

Letters Home during the UT Stand-Ins Era From Larry Manire

Some quick background:

I graduated from Ray HS in '59 in Corpus Christi where my father was general secretary of the YMCA. I attended Del Mar Junior College there for two years. There I was President of the Student Christian Association (SCA) which feebly tried to mount a stand-in campaign at the local drive-in type restaurant; we had few demonstrators and essentially no success but it got me interested in doing more when I transferred to UT in the fall of '61 where I finally (barely) graduated after three years with a BA in Sociology. Those three years at UT were exciting and exhilarating being involved in the Y, CLFC, and SDA meetings, conferences and actions. At UT I finally found myself through several epiphanies which occurred during events and meetings mostly at the Y in which I was president of the YM part in the spring of '64. I then married, went to grad school in Anthro at the Univ. of Arizona, where I participated in several riot filled Anti-war marches, fell in love with computers, never finished the PhD, took a computer job in RI, where 45 years later I'm still a computer consultant trying to retire and fondly remembering the passion of my days at Texas and rekindling it for current causes like sustainable agriculture and fighting for progressive policies!

But, I digress. At UT, I wrote dozens of letters back to my parents in Corpus which, I discovered recently, my mother religiously saved! Thanks mom! Mostly the letters are reporting on jobs, courses and living conditions, as well as always pleading for more money to pay the rent. Several of the letters, however, include passages about the Y and SDA activities and stand-ins as follows:

11/2/61 -- re: the SDA, Negro girls sit-in, SDA response

"...Things are really hopping around here integration wise. I went to the SDA (Students for Direct Action) meeting last Tuesday night. The nature of this group is really fantastic. About 300 hundred of us crowded into a very hot and stuffy small auditorium in the Y at 8:00 o'clock. The group had no committees, no elected leaders, no definite income or financial resources or meeting time. They (and I like to include myself) are so fervently united in the cause that when funds are needed for something everybody chips in wholeheartedly and eagerly. There is somewhat of a leadership in that there are people who know what is going on and have tremendous leadership abilities--these are some of the sharpest people on the campus. The leader varies from night to night. When something needs doing, someone volunteers to do it. What is really great is that they know what they are doing--everything is carefully thought out with much consultation and research, all actions and decisions are talked over by the group until it comes to a consensus. The group has been so careful and straight thinking and yet so firm in its stand for total integration that it has the respect of the faculty and many community personnel. The only means of identification we have is a small card with a drawing of a black hand shaking hands with a white hand. There are no membership roles; anybody may come and at the end of each nights meeting the time for the next meeting is decided upon. All are welcome.

At the last meeting we were given a complete summary of the happenings in the current goings-on for those who weren't acquainted with them. It seems that up to now there have been unwritten rules in University housing units both in the Negro women's dorms and white women's dorms to the effect that a Negro girl may be in a white girl's room only if the door is closed; Negroes may not sit in the "social area" (the lobby) of the white dorms nor may they use drinking fountains, restrooms and other facilities. These rules are thought to be so downright ridiculous (which they are) that one night about two weeks ago about 50 Negroes from the dorms spontaneously (and only was it spontaneously) held what might be called a sit-in in Kinsolving dorm, the large white girls dorm. The only "rules" which they might have broken were those so called "unwritten" rules.

The next day the entire Negro population on campus was called in for a meeting by the Dean and each person was asked whether or not he had participated in the "demonstration". If they said yes they were immediately put on disciplinary probation. Also if they said "no comment," which most did, they were still put on d.p. Through a lot of pressure from us, student government, many students and the faculty, all but two were taken off of d.p. after a "one week moratorium" to think it over and write down these so called "rules" which we requested them to do.

Well the rules were written down and our meeting was timed to meet just after this statement was made so we could decide what to do next. All sorts of courses of actions were proposed. We know that finally the thing that will break all this will be a lawsuit, so a lawyer has been located to take a case on and money is being raised. That night we passed around a box and deposited in it a slip of paper and a dime to send a telegram to Lyndon requesting that he take note of the matter, etc., etc. Over and over again we reemphasized that anything we will do will be completely within the law but preferably as close to the "edge" as possible. We said we're not looking for martyrs--white or Negro--to get arrested, go on probation or anything else. That night, just to show our feelings, we walked quietly, normally (and not on the grass, mind you) over to Whitis (the Negro dorm) and Kinsolving. We sang such "integration" or "freedom" songs and We Shall Overcome, Battle Hymn of the Republic, the Star Spangled Banner, and others. We shouted, football yell style F-R-E-E-D-O-M - FREEDOM!!.

