

**THE GREENSBORO SIT-INS:
HOW FOUR YOUNG MEN DECIDED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
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The following is part two of a two-part essay. In part one, which appeared in the July 13 issue of Seize the Day, we learned how four students at North Carolina A&T State University banded together to protest Woolworth's policy of not serving black customers in their restaurant, instead directing them to the basement for service.

Great individuals fight abuses of authority. The truly strong do not lord it over the weak. People of genuine strength and courage battle against the powerful, the arrogant, the authoritarian, the evil and corrupt—all who look down on the people with contempt (SGI President Ikeda, *Faith Into Action*, p. 106).

By the end of the first day, the students had many supporters from all over North Carolina. Not only black, but white as well. The next day they went back to the Woolworth's counter, this time with enough people to shut the store down. These sit-ins, as they became known, grew throughout the city. Eventually every segregated business in Greensboro was filled with protestors, both black and white. "It spread to places like the shopping centers, the drugstores in the shopping centers, the drive-ins...No place was going to be left untouched. The only criteria was that if it did not serve blacks, it was certainly going to be hit" (*My Soul is Rested*, by Howell Raines, p. 81).

Within the year, the students had desegregated every theatre and restaurant in Greensboro. What had started as a small group of four students had grown into a full-fledged movement for peace. These students were no different from any one else. In fact, after these sit-ins were over, they graduated and moved on to other pursuits. But for that one year, they had seen something they felt needed to be changed and acted to change it. They never lost sight of the fact that they were just people who wanted to make a difference. There was nothing for them to gain but justice and equal rights. Their youthful energy and enthusiasm made them feel responsible for society. It was a vision for a better future—not fame or fortune—that encouraged them to make a change.

As youth within the SGI, we too have a noble mission that we can only accomplish with courage and conviction. President Ikeda appeals to youth, "To realize this long-cherished dream of your esteemed predecessors, to establish a utopian world for all of humanity...that is your lifelong mission" (July 9, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 1).