entire groups of people, but get to know the individual.

“I was always looking at the individual.”

Evelyn Scribner’s life has been exciting and full. She lived part of her life in Memphis, Tennessee during the years before the Civil Rights Act. To her, Memphis was not the center of racial discrimination, but it was certainly there. For example, the buses were set up the way they were in the South. There were front row seats for the “white” section on the bus. The African-Americans had to sit in the back and move if a white person wanted the seat. The theaters were segregated in the same way as the buses. Whites were in the front and blacks had to sit up in the balcony section. They got popcorn thrown at them during the movie. Another thing that wasn’t fair was that while the white people were sitting comfortably in their chairs, the African-Americans had to watch the movie from the high balcony. So, indeed Evelyn saw some segregation in her time in Memphis.

While in Memphis, Evelyn also did volunteer work with African-American children in a black neighborhood. The program was called the Bethlehem Project and it was run by two white women; Evelyn traveled to the neighborhood once a week. She would take the bus into the neighborhood and she would be one of the few white people on the bus. The students she worked with were ages nine to twelve. She really enjoyed working with the children because she was helping them. Evelyn didn’t think it was a big deal because she wasn’t brought up to be a racist. One day, the students were doing a manger scene with papier mâché and the

children started painting all of the faces brown. Ms. Scribner was surprised actually but didn’t say anything, because she thought it was good for them to do that. As usual, she helped those children out with art and she really enjoyed working with them.

One important member of Evelyn’s family was her uncle, J. Weston Walch (of J. Weston Walch Publishing). He also worked at Portland High School as a teacher, and ran the Portland High School debate team. His top debater at the time was a black girl. They were so good that they were debating college teams and winning, and these students were only in high school. Evelyn doesn’t remember that they withstood any discrimination.

Evelyn spent some time working at a mattress factory in Memphis. One way that the mattress factory showed discrimination was that most of the African-Americans worked in the factory section while most of the whites worked in the office. Although black men worked in the factory, instead of a white foreman to head the department, there was an African-American. The owners, who were of Jewish descent, and knew what discrimination was like, appointed an African-American as foreman. They also paid everyone who worked a higher than average wage. So even though there was some segregation at the factory, there was some progress.

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Like Memphis, there was racial discrimination in Portland, although it wasn't as obvious. Her uncle helped a guy named Cliff Richardson who was African-American. Mr. Richardson wanted to join a men's club in Portland. They refused to allow his membership because he was African-American. So Evelyn's uncle resigned from the Portland Club and the Westbrook Club accepted them both.

Even though Evelyn lived in Maine for part of her life, she had a lot of knowledge about what was going on in the South. She got the news of the assassinations of JFK and MLK, the March on Washington, the Ku Klux Klan, and other events through listening to the radio. She also remembers being horrified, because she and her family watched a lot of news back then, and even before television, her father always had the radio going. They also read the newspapers regularly and they were really caught up with the news articles.

As you can see, Evelyn's life has been interesting and full. She witnessed discrimination but also progress in this area. As she told us, she never likes to judge a group of people, she always wants to get to know the individual. Thank you Evelyn for sharing your story.



--by Berta L.

Thomas Kennedy Edwards

Thomas Kennedy Edwards is an experienced educator who believes in civil rights. He began his educational career at Yale and continued it in Harlem teaching African American students. *Upward Bound* is a program he worked in to help underprivileged students gain access to higher education. He has dedicated his entire life to using education as a way to bring equality to all.

“When a terrible thing happens in somebody’s life, a good way to react is to do something-to be helpful.”

When Tom K. Edwards was young, he lived in a comfortable area in Wellesley, Massachusetts. The residents that lived in Wellesley were generally upper middle class white citizens. When he was young, he was like many of us, not knowing about the outside world. He was a great student, a great athlete, and his success led him to Yale University.

Several years later, in 1957, he became Dean Edwards at Yale University. As the Dean of students, he was the chief guidance counselor. On April 4, 1968, the Yale Community released the tragic news that Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

Many cities broke out into riots after Dr. King’s assassination. At Yale University, there were marches. Yale is located in New Haven, Connecticut, a small city with many African-American citizens. They broke into stores, angry about what happened to Dr. King. On the Yale campus there were students marching, singing, and yelling, as well.

