

Weary Feet, Rested Souls: A Guided History of the Civil Rights Movement

BY TOWNSEND DAVIS

Forty years ago in homes, shops, schools, meeting halls, and churches across the American South, African Americans began the most profound political and social reformation of our time — the civil rights movement for racial equality. In these ordinary locales, they wrote sermons, speeches, and newsletters. They organized demonstrations, boycotts, and law suits. They suffered unemployment, incarceration, violence, and, for some, death.

Today, only three movement sites in the South are designated by the federal government as national historic landmarks — the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s home and church in Atlanta, and Central High School in Little Rock.

But what of the many equally important places where countless African Americans and their allies labored to spread their cause? In *Weary Feet, Rested Souls: A Guided History of the Civil Rights Movement*, (W.W. Norton; Jan. 19, 1998; \$27.50), author Townsend Davis highlights hundreds of sites — some well-known and some far off the beaten track — where civil rights history was made. He also provides an up-to-date description of newly built museums and monuments that commemorate the movement and its heroes.

Weary Feet, Rested Souls organizes a wealth of information in an easy-to-read format. It is a travel guide through the seven states in which the most pivotal events of the Movement took place — Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Introductory essays give the historical background of each location, followed by descriptions of particular sites, as well as items of interest overlooked by the casual traveler.

Drawing on more than 100 new interviews and field work covering 30,000 miles, *Weary Feet, Rested Souls* offers many sites never before featured in print, in addition to those that are fixed in America's collective memory. Among the most important sites are the following:

- The Empire Theater bus stop in Montgomery, Ala., where the arrest of Rosa Parks ignited a year-long bus boycott in 1955.

- The Woolworth's store in Greensboro, N.C., where a sit-in

"With this book, Davis has given us a key to historic Southern worlds that will be a priceless treasure for every American."

— William Ferris, chairman of the National Endowment of the Humanities and Director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

at the lunch counter by four African-American college students in 1960 pioneered a new form of protest against racial segregation.

- The grave of James Chaney, whose brutal slaying along with two other civil rights workers in 1964 outside Philadelphia, Miss., prompted a national outcry.

- Highway 80 between Selma and Montgomery, Ala., site of a triumphant five-day march in 1965 that solidified the drive for new voting rights laws.

- The Progressive Club, site of the first Movement-supported citizenship classes that spread through the deep South to teach reading and civil rights in the early 1960s, which still stands on a remote road on Johns Island, S.C.

- Kelly Ingram Park in Birmingham, Ala., where in 1963, young marchers faced dogs and powerful water hoses. Today it features sculptures capturing the event and a large civil rights museum nearby.

• The Mason Temple and Lorraine Motel in Memphis, where Dr. King gave his last speech and was fatally shot in April 1968.

Twenty-five original maps pinpoint the exact location of the sites, while 109 powerful photographs taken both during the movement and the present day illustrate the text. The site descriptions are accompanied by explanations of intriguing movement topics, such as the gripping journey of the Freedom Riders and the origin of the anthem "We Shall Overcome."

As Davis describes in brilliant detail, these issues and events continue to haunt these historic landmarks. Throughout *Weary Feet, Rested Souls* are letters, epitaphs, newspaper articles, civil rights pamphlets, sermons, speeches, and songs, all of which sound out the many voices heard during that time. Davis also provides useful guides, such as a movement chronology of events, a list of civil rights laws, and a detailed index.

"My feet are weary, but my soul is rested," said an old woman named Mother Pollard, as she declined a stranger's offer to give her a ride during the Montgomery bus boycott. *Weary Feet, Rested Souls* allows readers to literally walk in the footsteps of the extraordinary men and women who worked, suffered, and rejoiced during the civil rights movement. Chronicling the back roads and battlegrounds of the movement, Davis provides readers with both an armchair history of the struggle and an indispensable companion for those traveling to the deep South in search of our nation's turbulent past.

Townsend Davis is a writer and lawyer living in New York City. His articles have appeared in the *New Republic*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Charlotte Observer*.

Elite Social Club to sponsor benefit dance



Members of the Elite Social Club Inc. are once again preparing for the club's annual Holiday Benefit Dance, which will be held Saturday, Dec. 27, at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. Music will be provided by Arthur Gray Productions. Proceeds from the event will be dispersed among local charities. Tickets may be purchased from any member.

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Carrying on a tradition



In 1984 James Smith (right) opened his first McDonald's restaurant in Houston, Texas, with 11-year-old Adrian (left) by his side. Fourteen years later, Adrian is following in his father's footsteps. He is currently in McDonald's Second Generation program, through which he will soon own his own McDonald's restaurant. Adrian still helps out at his father's McDonald's and takes pride in being involved in all areas of the restaurant business. His father, James, currently owns and operates three restaurants in North Carolina, and is proud to support his son's business development.



Kids enjoy BARNEY show

Thanks to Flo Livingston of the Laurence Joel Coliseum and promoters of the Barney's Big Surprise show, held Sunday, Dec. 14. Hanes Hosiery gym recreation center participants, staff and volunteers attended the "big show" and had a wonderful time. The kids, ranging in ages from 3 to 11, were delighted and excited, as they shared the "true Christmas spirit," by

Laughing, hugging, singing along for all of the famous Barney songs, and sharing candy, popcorn and drinks. It was a beautiful day and was truly enjoyed by all. Just to see the kids eyes light up with gleam and joy made it a "magical day" with Barney.