

CHAPTER 2

MASS MOVEMENTS: CONFRONTING THE ESTABLISHED ORDER

One Saturday afternoon in 1959, Clark Schooler was sent up to the Monarch, one of the first regional shopping centers constructed in the Baltimore area. The Monarch was located in northwest Baltimore. It was immediately surrounded by all-white neighborhoods. Just a few blocks away, however, was the outer edge of the largest black community in Baltimore, a black community that was constantly growing larger and progressively expanding into nearby white areas.

In Baltimore at that time, there was a chain of small restaurants called the White Dinner Plate. These restaurants all had tables and chairs, booths, and a long counter with stools. The food was nourishing, occasionally tasted good, and was quite modestly priced. A wide range of social classes ate at the White Dinner Plate. The restaurants were conveniently located in a variety of places around town, and everyone from a bum to a businessman could get a decent meal there in a relatively short time.

There was a brand-new White Dinner Plate in the brand-new Monarch Shopping Center. Similar to all the other White Dinner Plates, it had a white tile floor, white-painted walls, white tables, white counter tops, and white china. The overall color theme was pure white. And something else was all-white. In the traditional manner of restaurants and snack bars in the American South, the White Dinner Plate did not serve black people.

Baltimore and Maryland, of course, were not technically in the South. During the Civil War, Maryland had been a Border State, a state immediately adjacent to the South but which had remained in the Union during the Civil War. In the years following the Civil War, however, Maryland had chosen to follow the Southern example, rather than the Northern example, and segregate the two races. That meant that most restaurants, snack bars,

hotels, motels, amusement parks, and swimming pools were open only to whites and were strictly off-limits to blacks.

Clark Schooler's boss at the *Baltimore Banner* was a grizzled city editor named Terry Songman. Middle-aged and slightly overweight, Terry Songman had the gruff but sympathetic manner that cub reporters expect from a city editor.

"Get right up to the Monarch," Terry Songman said to Clark Schooler, a note of urgency in his voice. "A group of protesters is sitting at the tables and demanding to be served. The White Dinner Plate won't serve them, and the protesters are refusing to leave until they do get served. Apparently some of the protesters are black, but others are white."

At that point, Terry Songman apparently detected Clark Schooler's enthusiasm for getting to cover a story about black people and write it up for the *Banner*. Terry Songman smiled at Clark, and then laid it on the line.

"Look, kid," the city editor explained, "all we want you to do is keep an eye on things. We're not going to do a story unless there is a riot, or something like a riot. Right now its pretty quiet, but we need to have someone up there if it doesn't stay quiet."

Clark Schooler jumped in his car, a 1951 Ford Victoria hardtop convertible, and drove out to northwest Baltimore. After parking his car in the shopping center parking lot, he walked into the center and had no trouble finding the White Dinner Plate. There was a small group of pickets, about six in number, walking up and down in front of the restaurant, quietly holding signs calling for racial integration of the White Dinner Plate. The pickets were nicely racially integrated. About half of them were white and the others were black. The pickets were making no effort to prevent anyone from entering the White Dinner Plate to get a meal.

Inside the White Dinner Plate, eight protesters were sitting down trying to get served some food. Four were sitting in a booth, and four others were sitting at a table. These protesters also were racially integrated. Some were white and some were black. A number of them, confident they would not be served, had brought along books or magazines and were quietly getting a little reading done.

The management at the White Dinner Plate was simply ignoring the protesters, not serving them anything to eat but, at the same time, not making any attempt to physically force them to leave. A small number of white persons, many fewer than you would expect on a busy Saturday afternoon, were sitting elsewhere in the restaurant eating their food. These white patrons appeared to be going out of their way not to notice the racial protest taking place near them in the restaurant.

A white Baltimore City policeman, in uniform and armed with his

police revolver, was standing just outside the restaurant door. Similar to Clark Schooler, the policeman had been sent to simply keep an eye on things. He was bored. And he was only too happy to answer Clark's questions about what was going on.

"This is the third Saturday in a row that we've had this," the policeman said. "The protesters come promptly at 10 A.M. and quit about 4 P.M. Because this is a shopping center, the restaurant mainly does a lunch and afternoon snack business, so the demonstration is designed to drive away patrons at the busiest time of the day."

"They're quiet, though," the policeman said of the protesters. "The picketers are not trying to talk to or interfere with any of the people trying to get into the White Dinner Plate. The protesters are handing out a leaflet, but only to people who come up and ask for one."

"But it's working," the policeman concluded. "A lot of people are walking up as if they are headed to the White Dinner Plate to get something to eat. Then they see the pickets and their signs, and the people just stop dead in their tracks. They look things over for a while, wondering what to do, and then most of them walk away. I guess they figure they'll get a meal someplace else today. Who needs the hassle?"

One of the picketers outside the White Dinner Plate took notice of Clark Schooler talking to the policeman and writing down what the officer had to say. The picketer was a young woman. She was white. In terms of age, she looked as though she was in her mid-twenties. She was nicely dressed in a wool sweater and a Scotch plaid skirt. When Clark Schooler had finished talking to the policeman and was just standing there thinking of what, if anything, to do next, the woman approached him. She asked Clark politely: "Are you a newspaper reporter?"

Clark answered her inquiry in a somewhat smart-alecky tone. "How could you tell?"

"Well, it's Saturday," the woman said. "Most men don't go shopping on Saturday dressed in a suit coat and necktie. Also, most men don't talk to a police officer and take notes on what the officer has to say."

The woman's response had been friendly enough but very rational and businesslike. Clark sensed that she was very serious about what she was doing that day and was in no mood to fool around.

"I'm surprised to see a reporter here," she said. "The newspapers haven't bothered to cover any of our other demonstrations and protests. Would you mind telling me who you work for?"