At this time in history, Dr. Edwards knew helping others was important. He recalled, “When a terrible thing happens in somebody’s life, a good way to react is to do something-to be helpful.”

Tom Edwards was working in a black community in Harlem after he was the Dean at Yale. When Dr. Edwards was working, he used to go to the students’ neighborhood and talk to the black students. But that was not all. Tom Edwards worked in a high school in Harlem for five years. Every day when he woke up, he wanted to go to school to teach those kids, and the students wanted to learn. He discovered that the students were always happy, and they showed up every day to learn history and other subjects. When the school year was out, Dr. Edwards went to work with the students in the summer. Tom Edwards was teaching the kids in the summer to help them, so when school started again they would know a lot. He also worked in the *Boys and Girls Club* where he taught students year-round.

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Tom Edwards was a part of an education program to encourage kids to go to college and help them prepare. This program is called *Upward Bound*. This program worked with high school students whose parents had not gone to college and students of poverty. Many of the students he helped or worked with were African-American. The places that he went to work were churches, schools, and community centers. The Upward Bound organization is alive and well and can be found at U.S.M. in Portland, Maine, today.

Tom Edwards became the superintendent of Portland Public Schools in 1990. Tom Edwards also worked with Mr. McCarthy, our principal, during that time. During his work as a superintendent many of the ELL (English Language Learners) came to a Portland Public Schools for the first time.

The power of the pen was Dr. Edward's main idea for all students especially African-Americans in the educational system. Edwards always says to his students and his African-American friends that, "If you see something wrong, you should feel empowered to speak up about it, write about it, and do something about it." Mr. Edwards believes that when you write about and advocate for something, people will see what you believe.

Tom K. Edwards spent his whole life in education. This included working at Yale University, the Harlem Boys and Girls Club, and as the Superintendent of Portland Public Schools. His dedication became even stronger after Dr. King's assassination. Today this devotion is seen in how he

helps train teachers at the University of Southern Maine to become the best teachers they can be. Dr. Edward's story taught me that one person can make a difference in many lives. It doesn't have to be a big story, it can be a small act of courage.

--by Stephen O.



June McKenzie

June McKenzie has led a wonderful life and lives each day to the fullest. She has faced discrimination at almost all of the junctures in her life. Over the years she has served in every position in the Portland NAACP except president. The work she did has helped the community of Portland.

“It’s just like holding hands. It takes all of us to make a world.”

As a seventh generation Mainer, June McKenzie refers to herself as “just a Portland girl.” In her young life she felt out of place in schools that had more whites than blacks. When she went to Portland High, she was the only black girl in her class of about 400 students. The fact that there were fewer blacks in the North is why discrimination was more subtle in Maine.

June Mackenzie's family is very interesting. Her father was a truck driver even though he graduated from Tuskegee College. He also taught her many things such as, “Try hard because you have to do twice as good as anyone else to get recognition.” Her great grandfather was involved with the Abyssinian Meeting House. His obituary said that every dollar someone donated to the Abyssinian he would match. June says her kids are very successful and that would have not happened if the Civil Rights Movement had not been successful.

As she got older, June became more aware of discrimination in her community. The Portland NAACP held meetings at her church, which inspired her to do something to help. Over the years, June has held every position in the Portland NAACP, except for President. One of the things they focused on through the years was voter registration. They would make sure that

blacks registered to vote in order to have some say in legislation. Another thing laboriously worked on was fair housing. Frequently, landlords would not rent to blacks for fear of their other tenants moving away. They also educated people on how to get involved with non-violent protests.

When June Mckenzie's house burned down in the 1960s, it was a rude awakening to the large amount of housing discrimination in Portland. She spent four days on a friend’s floor because nobody would rent to her while her house was being fixed. When blacks called on the phone to ask to rent an apartment the answer was yes, but when they went to meet the landlord face to face they were turned down. Even the powerful Gerald E. Talbot could not find a house. Gerald E. Talbot trudged the streets of Portland to be the first African American elected to the Maine Legislature, where he helped pass the Fair Housing Act, which helped to end housing discrimination.

Another large problem that the NAACP faced was job discrimination. Sometimes blacks with good grades would get worse jobs than whites with poor grades. One of the things that shocked June most was the fact that Maine did not allow any black teachers. Her first working experience was working an

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elevator. June's next job was at a department store. Finally, she worked at People's Bank for fourteen years before she retired.

