



Diversity Gazette

February 2019

Chapel Hill's rich history

by Alecia Matthews

Did you know that every day we have the opportunity to learn something new? Well, that very thing happened to me recently. Yadira Conyers gave me some trading cards that described the contributions many courageous young people in Chapel Hill made during the Civil Rights Movement from 1960-1969. (*Let me know if you'd ever like to see these trading cards.*)

In honor of Black History Month, I wanted to share a small portion of what I learned about the civil rights movement that happened right here in Chapel Hill, NC. One incident that is said to have sparked change happened on February 28, 1960 when a group of nine high school students

decided to sit in a booth at the Colonial Drug Store located on Franklin Street. The Chapel Hill Nine wanted the same service that was given to white patrons. Unfortunately, they were refused service, and told to leave the store. This act of civil disobedience led to the students being arrested, put on trial, and convicted for criminal trespass. What followed was a decade of civil rights demonstrations designed to make life better for blacks in Chapel Hill.

In fact, the demonstrations proved to be far reaching as it attempted to integrate movie houses, high schools, and many local businesses. Student activists even called a strike to seek higher wages for the mostly black UNC

food workers. Many argue that this decade of protests helped make life better for black citizens. The city of Chapel Hill made history in 1969 when the voters elected its first black mayor, Howard Lee. It seems that the efforts of a few courageous young people paid off.



Resource

Opening our Future: Chapel Hill Civil Rights Movement 1960-1969.

<https://chapelhillhistory.org/> Retrieved on January 29, 2019.