

Join the Student Sit-Ins

Act Three Transcript

Video online at: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/freedomandjustice/A3.asx>

Codes:

A = Actor (Samuel P. Leonard)

P = Participant

“ “ =interrupting, pause

[] = not speaker's words

A = Maybe I should ask it another way. When there is a law you don't like what do you do about it? You don't have to raise your hand, you just say it.

P = You could write to people like congressmen.

A = Well I suppose we could. You mean write your congressman, yes I suppose you could do that. You know sometimes your congressman don't listen some of them don't listen to what you write. So today we are going to teach you all some even more aggressive tactics. Before we do that though, let me ask you another question and you know this one is really easy but I need everybody to answer this and I want you to be honest. What's the first word you think of, the first word that comes to your mind when you hear someone say the word nonviolent? Nonviolent, nonviolent, what does that make you think of?

P = Passive.

A = Someone said passive that's a good one. What else?

P = Peaceful.

A = Peaceful, peace is usually the first thing people think of. What else?

P = Gandhi.

A = Gandhi, oh people all over the world would think of Gandhi.

P = Dr. King.

A = Dr. King, that's the easy one, Dr. King nowadays right. What else, nonviolent? That's it? Can't be it. Let me tell you some words that come to my mind. When someone says nonviolent and you want to know something funny? We didn't hear any of these today, we usually don't: strong, powerful, aggressive, active. Now how come and all those were good, but how come we don't hear any of those kind of words? You see a lot of people come to these training sessions they say nonviolence, that's not for me. Because they think that most of us in the movement are these mythical heroes, these self-sacrificing saints who love our enemies and look forward to suffering with love in our hearts and a smile on our lips, well I can tell you that just ain't me. I don't look forward to getting beaten up, do you? No I'm afraid that I will have the urge to fight back and protect myself. But nonviolence is a tool and it's a tool we use because we want to win. We see nonviolence as the most effective way to accomplish our goals. But even though it's effective, in order for it to work we need people, we need trained activists to take the place of those who do get arrested. We need to fill up every seat at lunch counters and every jail cell if necessary until we get noticed by the nation. We need all of you to force the country to decide whether segregation is wrong or right.