

1960 Alabama State College Student Sit-In Demonstrations and Meetings

Date	Location	# in Attendance (estimated)	Activity	Speakers	Administration's Response or Perspective
2/25 Thurs	Sit-in at Montgomery County courthouse lunch counter	21-35 students	Entered grill and requested to be served. Stood in hallway on the wall for an hours	None	Governor "ordered" Trenholm to investigate and expel during afternoon meeting ¹ Trenholm mimeographed message to students distributed in classes and dormitories ²
2/26 Fri	Sit-in Montgomery Courthouse Trial	250 students	Watched in silence, marched two miles back to campus	None	None ²
2/26 Fri	Rally - Alabama State College (ASC)	Slightly larger than 250	Rally		Trenholm spoke, told them they were being disruptive and broke up the rally ²
2/27 Sat	Downtown Tuskegee and Montgomery	In Tuskegee 300 students	No formal student involvement; Patrols of whites with bats; Negro woman beaten with a bat and multiple assaults against blacks reported	None ³	Trenholm, in personal conversations, advised against demonstrations ⁴
2/27 Sat	Meeting at Negro First Baptist Church		Lee and 16 others met with reporters afterward		Abernathy advised them to not go downtown because the Ku Klux Klan were reported downtown ⁴
2/29 Mon	Hutchinson St Baptist	1000 students	Lee – threatened walk out if students expelled Abernathy – “you have our full backing” and announced a legal defense fund King – “gone too far to turn back”	MLK, Lee, and Abernathy ⁵	
3/1 Tues	9am State Capital Building Steps followed by brief gathering on campus	720 - 1000	Hymns (Lords Prayer and The National Anthem) and Speeches	Lee calling for strike if Marzette Watts expelled ⁶	
3/2	Hutchinson St Baptist	700	Voted to quit school in protest	Abernathy ⁷	

3/3 Thurs	Campus – Mass morning demonstration marched through campus during Exams	2000 reported in Alabama Journal			Trenholm tried to stop the march. Called a student meeting mid-morning. Appealed to the leaders to release the students from their pledge ⁸
3/3 Thurs	12:30 Student Meeting		Leaders released students to go to class ⁸		
3/4 Fri	Beulah Baptist Church	900	Speeches against the expulsion and Patterson, promised support from the adult community, announced meeting on Sunday at the Capital	Abernathy, King, Lee and students from other colleges*	ASC faculty supposedly present in support; but not reported in paper ⁹
3/5 Sat	Downtown Montgomery	30 cars of whites	Drove up and down with placards		Commissioner Sullivan placed a moratorium on demonstrations
3/6 Sun	Dexter Avenue Baptist Church	5000 whites, 400 law enforcement and 750 Blacks	Few from adult black community as promised, mostly students		Needed help to get out safely ¹⁰
3/8 Tues (AM)	Just off ASC campus	37 jailed 1000 onlookers	Expelled students passed out placards, ‘roughed up’ a ASC staff person, police responded	1 faculty, 1 husband, and 35 students ¹¹	Patterson’s Affidavit states this started as an on-campus demonstration and became a riot the police had to break up ¹²
3/8 Tues (PM)	Beulah Baptist Church	600 students	Encourage continued unrest, promises of available money and scholarships	Lee and Rev. Seay ¹³	
3/10	ASC Auditorium	2/3 student body – 1400	Decided to rebuff the agitators and return to class	Phi Beta Sigma and 2 faculty	Encouraged by Administration in Response to Commissioner Sullivan’s recommendation to close the school ¹⁴

*3/4/60 Speeches: Abernathy – promise of financial support; King – “if you can’t fly, run; if you can’t run, walk; if you can’t walk, crawl; but by all means keep moving” “Nobody here must hate Governor Patterson” in response to several student speakers’ anger at him for his role in the expulsions; Lee ”let ‘em put locks on the doors at the college.” “...we are not little children to be spanked on the behind and sent back to classrooms”⁹

¹ Dick Hines and Ingram, Bob, “Expel negro sitdowners, college told: Alabama State president given mandate in Governor’s office,” *Montgomery Advertiser*, February 26, 1960, p. 1.