"You should have said 'whom you work for,'" Clark said spontaneously. Then he added, "I work for the *Banner*."

"Actually," the young woman shot back, "I should have said 'for whom

you work.” Clark and the young woman had successfully demonstrated to each other that both of them knew something about how to speak and write the English language.

Clark quickly returned to his journalistic duties. He asked: “Are you the person in charge of this demonstration?”

“Yes, I am,” the young woman replied. “I represent CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality. This is an official CORE demonstration.”

Apparently the young woman wanted to be interviewed by the press, because she was willingly answering Clark’s questions with some measure of enthusiasm. Clark asked: “What are you trying to accomplish here?”

“We are trying to racially integrate the White Dinner Plate at the Monarch Shopping Center,” the young woman replied. “CORE’s goal is to integrate restaurants, snack bars, lunch counters, and public rest rooms throughout the North, the Border States, and the upper South.”

Clark interrupted her oration on the rationale for CORE with a quick question. “Why just the upper South? Why doesn’t CORE try to integrate the entire South?”

“We know better than to attempt that,” the young woman replied. The tone of her voice suggested she considered Clark naive for asking such a question. “We know better than to go into the Deep South. Places such as Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi are just too dangerous. Furthermore, our nonviolent techniques are not likely to be successful in ‘The Heart of Dixie.’” She said “The Heart of Dixie” with just a touch of malevolent sarcasm.

“So you’re doing the easy part first,” said Clark Schooler, “and I guess Baltimore and Maryland get classified as the easy part.”

“There is an invisible and indeterminate line across the United States,” the young woman responded. “Above that line, blacks can be served alongside whites in public places. Below, that line, everything is racially segregated. It’s called the Jim Crow line. CORE is dedicated to pushing the Jim Crow line southward as quickly as reasonably possible, and right now the Jim Crow line sits just a little bit north of the city of Baltimore.”

There was a pause in the conversation. Clark Schooler looked away from the young woman and at the pickets slowly walking up and down in front of the White Dinner Plate. It was getting to be later in the day, and the number of people shopping at the Monarch was beginning to diminish. There was a strange peacefulness to the scene, not at all what one would expect during a civil rights demonstration. Clark looked back at the young woman.

“Right now,” he said, “there isn’t much of a story here. What would happen if the manager of the White Dinner Plate asked the police to force-

fully remove your CORE demonstrators? What if your people who are occupying the booth and the table inside the restaurant were told by the police to get out? What would happen then?"

"Our people are highly trained and know just what to do," the young woman replied. "If there's violence, they know how to curl up their bodies and put their arms around their heads so as to reduce the effects of a physical attack. No matter how hard someone might hit them, our demonstrators are taught to never strike back. CORE is nonviolent. But at the same time we are very determined."

"We try to be smart about it," the young woman went on. "Notice that only half of our demonstrators are breaking the law by occupying a booth or table inside the restaurant. If they get arrested, the people outside the restaurant, the picketers, can arrange for a lawyer to come and bail them out of jail. If the people inside are beaten up by segregationist toughs, the people outside can see to their medical needs and get them to the hospital if necessary."

While the young woman was talking, Clark Schooler caught himself looking at her left hand to see if she was wearing an engagement ring or a wedding ring. When she talked, the young woman's face became very animated. Clark tended to be drawn to talkative and animated young women.

Clark saw no engagement or wedding ring on her left hand, but he also suddenly remembered that he was working for the *Banner* that afternoon and was not at a social event. He quickly tried to assume a very professional and disinterested tone while talking with the young woman.

"Speaking about breaking the law," Clark said, "why do you think you have the right to break the trespass laws of the great state of Maryland? The owner of the White Dinner Plate has the right in this state to refuse service to anyone, for any reason, and he could get the police in here to enforce that law if he wanted to."

Clark had no difficulty making the private property argument for defending racial segregation in restaurants and other privately-owned properties that the general public patronizes. He had heard the argument made many times in his graduate school American Politics seminar by Beau Stevens of Albany, Georgia.

With this question, the young woman's tone and manner changed completely. She softened her stance, and lowered her voice, and looked Clark straight in the eye as she answered him.

"It's wrong," she said, "to put 'Keep Out' signs on restaurants and snack bars and have those signs apply to only one group of people. It's so demeaning to black people to have large parts of their world marked off as places where, because of their skin color, they cannot go. Have you ever

thought about how long the list of segregated places is in Baltimore? Blacks can't go to restaurants, swimming pools, skating rinks, country clubs, movie theaters. They can't go to Ford's Theater in downtown Baltimore to see a Broadway play. They can't go to the Lyric Theater to hear the Baltimore Symphony. They are reminded of their second-class status everywhere they look and everywhere they go. It's unfair. It's unkind. It's immoral."

Listening to this impassioned plea, Clark Schooler was struck by the depth of the young woman's commitment to the cause of black civil rights. He also was aware of something else. When available young men and available young women talk and socialize with each other, a sense of elation and a great feeling of well-being and happiness can build within them. Clark was suddenly getting that feeling, on his part at least, with this young woman. As he and she had talked that afternoon, their conversation had accelerated and become animated in a manner typical of a man and woman who like each other.

But any thoughts Clark Schooler might have had of asking her for a date were quickly ruled out. Clark was, after all, giving the young woman a raw deal. He had been talking to her for almost an hour, pretending the whole time that he would be writing a story for the Sunday paper about CORE and the civil rights protest at the Monarch.

Since there had been no violence, not even harsh words, there was no way that even one word of the event would get in the next day's *Banner*. Even if Clark wrote such a story, his city editors would make sure it never saw the light of day.

