**Timeline of Major Events in the Nashville Civil Rights Movement**

***Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)** – The Supreme Court rules “separate but equal” constitutional, resulting in Jim Crow Laws and the conditions of segregation throughout the south. List what - conditions of segregation looked like in Nashville and throughout Tennessee: separate schools; separate water fountains, lunch counters, businesses “for whites only,” separate churches, etc. (*answers will vary*)\_\_

**Background**

***Brown vs. Board of Education*** Decision **(1954)** declares “separate but equal” unconstitutional

**Period of preparation**

● **Highlander**\_ School – Monteagle, TN – helped to train **MLK** and **Rosa Parks**\_\_\_

● \_ **Jim Lawson**\_\_ comes to Nashville (at request of MLK) – working with the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (affiliated with MLK’s SLLC) and organizes workshops for nonviolent action at a church close to **Fisk\_** University (1st workshop March 26-28, 1958)

● In late 1959, after the workshops had identified downtown business lunch counters as a target for their demonstrations, Jim Lawson and other members of the NCLC’s projects committee met with business leaders asking them to **voluntarily** serve African Americans at their lunch counters. This request was declined, as the store owners stated that they stood to **lose more** business than they would **gain** if they agreed.

● Reconnaissance missions for sit-ins led by students on November 28 and December 5, at two different downtown department stores

**Period of demonstrations**

● **Sit-ins** (February 13, 1960 – May 3, 1960)

- week one: **no** incidents – store owners **closed** the lunch counters

- week two: **verbal** abuse, **no** arrests

- week three: targeted six stores; “tipped off,” students prepared to be beaten and

then to be arrested; special preparation = 2nd and 3rd waves of demonstrators, observers who had numbers for ambulances and change for a phone call; police hang back for first fifteen minutes, allowing white citizens to abuse the demonstrators, and then arrested the first wave of demonstrators, the police, who thought they had “lowered the boom” on the problem, were surprised when they turned around to find the second wave of demonstrators sitting at the counters. (**81** arrests – none for violence/assault)

● **Do the Time, Don’t Pay the Fine:** February 29th, 1960 - First day of trials against student

demonstrators– thousands lined the streets to show their support for the students – city resources overwhelmed; on the same day, Lawson and other black ministers met with Mayor West to discuss the sit-ins. Coverage of the meeting by the local press resulted in a harsh editorial in the *Nashville Banner* labeling Lawson as a “flannel mouth agitator.” This negative press, and his continued involvement in the movement, ultimately resulted in Lawson’s expulsion from divinity school at Vanderbilt University.

● **Boycott** of downtown businesses is added to the sit-in efforts – April 1960

**April 19, 1960 – “the turning point” - Nashville begins to publically move toward desegregation**

● Bombing of Alexander Looby’s house (prominent African American Civil Rights attorney)

● Silent march to city hall (3,000 - 4,000) – meeting with Mayor West

● Mayor West, responding to questions asked by Diane Nash, replied, “I could not agree

that it is morally right for someone to sell them merchandise and refuse them service;” when further asked if he believes the lunch counters should be desegregated, West replies, “Yes.”

**Work continues - Forming of SNCC – Freedom Rides – continued activism Civil Rights Act 1964**

**Instructions for Sit-in Demonstrators:**

"***Do not*** strike back or curse if abused. ***Do not*** laugh out. ***Do not*** hold conversations with the floor walker. ***Do not*** leave your seat until your leader has given you permission to do so. ***Do not*** block entrances to stores outside nor the aisles inside. ***Do*** show yourself courteous and friendly at all times. ***Do*** sit straight; always face the counter. ***Do*** report all serious incidents to your leader. ***Do*** refer information seekers to your leader in a polite manner. Remember the teachings of [Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), [Gandhi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohandas_Karamchand_Gandhi), [Martin Luther King](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King,_Jr.). Love and nonviolence is the way."

***Respond to these instructions that the demonstrators received***.

What is your impression of these instructions?

Why do you think they were so effective?

Do you think you could have followed these instructions?

**Discussion Questions**: (pair share/group of three – share out)

**Give examples that show that Jim**

What was learned in the “Non-violent Academy”?

How to:

\*organize a community \*negotiate

\*conduct a demonstration \*deal with the media

**Lawson’s Nonviolent Workshops were**

**successful in meeting these goals:**

*students were as disciplined as soldiers/incredibly well-organized – greater community joined in; sit-ins and boycott were very effective; store owners and mayor listened/conceded; great spokespeople*

**Why was the selection of lunch counters as a target for student demonstrations a good strategy?**

*Highly visible, easily accessible, and they provided a dramatic example of the injustices faced by black Southerners every day*

**Philosophy of the movement: Philosophy of the opponent:**

“the power of nonviolence”

“the use of force”

“philosophy of violence”

- “I make you suffer more than I suffer

- escalation of violence until the other side “gives”

“sympathy of the majority”

– local action … national/international audience

“everyone can be a participant”

“the need to dramatize the situation”

“converting the enemy”

“violence can backfire”

making segregation “costly and controversial”