

Charlotteans Join Brotherhood March

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the fact that the entire world was looking at this march.

While the bus waited to leave for Forsyth, Levinthal and Mrs. Woodard went over the ten commandments of non-violence and each rider vowed to uphold the commandments.

At approximately 11:30, the buses, cars, vans and trucks were given the signal to exit. And as far as the eyes could see there was bus after bus filled to capacity. Leaving Bedford Pines Park where the convoy had lined up, and heading toward the highway, Atlanta seemed like a ghosttown, vacant and deserted.

It seemed that as the bus neared Forsyth, tension mounted, nerves became on edge and the gravity of the situation took on a new dimension of reality. Riding alongside a passenger in another automobile that sported a Confederate flag, members of the bus were told not to glance in the driver's direction. When one marcher grunted a greeting at a passing rider, members on the bus quickly chided him for making any remarks. Others reminded the riders that this march was nothing to play around with. Even as the bus stopped at the Cumming exit, some bus riders were concerned at the number of unfamiliar faces who came on the bus to use its restroom-facilities. Fearing the possibility that an infiltrator could board the bus, strangers were denied entrance. Even listening to the regular news developments caused the heart to race at a quickening pace. There were reports of 60 arrests, stemming from counter-protestors who had firearms. David Duke, the leader of the National Association of Advancement for White People was reportedly arrested. There was even the news that the night preceding the march all ammunition had been bought and that no more was available.

After a two hour ride, that on a normal day may have taken anywhere from 30 to 40 minutes buses finally exited off the Cumming ramp around 2:30 p.m. After many delays and a considerable amount of stalling, the march finally commenced. Dignitaries like Rev. Jesse Jackson, Senator Gary Hart, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, Joseph Lowery, Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, and Ralph Abernathy were already in Cumming and had been waiting for the masses of marchers who were riding on the buses. But with time playing an important element, the march began without the large number of people who were ready to march.

The majority of marchers were stuck at the exit of Cumming. It was obvious that there was no way that the city of Cumming could accommodate the huge numbers of buses and other transportation modes. And while the radio reports assured that everyone who had come to march would have the opportunity, it didn't seem like



Marchers listen to the stirring words of Coretta Scott King at the steps of the Cumming County Courthouse.

they would get the chance. The last radio report that announced that the buses had gone as far as they could go was the signal that the thousands of marchers were waiting for. From out of the buses, the vans, the cars and the trucks they came. Black people, white people, people who had traveled from Illinois, from Florida, from Ohio, from North Carolina, from Alabama to participate in this non-violent march.

As the masses of the people converged on the city of Cumming, the national guard was there to steer marchers in the right direction. Marshalls helped to get the group in a more orderly fashion - walking six abreast, women and children in the middle, men on the outside, arms interlocked. More specific instructions included not talking, looking straight ahead and ignoring those persons who repeated, "Nigger, go home" or who held signs that read, "James Earl Ray - An American Hero".

Cumming, a small town that posted a welcome sign for its visitors had no welcome sign for those who marched this past Saturday. For these particular marchers there was only an overabundance of hatred, prejudice and fear.

Finally approaching the County courthouse, an hour later, where the rally was already in progress, marchers listened to the words of Joseph Lowery, Coretta Scott King, Ralph Abernathy, Bernice King, Mayor Andrew Young and others who echoed similar thoughts.

Lowery said, "This is the real super bowl. We've come too far, we've prayed too hard and we've marched too long to turn back now."

Benjamin Hooks rallied the crowd with, "What do we want? (Freedom)."

When do we want it? (Now). We see how you're treating us now, but what we want to know is how you're going to treat us next week."

Bernice King directing her thoughts to the younger generation uttered, "We are here because we have a right to be here, to tell our brothers and sisters of Forsyth County, that we have to love thy neighbor as thyself."

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Following her daughter, Mrs. King stated, "Racism is all over the United States, Forsyth County is just one manifestation of it. This is not the last time we're going to come to together like this, this is just the beginning. I know I'm coming back."

And as the speakers spoke, marchers continued to pour in. At 4:30 the rally closed with the singing of "We Shall Overcome". People began to link with others of their group and as they marched out of the city of Cumming, still under the protection of the National Guard, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the Forsyth County police, the low, melodious sounds of "We Shall Overcome" could still be heard. It was close to 6 p.m. before the buses from Charlotte left Cumming, many of the Atlanta buses having already on their way back to the city. But there were many more people who were awaiting rides or who were wondering how they were going to get back to Atlanta as the Charlotte group made its way back home, most of them feeling good about having participated in the march and feeling even better that once again the non-violent method was proven to work.

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