The next morning, when the young woman searched the pages of the *Banner* for the story, she would find nothing. She and her white and black CORE compatriots were going to receive one more rejection. There would be no coverage in the Baltimore newspapers.

The sun was getting low in the western sky when Clark said goodbye to the young woman and walked away from the CORE demonstration at the Monarch Shopping Center. He turned back one time and saw that she was watching him leave. She did not avert her eyes or try to look away. It seemed to Clark she had a disappointed look to her. He could not tell what her look meant. Was she disappointed because perhaps she had failed to convince him of the importance of her civil rights demonstration and her political cause? Or was she disappointed because he had not asked her out?

Nothing ever came of the CORE demonstration at the Monarch. The manager of the White Dinner Plate shrewdly let the demonstrators continue to sit in his restaurant without having them arrested. There was no violence, and therefore no newspaper or television coverage. Clark never heard for certain, but he assumed the Congress of Racial Equality eventually gave up

on that particular protest and quietly accepted, at least temporarily, defeat. This much was for certain. The White Dinner Plate stayed all-white.

Shortly thereafter, on a hot summer's evening, Clark Schooler was once again covering the police districts, this night on the south and west side of Baltimore city. By this time, Clark felt something of a kinship with the black community in Baltimore. For almost two years, he had driven and walked through their neighborhoods, searching out the facts on a variety of crime stories. He had seen black families sitting on the white marble steps of their brick row houses, enjoying a street life unknown to white families living in large, free-standing homes in the Baltimore suburbs.

This night was a particularly hot one, and it seemed that almost every black family in Baltimore had ventured out on to the sidewalks and into the streets to escape the blast furnace effect of staying indoors. Many adults had set up folding lawn chairs on the sidewalk and were sitting around chatting. Some children were playing baseball in the middle of the street, while other children were playing hopscotch and jumping rope on the sidewalk. The entire scene was lively yet peaceful. By forcing so many people out onto the sidewalk and street, the hot weather had given a genuine community feel to the black neighborhoods of Baltimore.

Three black girls, from ten to twelve years of age, were jumping rope on the sidewalk. Two of them were sisters. The third girl was one of their cousins. Two of the girls were holding and turning the rope while the third girl was jumping in the center.

An automobile, driven by a man who had imbibed much too much alcohol, came rolling down the street. He either lost control of the car, or passed out at the steering wheel, because the car veered away from the center of the street, climbed the curb, and roared across the sidewalk where the three girls were jumping rope.

As fate would have it, the car completely missed one of the girls who was turning the jump rope. It ran head-on into the girl jumping rope, however, and then, with the girl pinned to the front of the car, smashed into the wall of a house. In a split second, the car bounced off the wall and struck a glancing blow to the girl holding the other end of the rope. The automobile came to an abrupt stop when it slid sideways into a lamp post.

Both of the girls hit by the car were badly injured. The one who had been jumping rope was unconscious but breathing. The one who had been turning the rope and took a glancing blow from the car was covered with blood and screaming and crying loudly. Ambulances were called, arrived on the scene quickly, and both girls were rushed to the emergency room at West Baltimore General Hospital.

Clark Schooler arrived at West Baltimore General shortly after the

ambulance did. As he walked through the waiting room outside the emergency room, he noticed that it was filled with about 20 African-Americans of all ages and all sexes. Clark quickly divined that these were the parents, other close relatives, and neighbors of the two injured girls. Exercising his prerogative as a newspaper reporter, Clark negotiated his way through the crowd of people and then walked through the door that led from the waiting room into the emergency room.

Clark took one step into the emergency room, stopped, and surveyed the scene. One of the black girls was lying on an operating table. She was receiving what looked like the best attention medical science could provide. One doctor and three nurses worked quickly, quietly, and efficiently to save her life. She was receiving a blood transfusion, and a variety of other tubes, wires, and machines were hooked up to her body. The doctor and the nurses spoke politely but urgently to each other, reporting on her condition and giving and getting instructions.

Clark had barely stepped into the emergency room when a high-ranking Baltimore City police officer, a lieutenant, walked past him and entered the waiting room. The people in the waiting room, seeing his uniform and knowing his position of authority, crowded up to him and asked him how the two girls were doing.

The police lieutenant raised his hands in the air. The motion both warned the people to stay back and, at the same time, quieted them down. "The doctors and nurses are doing all they can for the girls," the police lieutenant said. Then he looked at the crowd of people and added, "I need a member of Roberta Monroe's family, but not one of her parents, to come back here for a minute."

A black woman, about 40-years-old, stepped forward and told the police lieutenant that she was Roberta Monroe's aunt. The woman was nicely attired, in a dress, stockings, and high-heel shoes. Clark Schooler speculated that she had been getting dressed for a dinner, a dance, or a party when she had received word that her niece had been injured in an auto crash.

The police lieutenant took the woman into the emergency room. Before he could say anything, the woman said, in a concerned voice, "I hope Roberta's going to be all right." The police lieutenant turned, looked at her, and said matter-of-factly, "I am sorry to be the person to tell you this, but we think she is dead."

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" said the woman, bursting into tears. The police lieutenant gave her some time to absorb this gruesome news and get herself together. Then the police lieutenant looked her in the eyes and said: "I called you back here to identify Roberta's body. You can understand that I didn't want her parents to have to do that."

The police lieutenant then stepped up to a large green curtain hanging on a long curtain rod. He quickly pulled the curtain aside, revealing the dead body of a young black girl lying on an operating table. Her eyes were still open. Her arms and legs were somewhat askew on the table top. Apparently an emergency room doctor had pronounced her dead and then rushed off to see what could be done to help the other little girl, who was still alive. No effort had been made to arrange the dead girl's arms and legs in an orderly manner.

