

The Board

Historical Context

Ella Baker was born on December 13, 1903. Throughout her childhood, the USA was infiltrated with racist messages developed by the KKK (Ku Klux Klan), whose goal it was to maintain white supremacy. Furthermore, Jim Crow laws, a collection of local and state laws legalizing racial segregation, were present and thriving since the 1860's. Despite such downturns, the Great Migration—a mass exodus of African Americans from the south to the north in search of equality—as well as the Harlem Renaissance—a revival of African American culture through music, art, and literature—brought forth a wave of pride and self determination. Once the Great Depression began in the 1930's, job availability would typically be given to the white man, once again proving disadvantageous to the African Americans. Following black participation in WW2, civil rights boomed for the postwar world. Throughout the 1950's influential figures prompted acts of "nonviolent resistance" that helped shape the civil rights movement of the next decades.



Ku Klux Klan (KKK) Meeting

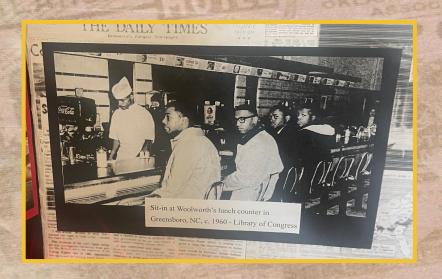
Harlem Renaissance music

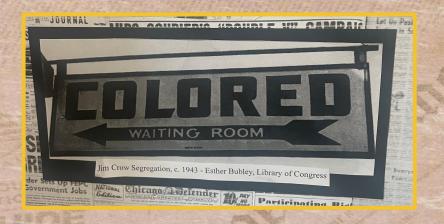




Nonviolent protest for equal rights to jobs

Historical Argument





Ella Baker was an influential leader whose impacts on the Civil Rights Movement and on the country as a whole are underappreciated. Her work in educating and preparing young people in the fight for equal rights is left largely unnoticed, despite her and the movement's overall success in making race-based discrimination illegal and bettering the lives of minorities.

Racial Barriers





During the civil rights movement, black people fought valiantly for equal rights, employing mostly nonviolent tactics, such as sit-ins and marches to call for equal treatment. As a black person, Ella was faced with racism and discrimination at every turn. Jim Crow laws and police brutality were especially present in the south, where she lived and worked. She was looked down upon for the color of her skin, seen as a second-class citizen. Ella Baker fought against racist systems that stood much longer than she lived and was successful in her fight; her perseverance and ability to work with and encourage others caused this victory of desegregation.



Discrimination on Two Fronts

Fighting against long standing injustice is nearly impossible when you are looked down upon for both the color of your skin and gender, yet Ella Baker did just that. During her work with Martin Luther King Jr. in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, he questioned her decisions and elected her to a provisional director position due to the hierarchy of the organization and views of women. Critics viewed her as abrasive and controlling; they did not think that women should have been leading. Instead of allowing this to stop her, Baker left the SCLC and went on to form the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. It was the first organization of its time to bring younger people, especially students, into the fight for equality.





Significance

Ella Baker played a huge role in the civil rights movement. She shaped the leaders of the movement, acting as the mastermind behind it all. She held campaigns and workshops, encouraging black people across the country to fight for their civil liberties. Her leadership not only encouraged others to fight for their rights, thus growing the movement, but also spurred the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Her efforts worked to achieve the eradication of segregation and discrimination. Rosa Parks was an attendee at one of Ella's leadership conference, and was inspired by what she saw there.





Accomplishments

Ella Baker is not widely known today, yet she was a crucial figure in the civil rights movement; her devotedness and ability to listen inspired others to fight for their rights and gave her the nickname, "Fundi" - meaning someone who teaches a craft to the next generation - as well as Mama Baker. Her involvement in the NAACP, co-creation of SCLC a non-violent civil rights program fighting for desegregation - and creation of SNCC, which helped register black votes, are among some of her lifelong accomplishments. We can appreciate her work today because of the civil liberties that African Americans can enjoy compared to during her lifetime.



NAACP protest for freedom

SCLC march for recognition and equality





SNCC sit-in at Atlanta, Georgia

Present Connection

After black people gained equal rights, many believed that racism and discrimination would end there, but it did not. In the summer of 2020, protests erupted across the country to fight against police brutality and discrimination. The protests rose up after the unnecessary, discriminatory murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, and many others. Black people are still not seen as equals, despite civil rights leaders, such as Ella Baker's, hard work.





THANK YOU!

