

Read the article and answer the questions that follow in the spaces provided.



The Civil Rights Movement included a series of significant events that sought equality for African Americans in the 20th Century. However, many people had different feelings and opinions on the Civil Rights Movement at the time and the ultimate equality for African Americans. Some people supported the push for equality rights for African Americans while others opposed change and wanted to maintain the tradition of segregation. One such event was the 1960 “sit-in” of a Woolworth’s lunch counter by four African American students.

Though the peaceful protest of a sit-in had existed for many years before the four African American students entered the Woolworth’s on February 1, 1960, their actions sparked a movement across the United States that had a lasting impact on the Civil Rights Movement.

The Woolworth’s Store, located in downtown Greensboro, North Carolina, allowed black customers to purchase food, but only for takeout – they were not allowed to sit at the counter, which was reserved for white customers. On the first morning of the protest, after days of careful planning and discussion, Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, Jibreel Khazan and David Richmond ordered their food at the counter and, instead of leaving with it, they instead chose to remain seated at the counter until the store eventually closed because the workers refused to serve them. By the next day, African American students from other local colleges had joined the protest as well and stayed as the servers continued to refuse service, under store policy. By the fourth day, more than 300 people were taking part in the peaceful protest. At one point sixty-three students occupied the seats at the white lunch counter. Local workers joined them to show their support. Angry whites began to gather behind the seats at the counter to pester the young activists.



Within a week after the Woolworth’s protests began, the idea had spread to other communities, including Winston-Salem, Richmond and Nashville. Despite continued heckling and protest from white customers, the protesters worked in shifts to ensure some were seated at the counter in protest at all times.

As a result of the protest, Woolworth’s sales dropped by a third and the store’s owners made the decision to abandon segregation policies and officially integrate the Greensboro Woolworth’s lunch counter on July 25, 1960, asking the black servers to be the first African American at the counter. The next day, the entire chain was desegregated.

Because the local media covered every day of the Woolworth’s sit-ins from when it began, the impact of the protest became widespread, as the growth and effect of the demonstration was proclaimed in the press. Besides leading to similar protests in other

states across the country, the sit-ins elicited a public statement from then President Eisenhower, who said he supported the students and expressed sympathy for those fighting for their human and civil rights as “guaranteed by the Constitution”.

Before the events of the Greensboro sit-ins of 1960, much of the southern United States was largely segregated, meaning that different races were kept separated. African Americans were not seen as equals and were denied certain services in society. For example, schools were segregated, and whites and African Americans were kept separate. As well, African Americans were not allowed access to the same water fountains or public washrooms as white people and were also denied certain services at diners and theaters. The actions of the Greensboro Four and the rest of the people who participated in the sit-in ultimately sparked a change that helped advance the overall Civil Rights Movement.



1. Before the sit-ins occurred, did Woolworths' follow the policy of "separate, but equal" at their lunch counter? Explain
2. What was the reaction of the white customers to the protestors' sit-ins?
3. When was the first Woolworths' lunch counter sit-in? When did the sit-ins end?
4. What was President Eisenhower's view of the sit-ins?
5. Besides desegregating lunch counters at Woolworths, how else were sit-ins successful?