"It's her! It's her! It's Roberta," the woman gasped. The tears started all over again as she looked away from the painful sight.

"She died in the ambulance on the way down here," the police lieutenant said. He then added somewhat brusquely, "Now, I want you to look at her one more time and be absolutely certain it is Roberta Monroe."

"I don't need to look," the woman blurted out. "It's Roberta!" But the woman responded to the police lieutenant's request, looked one more time, and then nodded her head up-and-down. The woman said softly, almost inaudibly, but with finality, "It's her."

The police lieutenant once again looked the woman in the eyes. "Now," he said, "you have to go back to the waiting room and tell Roberta's parents that she's dead."

"I can't do that," the woman said.

"You have to," the police lieutenant replied. "It will be better for them if they get the news from you rather than from me."

The woman accepted this particular bit of logic. She walked back with the police lieutenant to the waiting room. As she came through the door, the entire roomful of people turned in her direction. A voice cried out: "How's my Roberta?" It was obviously the voice of the girl's mother. "Oh, Annie," said the woman, again breaking into tears, "Roberta's dead."

The waiting room suddenly became a place of furious action and powerful emotion. Men and women stamped the floor in agony as they absorbed the news that the little girl had been killed in the accident. Some of them pounded the walls with their fists. There was a chorus of anguished words. "No!" "No!" "Oh, Lordy!" "Why, Lord?"

Clark Schooler had stood and watched the entire incident from beginning to end. It had not affected him emotionally at all until the African-American aunt had returned to the waiting room and told the African-American parents, relatives, and neighbors that the little girl had been killed. The room had exploded with the physical manifestations of pain and despair. There was foot stamping, fist pounding, and cries of anguish filled the air. As this was happening, certain ideas penetrated Clark's consciousness in a very powerful fashion.

Black people have and can freely express emotions.

Black people love their children and experience great depths of pain when their children die young.

Clark Schooler felt suddenly ignorant, unaware, and insensitive. Of course part of him, the intellectual part, the part that had gone to college in New England and become a racial integrationist, knew that black people had the same emotions as white people. But Clark had just been put in touch with another part of himself, a part he had not known about, that emotionally put black people in a completely different category than white people.

Simultaneously with these thoughts, Clark Schooler could feel himself becoming furious with himself. He realized that he had bought the myth. Raised in a racially segregated city, the product of a racially segregated school system, Clark had unintentionally absorbed the idea, pushed relentlessly by segregationists, that black people were different from white people. It was the stereotype that black people were happy-go-lucky, that black people did not have a care in the world, and that black people did not think or feel the same things that white people thought and felt.

Clark Schooler recognized, in this moment of emotional awakening, that he was consciously and intellectually a racial integrationist. Subconsciously and emotionally, however, he had just faced the reality that there still were elements of racial segregation in his outlook on life and his view of the world. At least, those elements were there up until this particular evening of his life.

Clark realized he had achieved racial integration of the mind. He still had some work to do on racial integration of the heart.

The other little girl was badly injured in the car accident, but she did not die. Clark Schooler telephoned the story to the *Banner*. As ever, Clark was asked by an assistant city editor whether the story was white or black. Clark said the three little girls were black, but he got up the courage to point out to his editor that two little girls being hit by a runaway automobile while jumping rope on the sidewalk was a very newsworthy story.

The assistant city editor put the story on the first local page of the next day's newspaper. A photographer was sent to West Baltimore General Hospital the next morning to get a photograph of the injured black girl in her hospital bed. Clark secured a photo of the little girl who was killed, Roberta, from her parents. The newspaper also printed that photograph.

To Clark Schooler's knowledge, it was the first time in history that photographs of African-Americans, except for wanted criminals, were printed in the *Baltimore Banner*.

Clark never found out why the *Banner* suddenly changed policy and began running news photographs of black persons who were not criminals.

Perhaps his city editors, racial segregationists though they might be, detected the changes in race relations that were in the wind in the late 1950s. Or perhaps it was just the high news value of little girls jumping rope and being killed and injured by a careening automobile.

The outright refusal of Southern and Border State newspapers and television stations to cover black people, except as criminals, was known as the Cotton Curtain. Suddenly, in the summer of 1959, the Cotton Curtain lifted in the city of Baltimore. The *Baltimore Beacon* and Baltimore's local television stations followed the *Banner* in giving appropriate coverage to major non-crime news events in Baltimore's African-American community.

Clark Schooler realized that a change in public opinion had helped to inspire newspaper and television news editors in Baltimore to start reporting news about black people. Out of this change, Clark Schooler developed his Seeing-Eye Dog Theory of United States Journalism.

"The news reporter," Clark would tell anyone willing to listen, "responds to the public and its wishes as well as to his or her own judgement about the news value of a story. The public is like a blind man, needing the help of a seeing-eye dog to get him where he wants to go. The press is the seeing-eye dog. Just as the seeing-eye dog gets its orders from the blind man, the press gets its orders from the public. The dog then decides what the blind man needs to know, and in the same way the press decides what the public needs to know."

"Many things happen as the blind man and the seeing-eye dog go down the street," Clark liked to say. "An automobile parks at the curb. A hot dog vendor and his hot dog wagon roll by. The dog sees these things. But the dog does not communicate these things to the blind man unless these things get in the way of the blind man and the dog getting to the blind man's chosen destination. In short, the seeing-eye dog chooses for the blind man what the blind man needs to know to get where the blind man wants to go."

"And so it is with the journalist," Clark would continue. "The public tells the press how it wants to be informed, to be entertained, to be touched emotionally, but the public leaves the decision as to exactly what the public reads in the newspaper or sees on television to the individual members of the press."