We mainly sort of dramatized our feeling and got a little publicity (the more of this we can get on the subject the better). We also decided that each day at the ten minute break 10:50 to 11 we will gather on the main mall in front of the library building and all read together the inscription on the front of the library "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." I didn't get to do it yesterday because we had a geology field trip but today I did and there were about 200 or more gathered there to read. As you can imagine this draws looks all the way from the curious to that of a deep hatred toward those "niggers" and those "nigger lovers" who are "just stirring up trouble."

Well, this is just a minute part of the story; I could go on forever...."

9/22/62 -- Y fundraising

"...At the home football games I'm in charge of the novelty booths--the ones that always sell pennants, bells, rubber alligators and the like. Just with me and two others working it we'll draw \$400-\$500 a night of which the Y gets 20%. There only one trouble--we don't get to see the game. When we get more people we'll probably pair off and see half a game..."

10/21/62 -- Y fundraising; Y thrown off Campus Chest, Methodist segregation

"Well I suppose you know that beef is better than pork. I believe that half the state of Arkansas was here yesterday--we concessioners really felt the crowd because my booth (novelties, southwest corner) sold \$360 worth compared to \$260 last game. That added \$66 to the Y funds...I got to sell in the stands and see the game...Never have I seen so many people and heard so much noise,,. Nor have I seen such a crowd so emotionally wound up and involved, or so drunk or so despondent or so jubilant or so interested to the very end of the game. ...Truly that game will go down in history. Incidentally, we won.

...I don't know if you heard but the student Y here was thrown off the Campus Chest (UF) so we won't get a cent. The ostensible reason was because certain organizations wouldn't support it if we were on it. These misunderstandings have grown up out of the Dallas Morning News articles and many other incidents occurring when we try to think and have a little academic freedom and through this strange anti-communist logic, we eventually get connected with the most subversive pinkos in the country. Such gross ignorance and repudiation of the very principles they defend, I cannot understand.

This is the best year program wise this Y has ever had and we get slapped in the face. A several thousand dollar contribution would really relieve a burden almost to great to bear. All of us in the cabinet are working our heads off at the football games to raise the necessary \$1,000 and then we lost the \$3,000 we were depending on. This "communist" theory some people hold about us is a total farce. Sometimes I wish I were in a European society where you wouldn't be antagonized and scoffed economically for trying to see all sides of a question and opening up your building to any and all.

Incidentally, although I realize you can't say too much overtly about it, but what the heck is all this about the Methodist Churches being fairly progressive in the field of integration--what a facade!!!. Few people realize that our great Methodist Church maintains a completely segregated educational institution, namely Southwestern University, Georgetown and probably some others also. Don't I sound like a young college radical preaching reformism? It's funny that we're proud of the attitude of our home church so much yet let the church elders continue this without a word from the laymen."

6/12/63 -- 42 Austin restaurants integrated; Corpus still behind, Black Like Me

"...Well Austin just desegregated 42 restaurants and it's major hotels and more progress is on the way. How about Corpus. Having talked with Jo Ann James (the Negro girl I brought to the Y that day) she believes that Corpus has made very little progress and, worse, has been very hypocritical about the whole situation--bragging about its "progress." Of course we're just

rebellious college students (of which, incidentally, there are surprisingly few) but I have a feeling she is more right since she is rather involved in it.

I sure wish you could make the time to read a much talked about book by John Howard Griffin entitled *Black Like Me*. It made a more cutting impression on me than any other book ever has. If it doesn't drive our fine, up-standing, white, protestant, middle-class businessmen and citizens to a re-examination of business and social practices and their morality as human beings then nothing ever will. Please read it,, that is, if you can find such a good book in Corpus. (I don't see how the highly educated and intellectuals exist there from what I saw in the bookstores.) Well, enough degrading of my hometown. It may be a good thing that I'm a not there because Jo Ann and I might attempt the organization of a racial revolution if I may entertain the fancy that we could ever do such a thing...."