

Mary Lillian Andrews and the Letter That Helped Integrate Local Lunch Counters

Seventeen-year-old Mary Lillian Andrews, the granddaughter of Samuel and Lillian Sutton, took a bold stand against lunch counter segregation in San Antonio, Texas. While a college freshman at Our Lady of the Lake, she served as president of the local NAACP Youth Council. Under her leadership, the student-led, national Sit-In Movement made its presence felt in San Antonio.

Miss Andrews wrote to downtown store managers, requesting an end to segregated food service. Awaiting a reply, she led a Youth Council rally where members planned an “all-out assault on discrimination in San Antonio eating facilities.”

The following account comes from the March 11, 1960 edition of the *San Antonio Register* newspaper. It illustrates how Miss Andrews used the power of youth action, and the conviction that injustice must be overcome by reason and right, to champion long overdue social change.

“In letters dated March 7, and directed to Joske’s of Texas, S. H. Kress and company, and F. W. Woolworth company, management is reminded that certain groups are barred from dining facilities, and a change is asked.

The letters set forth:

“Youth of all races in San Antonio go to school, ride the buses, enjoy municipal recreational facilities together, but they cannot sit down and eat together in your store.

Help the youth of San Antonio realize that the principles stated in the Holy Bible and the Constitution of the United States can be a living reality in San Antonio by abolishing this discriminatory practice in your store.

We feel that the citizens of San Antonio are intelligent enough to accept such change.

Please inform us of your decision. . .”

The letters were signed by Mary Lillian Andrews, president of the local (NAACP) Youth council.”