"The journalist picks and chooses information for the public," Clark would conclude, "exactly the way a seeing-eye dog picks and chooses information for the blind man, but never forget that it is the blind man, and not the dog, who makes the overall decision as to where the two of them are going to go."

On February 1, 1960, four black college students decided to do something about racial segregation in the restaurants and snack bars of Greens-

boro, North Carolina. After talking among themselves much of the previous night about the problem of legally enforced racial separation in the United States, the students walked from their college campus to a drug store in downtown Greensboro. They sat down on four stools at the snack bar in the drug store and refused to leave without being served.

The four demonstrators, all males, were students at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College, an all-black school. They acted spontaneously. They did not bother to tell the news media, either in Greensboro or nationally, about what they intended to do. As a result, there was no television coverage of what quickly became an historic event. It was the first college student sit-in at a restaurant or snack bar in a college town.

There was newspaper coverage, however, and the idea of college student sit-ins rapidly spread to black and white college and university campuses throughout the nation. In the ensuing year, thousands of college-age youngsters of both sexes and all races organized and participated in sit-in demonstrations. A new civil rights organization, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was formed to organize sit-in demonstrations in college and university towns throughout the South. This student organization soon was called by its initials, SNCC, which were pronounced Snick.

The four black students in Greensboro had not invented the sit-in demonstration. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) had been staging sit-ins to protest racial segregation since the 1940s. But CORE demonstrators were adults and easier to ignore. When the sit-in demonstrations began to involve college students, particularly large numbers of white college students, the news media began to give the protests extensive coverage. The coverage got very extensive when, as often happened, white segregationists would verbally taunt and physically assault the students who were staging the sit-in demonstration.

By the time of the 1961-1962 school year, Clark Schooler was one of the senior teaching assistants at Johns Hopkins University. In return for free tuition for his graduate school education, Clark taught "discussion sections" of major courses that were mainly instructed by the leading professors at Johns Hopkins. Although the graduate school was coeducational, the undergraduates were all men. But there was a women's college nearby, Goucher College, and Clark taught some undergraduate political science courses there as well.

There also was an African-American institution of higher learning in Baltimore. Morgan State College was a well established and highly regarded black college located in the northeastern section of Baltimore city. Morgan State had a large and attractive campus. It was landscaped with acres of green grass and many shrubs and trees. There were a number of substantial

stone buildings, all of them accented with white-painted wooden trim.

Morgan State also had a nearby movie theater called the Montebello Theater. The theater was named for the neighborhood where it was located. The neighborhood was named for a nearby lake, a City water reservoir, called Lake Montebello.

Unfortunately for the students at Morgan State College, the Montebello Theater limited its clientele to white persons only. When Morgan State students wanted to go to the movies, they had to drive in their cars or ride the bus to one of the all-black movie theaters closer to downtown Baltimore.

Following the example set by the four young men in Greensboro, an example being emulated by college students all over the South, a group of black students from Morgan State College began a "line-in" at the Montebello Theater. The black students got in line to buy a ticket to the movie. Then they refused to step aside when the ticket seller refused to sell them a ticket. The Montebello Theater's ownership responded by calling the Baltimore City police and having the protesting students arrested and carted off to the City Jail in downtown Baltimore.

Men students from Johns Hopkins and women students from Goucher College, almost all of them white, quickly joined the Morgan State students, almost all of them black, in the line-in at the Montebello Theater. By the time Clark Schooler arrived on the scene, there was a line of more than 300 students stretching away from the theater box office out into the parking lot.

The Baltimore City police were politely, carefully, but ever so systematically arresting the students, white as well as black, when the students reached the ticket office. The white students were being arrested because, by standing in the long line of protesters, they were preventing the regular customers of the theater from being able to buy tickets and get into the theater. This was deemed to be denying the owners of the Montebello Theater the full use of their property, so all the students, no matter what their race, were being arrested and charged with trespassing on private property.

Clark Schooler had been sent to cover the story by the *Banner*. There was a festive atmosphere among the students waiting in the theater line, particularly the white students. They had no concern that being arrested might put them in physical danger or could result in their having a damaging criminal record. The fashionable place to be at that moment was in the line-in at the Montebello Theater demonstrating for civil rights. Clark quickly learned from the students that they were totally committed to their cause and enjoying every minute of it.

The arrested students were being carted off to City Jail in cruising patrol wagons. These were large panel trucks with barred windows and

externally locked rear doors that were used to haul prisoners from the place where they were arrested to jail. In the daily language of Baltimore City police officers, the vehicles were referred to as “cruisin’ ‘trol” wagons. As soon as each vehicle was filled with arrested students, it would pull away from the movie theater parking lot amid good natured cheering from the not-yet-arrested demonstrators.

On the scene also were the three television stations in Baltimore and a reporter from the *Baltimore Beacon*. The whine of the television camera motors was incessant, as was the prattle of television reporters interviewing virtually everyone they could drag before their cameras. Periodically one could hear the click of a still camera as a photographer sought to capture exactly the right images for the next edition of a newspaper. One radio station, WFBR, was doing periodic news broadcasts live from the cement steps in front of the Montebello Theater.

Clark Schooler marveled at the scene. Where had all the cameras and reporters been some four years ago when CORE staged its sit-in demonstration at the White Dinner Plate in the Monarch Shopping Center? What had changed that made a civil rights demonstration a nothing story one day and, three short years later, the biggest story in town?

The *Beacon* reporter covering the Montebello Theater line-in was Roy Roost, a newspaper writer who only covered police stories when they had an unusual or extra dramatic angle to them. Roy was a good friend as well as a professional colleague of Clark Schooler. The two men discussed the fact that suddenly, for no apparent reason, civil rights sit-in demonstrations had become a top news story, not just in Baltimore but all over the nation.