The NAACP in Portland would participate in marches out of state because the NAACP in Portland was small. Members would often go to Lynn, Massachusetts, for marches because the New England branch was based there. One of the most famous marches, the March on Washington, is remembered very well by June. She could not go because her twins were only eleven months old. One of the marches in Lynn that she remembers was scary for her because their large bus drove across a very thin and tall bridge.

June McKenzie and another woman from her church went to local PTA meetings and would tell everyone that the black parents would be coming next week. June would go back to church and tell everyone that they had to go to the PTA meeting because she said, "If you don't care, they don't care." She also said that going to the PTA meetings was the easiest thing to do to help the Civil Rights Movement.

June became involved with Portland's Freedom Trail trail and the Abyssinian Meeting House. One of June's relatives was involved with the underground railroad. Slaves would come into the harbor hidden in ships. They would put them in hacks (a taxi) and bring them to secondhand clothing stores that the smugglers owned, and then bring them to the "Abby." They had to be very secretive because there was a law that said runaway slaves could be brought back to the South even if they were in the North. The Abyssinian Meeting House is being restored today and June is on the committee.

The assassinations of important people during the Civil Rights Movement frustrated June. She says that after the assassinations of the Kennedys, she began to think that the only way America could deal with the people they don't like was to kill them. When JFK was assassinated, she said it was frightening because

she was not sure the Civil Rights Act would pass because she had never heard of Lyndon Johnson. She also said she was completely horrified when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated.

One of the major things June McKenzie thinks about is the progress and change that she has witnessed in her lifetime. One example is that she used to know all the African Americans that lived in Portland. Now she doesn't even know close to half living in Portland. When her cousin was nominated for the EAL award, she couldn't receive it because the ceremony was being held in an all white facility. Margaret Chase Smith interceded so her cousin could go and receive the award. Nowadays we have one thing June thought she would never see, a black president. She is delighted that we have come so far. Thank you June, for sharing your wonderful story.

--by Eben B.



Stephen Halpert

As Stephen Halpert walked in to King Middle School, we knew he had a great story to tell us about the Civil Rights Movement.

“If you left the base and went downtown you were in segregated community.”

Stephen Halpert grew up here in Maine. He is currently a teacher at Maine College of Art. Stephen Halpert was young during the Civil Rights Movement, but he still remembers things about the housing discrimination that was happening at that time. He said that there was mostly housing discrimination going on in the ‘60s in Portland.

The military experience that Stephen Halpert had was really shocking. Mr. Halpert went to this military camp and was disturbed to see how African Americans were treated disrespectfully. “All these black guys that you worked with every day... But if you left the base and went downtown you are in a segregated community.”

Stephen Halpert played a role in the NAACP in the 1960s. There were several branches of the NAACP in Maine, and one of those was in Portland. At first he was not even thinking about becoming president of the NAACP, but he was persuaded by some black senior members of the organization.

Housing discrimination was one thing that was involved with the Civil Rights Movement. Stephen told this story

about an African American man who wanted to rent an apartment in Portland. The landlord said, “No, this is rented.” The African American man, Gerald E. Talbot, kept looking to see if anyone moved in but no one did. One day Stephen said to that landlord, “I would like to rent the apartment.” The landlord told him that he would rent it to Stephen- he is white. So then Stephen wanted to take this case of housing discrimination to the court.

The case was brought to the court by the state of Maine and at first the landlord won because the court was going along with segregation. Stephen Halpert won the second trial with Gerald E. Talbot. So from then on, there shouldn't have been too much discrimination for renting a house, but there still was some.

One time when Stephen Halpert was traveling in the South he had an interesting experience. He was about to cross the street when an African American man stepped aside to let Stephen cross first. According to Mr. Halpert, the man was “respecting his color” and not his age. Stephen felt

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uncomfortable with this situation and hoped that someday it would change.

Changing the racial climate in Portland was one of the biggest things Stephen worked on in the 1960s. The black population was relatively small at the time, and still is today. Even so, Stephen Halpert really worked on the climate in Portland and tried to work to make things equal. All in all, Stephen has brought a lot of change throughout the years he has been in the NAACP. He didn't remember all of his moments, there were so many. Stephen is still a member of the NAACP today and continues to do important work.

--by Mano A.

