

Albany 1961

Albany came to the forefront of the civil rights movement in 1961. Albany State College was an African-American college in Georgia.

The SNCC organised students from (black) Albany State College, Georgia, in sit-ins in Albany bus station which had ignored the Interstate Commerce Commission's order to desegregate.

Segregation still existed and this is what forced the students to protest. Hundreds were arrested. Albany's city authorities refused to desegregate the bus station despite pressure from the Attorney-General, Robert Kennedy.

The SNCC mobilised students to protest about the segregation and disenfranchisement experienced there. This protest did not receive support from local NAACP and other civil rights leaders as they saw SNCC as troublemakers.

Someone in the Albany civil rights movement invited Martin Luther King to join the protest. This angered SNCC who wanted the protest to stay led by locals.

The role of Martin Luther King:
King led one protest march and got arrested. The city authorities played a cat and mouse game. They decided no-one would be arrested and jailed; students were arrested and released. In this way there were no 'martyrs' to the cause and the nation's media were less likely to be attracted to what was going on - the opposite of what happened in Birmingham. They also promised the creation of a biracial committee to look at Albany's problems.

What had been achieved by the Albany movement?

1. Local black leaders claimed the black community had lost a lot of its fear for white power.
2. National attention had been gained
3. The SNCC's: "jail not bail" strategy could fill the jails with protesters and bring courts to a standstill.
4. King had learned that it was unwise for SCLC to intervene in an area where there isn't a strong SCLC presence.