² “Dr. Trenholm asks for clear thinking”, John Coombes, p. 1 and 7A “Rally held by Negroes at college: Earlier gathering jammed courthouse, another threatened”, *Montgomery Advertiser*, February 27, 1960, p. 1.

³ John Coombes, “Two demonstrations staged by negroes”; :”300 Students at Tuskegee stage brief protest march”; “Violence erupts on Dexter, woman clubbed with bat”, *Montgomery Advertiser*, February 28, 1960, pp. 1-2.

⁴ “Dr. Trenholm hold parley with students”, *Montgomery Advertiser*, February 28, 1960, p. 2.

⁵ “ASC negroes roar approval of campus walkout threat”, *Montgomery Advertiser*, March 1, 1960, p. 5A.

⁶ *Montgomery Advertiser*, March 3, 1960, p. 12A “Hymn-singing students hold rally at capitol”, Associated Press and Gene Kovarik, Alabama Journal p. 1 and 2A, March 1, 1960, “Negroes ‘Visit’ state capitol, holiday-closed: Several hundred students in crowd on orderly march”

⁷ “Student ouster sparks negro college walkout: 9 expelled, 20 given probation”, *Montgomery Advertiser*, March 3, 1960, pp. 1-2.

⁸ Dick Hines and Ingram, Bob, “Take Exams: Pledge-free students troop back to classes”, *Montgomery Advertiser*, March 4, 1960, pp. 1-2.

⁹ Bob Ingram, “900 Negroes Shout Pledge of Protest”, *Montgomery Advertiser*, March 5, 1960, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ “Thwart Negro at capitol: Whites held at distance by officials”, *Montgomery Advertiser* March 7, 1960, p. 1.

¹¹ Dick Hines, “City police arrest 37 Negro agitators for demonstrations: plans laid for another rally today”, *Montgomery Advertiser* March 9, 1960, pp. 1-2.

¹² Answer of Defendants: Exhibit “A” for the Defendant - Governor Patterson’s Affidavit p.11, in Case File for *St. John DIXON, Bernard Lee, Marzette Watts, Edward English Jones, Joseph Peterson, Elroy Embry, plaintiffs, v. ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, Governor John Patterson, Ex-Officio Chairman of Alabama State Board of Education, Montgomery, Alabama, Robert R. Locklin, Mobile, Alabama, J. T. Albritton, Andalusia, Alabama, J. P. Faulk, Jr., Samson, Alabama, Harry M. Ayers, Anniston, Alabama, J. J. Benford, Albertville, Alabama, E. W. Skidmore, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, W. C. Davis, Fayette, Alabama, Cecil Word, Scottsboro, Alabama, Chester Austin, Birmingham, Alabama, as Members of the Alabama State Board of Education, Alabama State College, H. Council Trenholm, President of Alabama State College, Montgomery, Alabama, defendants*, 186 F. Supp. 945 (1960) Aug. 22, 1960; Civil Action No. 1634-N. Ascension # 021-70B0811 Closed Civil Case Files (Northern Division) 1960-1964; General Records of the Alabama Middle District, 1839-1969, Montgomery Division; General Records of the District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; National Archives and Records Administration - Southeast Region, Atlanta, GA.

¹³ Supra Note 11

¹⁴ “Halt called to protests by students: College source says negroes turn backs on all agitators”, *Montgomery Advertiser* March 11, 1960, p. 1.

Use the following APA citation if referencing or distributing this handout or its content:

Boyd, K. D. (2020). *1960 Alabama State College Student Sit-In Demonstrations and Meetings* [Annotated Table with Primary Sources References]. Retrieved from College Students Change the World Website: <https://www.csctw.org/Sharing.html>