“It’s phenomenal,” Roy Roost was saying. “We’ve got two reporters and three photographers on this story. I’m covering the demonstration here at the theater. A woman from the business section is getting the reaction of the Montebello theater ownership. She’s also getting opinions from the Chamber of Commerce. The *Beacon* is all over this story.”

“It’s all because of those four black college students down in Greensboro,” Clark responded. “They are the guys who gave this phase of the civil rights movement its critical mass.”

“Critical mass,” said Roy Roost quizzically. “What does critical mass have to do with it?”

“I can see that this is my opportunity to win another convert to my Atomic Theory of Mass Movements,” Clark said playfully but with the serious intention of seeking another convert to the theory.

Roy Roost had spent some time sitting around Baltimore City police stations listening to a variety of Clark Schooler’s theories about politics, journalism, and the nature of humanity. It was as good a way as any to pass

the minutes and hours while waiting for new developments in a major crime story. Roy Roost relaxed his stance, put down his reporter's notebook, and prepared himself to hear what Clark Schooler had to say.

"You know how an atomic explosion takes place," Clark began. "Little chunks of uranium aren't dangerous at all when they are lying around in different places. But get enough of those chunks together in one place and there is a critical mass. The result of a critical mass is a chain reaction. The little chunks of uranium all start reacting with each other and, boom, there's an atomic explosion."

Roy Roost listened to this quasi-scientific explanation of an atomic explosion and said simply: "I think those little chunks of uranium you referred to are called atoms."

"You're starting to get it," Clark lectured on. "After Greensboro, there suddenly were so many civil rights demonstrators and so many newspaper reporters and so many television cameras that the entire situation reached critical mass and a chain reaction was set off. Here, before your eyes, in the parking lot of the Montebello Theater, is the Baltimore city version of the atomic explosion that started, relatively quietly, in Greensboro."

"I have one problem with your Atomic Theory of Mass Movements," Roy Roost said. "Greensboro eventually brought a new kind of uranium into the mix. The new kind of uranium was white college students. It was the presence of white college students that really got things going after Greensboro, and it's white college students who are making these demonstrations so newsworthy here today. How does your theory account for that?"

Roy Roost was smirking at Clark Schooler as he deliver his critique and question. Trying to debunk the various theories propounded by Clark Schooler was something Roy Roost relished doing. He criticized Schooler's theories with the same good natured attitude with which Clark Schooler propounded them.

"We have adjusted the theory for the white college students," Clark Schooler replied, thinking fast and pretending he had dealt with the question before when actually he had not. Thanks to an instant inspiration, Clark further perfected his theory while answering Roy Roost's question. Clark said:

"Have you heard of this new stuff they're developing for making nuclear bombs? It's called plutonium. It's supposed to be more powerful than plain old uranium. It gets to critical mass faster and produces a faster and bigger chain reaction. That's where the white college students come in. They are the new plutonium fuel of the civil rights movement."

Roy Roost pondered this latest addition to the Atomic Theory of Mass Movements and said somewhat seriously: "Your theory does sort of explain

why civil rights protests went on for years without attracting press attention and then suddenly became a big story about the time of Greensboro. Civil rights demonstrations went from being no story to the big story of the moment. The newspapers and the television stations paid no attention, and now they are giving it all the attention in the world.”

At that moment, as if to highlight Roy Roost’s thoughts, another ‘cruisin’ trol wagon pulled away from the front of the Montebello Theater and began taking another load of college students on the long ride to the Baltimore City Jail. There were the customary cheers and shouts of defiance. Clark turned away from Roy Roost to study the crowd of demonstrators. Some of the college students, particularly some of the white college students, seemed to be making only a halfhearted effort to stay in line and advance toward the box office and get arrested. They were socializing. They were shouting and cheering each time another ‘cruisin’ trol wagon took off for the City Jail, but they also were surreptitiously moving backwards in the line and thereby avoiding arrest and a possible criminal record.

The next day both the *Baltimore Banner* and the *Baltimore Beacon* carried front page photographs of the scene at the Baltimore City Jail. Because so many college students had been arrested at the Montebello Theater, there was no cell space for them all. The jail authorities had simply herded the students, men and women together, into a large indoor recreation area with a hard cement floor. The students were standing or sitting around, passing the time and waiting to see what the authorities were going to do with them.

By incarcerating the students in the open recreation area, prison officials had sidestepped the problem of putting college students in the same jail cells with hardened criminals. But that decision had given the newspapers a tremendous photo opportunity. When the respectable, middle-class citizens of Baltimore looked at their newspaper the next day, they saw a giant crowd of college students in jail. Every conceivable type of student was visible in the photographs. They were male, female, white, black, well-dressed, not so well-dressed, etc. In the foreground, looking pert in their “poor boy” T-shirts and Bermuda shorts, were two women students from Goucher College. One of them was one of Clark Schooler’s political science students.

But something else was visible in the photographs of all the college students in the City Jail. In the background of most of the photos one could see barred windows. Peering out from behind those bars were the hardened and threatening faces of the jail’s regular clientele. The features on the jail inmates faces were indistinct, really only the suggestion of faces, but that made them appear even more threatening. The photographs in the newspa-

pers left no doubt that the college students, although in one sense off on what appeared to be a great social and academic adventure, also were close to potential danger.

Soon after the photographs of all the students in City Jail appeared in the newspapers, the telephones began ringing in the Criminal Court building in downtown Baltimore. Just plain citizens were calling the various City judges and telling them what they thought of imprisoning college students protesting for civil rights.

Another kind of call began coming in also. These calls came from all over the United States. They were from the parents of the Johns Hopkins University and Goucher College students who had been arrested at the demonstration at the Montebello Theater. Many of these parents were doctors and lawyers, and some even were judges themselves. They complained long and loudly about their children being imprisoned. They also expressed genuine concern for their children's physical safety.

That day found Clark Schooler back out in the parking lot of the Montebello Theater. The word had spread to a myriad of university and college campuses that the thing to do was to demonstrate to integrate the theater. There were about 1,000 students in the parking lot, almost double the number from the day before. Some of them had come from as far away as the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Virginia.

There also was a definite change in mood. The festive atmosphere of the day before had been replaced by a palpable sense of dedication and sacrifice. Having seen the photographs of their compatriots in Baltimore City Jail in that day's newspapers, these students knew where they were heading and that the place they were going was none too pleasant.

Also, the student leaders of the demonstration had things better organized. The students were standing in a clearly defined line, and it would have been very obvious and embarrassing to move backward in the line the way some students had been doing the day before. Once a student took a place in this line, that student was going to move steadily forward toward the box office and face an inevitable arrest and ride to City Jail.

Something new had been added. Just outside the theater entrance, barely 50 feet from where the students were being arrested, a group of counter-demonstrators were waving signs in full view of the demonstrating students. The signs bore statements such as: "Every American Has The Right To Serve Whom They Want, When They Want, How They Want." Another read: "Private Property Rights Are As Important As Civil Rights."

These counter-demonstrators were mainly white males in their 20s and 30s. They were not directly disturbing anyone. They did not yell threats or curses at the demonstrating students. But these young men looked like they

could cause a great deal of trouble if they wanted to do so. Their numbers were growing slowly as the day went by.

In the afternoon, a large luxury car, a black Cadillac sedan, pulled into the parking lot at the Montebello Theater. Out stepped an older white man, in his early 60s, who was dressed in a suit coat and necktie and appeared to be a typical businessman. He walked up to one of the police officers and identified himself as the owner of the Montebello Theater. He asked for a bull horn, which was a battery-powered portable microphone and loud-speaker, so he could make an announcement to the throngs of people in the parking lot. A police captain went and got him a bull horn from a nearby police car.

Clark Schooler and all the other news reporters and television camera operators were caught completely off-guard by this man's sudden arrival. There was a furious stir of activity as all the reporters, photographers, and television people circled around the man to get his picture and hear what he had to say. The various news personnel, acting in haste, got in each other's way and, in some cases, inflicted mild damage on each other. Shoulders bumped, elbows were jammed into stomachs, ankles were struck glancing blows by passing television camera tripods, and one newspaper reporter was accidentally hit in the cheek by a fast-moving radio microphone.

The man took the bull horn and addressed the demonstrating students. He stunned Clark Schooler and almost everyone else by beginning with a joke. "Hello," he said. "I am the owner of the Montebello Theater. I want to thank you all for coming out to see our movie presentation today."

A wave of reluctant and somewhat grudging laughter spread throughout the crowd. Everyone present was in a serious mood, but the man's little joke had reached the heights of biting sarcasm.

The man looked briefly at the counter-demonstrators and their signs, but only briefly. He then looked directly at the parking lot full of demonstrating students. He was standing on the front steps of the theater, which allowed the demonstrators to see him as well as hear him.

"The Montebello Theater is closed for the rest of today," the man said slowly. "No movie will be shown. No more tickets will be sold. And there will be no more arrests of student protesters by the Baltimore Police Department."

The man stopped speaking for a moment and let that message sink in. His pause heightened the tension. The crowd of students stood motionless and silent, waiting in high anticipation to see what he would say next.

"Tomorrow," the man finally continued, "the Montebello Theater will open on an integrated basis. The Montebello will sell tickets to customers

without regard to race, religion, or . . .”

The man never got to finish his sentence. The crowd of students in the parking lot erupted in wild celebration. Young men and women yelled, jumped up and down, and grabbed each other and danced around. It was, Clark wrote in the *Baltimore Banner*, “a genuinely jubilant, truly heartfelt response.”

The man gave the students about one minute to celebrate. He then used the bull horn, which was very loud, to quiet them down and, once again, get their attention.

“I have done this for you,” the man said. His voice was on the edge of quivering with emotion. “Now I want you to do this for me. I want you to go home. And I want you to go home safely. I want you to leave this parking lot in an orderly fashion and go back to your lives as students. There is nothing more for you to accomplish out here today.”

The students were still in a celebratory mood, but they began drifting away and returning to their respective college and university campuses. The protest at the Montebello Theater was over. The students had won.

At the same time, downtown, one of the judges of the Baltimore Criminal Court released all of the arrested students from the Baltimore City Jail. All charges against the students were dropped, simply because the owner of the Montebello Theater had decided not to press charges. There were no court trials of the protesting students. Therefore, there were no criminal convictions or criminal records for any of them.

When the owner of the Montebello Theater had finished speaking to the crowd of students in the parking lot, he handed the bull horn back to one of the police officers. He then walked over to the group of counter-demonstrators, shook a few hands, and thanked them for making their statement in behalf of private property rights. He then asked the counter-demonstrators to “go home” and “go home safely.”

When the theater owner turned around, however, he found himself facing all the news reporters and the television personnel. An impromptu press conference took place on the spot. The first question was an obvious one: “What convinced you to racially integrate the Montebello Theater?”

“I became concerned about the physical safety of all the people gathered in the parking lot,” the theater owner said. “Nothing bad was happening, but I became fearful that the situation could become dangerous and threatening.”

The next question concerned other movie theaters in the Baltimore area: “Did you meet with the Theater Owners Association, and are they going to follow your example and racially integrate all the movie theaters in Baltimore?”

“I did meet with the Theater Owners Association,” the owner of the Montebello Theater stated, “but there was no agreement on integrating all the city’s movie theaters. Most of the owners argued strongly that letting black people into their movie theaters would cause them to lose their white clientele. They said they were not personally prejudiced, but they believed they could not afford the financial losses if white people stopped going to integrated movie theaters.”

With all the reporters’ and photographers’ attention focused on the owner of the Montebello Theater, no one noticed that one of the students from Morgan State College, a young black woman named Vonda Belle Carter, had worked her way into the circle of news personnel. Standing next to the theater owner and looking him directly in the eye, she asked passionately and sincerely:

“Can you honestly say, in your own conscience, that racial segregation of movie theaters in Baltimore is morally right?”

There was absolute silence. Only the whirl of the television cameras could be heard while the owner of the Montebello Theater absorbed Vonda Belle Carter’s question. The theater owner looked down at his feet. Then he looked up at Vonda Belle Carter. “No,” he replied firmly and clearly. “I cannot say, in my conscience, that segregating white movie theater patrons from black patrons is morally right.”

That moment of revelation was the highlight on the 6 o’clock and the 11 o’clock news on every television station in Baltimore that evening. The television film of Vonda Belle Carter asking her question, and the theater owner answering her question so frankly, was played over and over again in the ensuing days. The following day, two of the three national television networks, ABC and CBS, used the film clip on their national evening newscasts.

That one news clip left the movie theater owners of Baltimore in a defenseless position. A businessman of the city had announced, for all to see and hear, his opinion that racial segregation of movie theaters was “immoral.” Quietly, without fanfare or public announcement, all the movie theaters in the Baltimore area voluntarily became racially integrated over the next few months.

Clark Schooler had one last story to write on the demonstrations at the Montebello Theater. The next day, the four university and college students who had organized and led the protest made a symbolic trip to see the current movie at the theater. By prearrangement, they met with Clark for an interview in the lobby of the Montebello Theater after the movie was over.

One of the students was a man from Johns Hopkins University, one was a woman from Goucher College, and the other two were a man and woman

from Morgan State College. The woman student from Morgan State was Vonda Belle Carter, the student who had confronted the theater owner the day before about the morality of racial segregation.

Clark began the interview: "How did you like the movie?"

"It was terrible," said the young woman from Goucher College. "It was 'The Moonspinners.' It was a Disney movie. It was for kids. I had to work hard to not fall asleep."

"Our having to go to see 'The Moonspinners' was the white segregationists' ultimate revenge," said the young man from Johns Hopkins. "But what else could we do? We had to show everyone that the Montebello Theater really is integrated now."

Clark tried to steer the interview in a more serious direction. He asked: "When all this started, did you ever think it would end this successfully?"

"It ended the way Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King said it would end." The speaker was Vonda Belle Carter from Morgan State. "Nonviolent protest is aimed at the moral values of the ruling group. Once you reach the conscience of the ruling group, its members are required by their own moral code to grant you the rights you are seeking."

Vonda Belle Carter's statement sounded pre-written and rehearsed to Clark Schooler. It was obvious that her professors at Morgan State College had mentally armed her with the established intellectual and moral rationale for justifying sit-in demonstrations.

Clark widened his discussion with the students a bit: "How does it feel to be members of a mass movement? What you accomplished at the Montebello Theater is being accomplished by college students all over the nation. Students are racially integrating snack bars in Nashville and restaurants in St. Louis."

"It feels great," said the young man from Morgan College. "But it's just one more step down a long, long road. Sit-ins and line-ins and swim-ins are working in the Upper South and the Border States, but they aren't working at all in the Deep South. There's more work to be done. There's a lot more."

Clark Schooler saved his toughest question for last: "Do you think you could have won this battle without the tremendous news coverage you received from Baltimore newspapers and television stations?"

None of the four students was anxious to answer that question, but finally Vonda Belle Carter took a stab at it. "The news coverage was crucial," the young black woman said. "My mother told me it was the newspaper photos of all the college students in City Jail that turned the tide. She said she just held the newspaper and stared for several minutes at the photograph. She said she'll bet the man who owned the movie theater looked at it for a long time, too. She thinks that photograph made up his

mind.”

The incident at the Montebello Theater quickly faded from the Baltimore news scene. But the racial integration of all Baltimore movie theaters was an accomplishment of great permanence. In his concluding newspaper story about the event, Clark Schooler wrote these words:

“All over the United States, businessmen are responding to college student sit-in demonstrations the way the owner of the Montebello Theater responded. They are voluntarily integrating their privately-owned facilities.”

“This is being done in hundreds of cities and towns. It is happening without the National Guard or U.S. troops having to be called to the scene.”

“These many incidents of voluntary racial integration, after only slight prodding from the university and college youth of America, stand in sharp contrast to those few incidents, mainly in the Deep South, where voluntary acceptance of racial integration has not yet been achieved.”

In The Interim

Periodically throughout United States history, mass movements have arisen at the grass roots which have led to major changes in government policy. One of the most famous and significant was the abolition movement of the early 19th Century, which worked to bring an end to human slavery.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s became something of a model for subsequent mass movements. The anti-Vietnam war movement from 1965 to 1975 directly copied the confrontational techniques of sit-in demonstrations and attention-getting public protests. The women's movement of the early 1970s used much of the language and logic of the civil rights movement, particularly the appeal to conscience to grant equality and dignity to a previously-oppressed group. The most recent mass movement of significance has been the gay and lesbian rights movement.

The U.S. Government is divided into the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary. Mass movements are most likely to occur when one of the three branches fails to respond to the needs and wishes of a substantial portion of the body politic. Some mass movements succeed while others fail, but the mass movement is definitely an important part of the United States system of government.