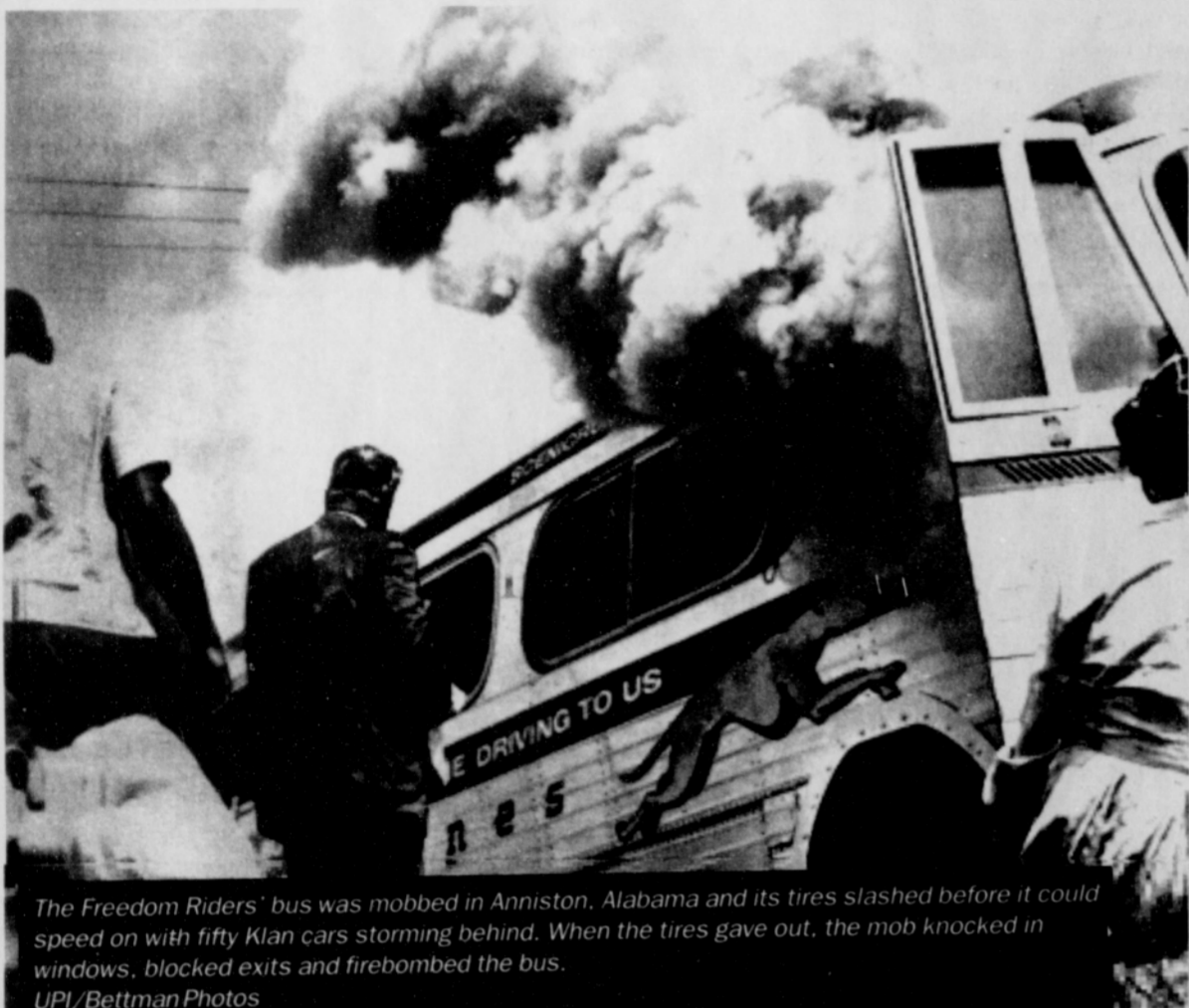


MAY FREEDOM DAYS MOMENTS IN CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY



The Freedom Riders' bus was mobbed in Anniston, Alabama and its tires slashed before it could speed on with fifty Klan cars storming behind. When the tires gave out, the mob knocked in windows, blocked exits and firebombed the bus.
UPI/Bettman Photos

By JANUS ADAMS

MAY 1

On May 1, 1950, Gwendolyn Brooks was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. She was the first African American writer so honored. The book that so distinguished her was Annie Allen, the story of a young black woman coming of age. The story of the book is also the literary coming-of-age of a poet and her work.

MAY 5

On May 5, 1941, Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie triumphantly reentered the capital city of Addis Abab, liberating his ancient land, reassuming his throne, and fully overthrowing his Italian invaders.

In 1884, four hundred years after the papal encyclical that granted Europe's kings and queens "title" to lands that were not theirs, the descendants of those same marauders held the Berlin Conference to partition Africa. Their reign of terror had crested in the rape of every part of the continent but one-Abyssinia, later renamed Ethiopia. In 1896, by winning the Battle of Adua, Ethiopia forced the retreat of Italian troops, retaining its sovereignty. In 1935, Italy was back, this time victorious. Selassie had fled to London with his family, and for seven years Ethiopia was under foreign rule, the papal mission fulfilled at last.

MAY 10

Birmingham Alabama was in turmoil. After four weeks of protests and one week of negotiations, a "Birmingham Truce" between protest leaders (the SCLC and its Birmingham affiliate, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights) and the busi-

ness community was signed on May 10, 1963. Within three days after close of demonstrations, fitting rooms would be desegregated. And, once the city government was established by court order, within 30 days signs on wash rooms and drinking fountains would be removed; within 60 days a program of lunchroom counter desegregation would begin; and employment of blacks would be upgraded and further steps considered.

It seemed so little progress for so much sacrifice by demonstrators who had each pledged to uphold the Ten Commandments on their signed Commitment Cards:

1. **MEDITATE** daily on the teachings and life of Jesus.
2. **REMEMBER** always that the nonviolent movement in Birmingham seeks justice and reconciliation - not victory.
3. **WALK and TALK** in the manner of love, for God is love.
4. **PRAY** daily to be used by God in order that all men might be free.
5. **SACRIFICE** personal wishes in order that all men might be free.
6. **OBSERVE** with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy.
7. **SEEK** to perform regular service for others and for the world.
8. **REFRAIN** from violence of fist, tongue, or heart.
9. **STRIVE** to be in good spiritual and bodily health.
10. **FOLLOW** the directions of the movement and of the captain on a demonstration.

With word of truce, violence broke out. Bombs struck at Dr. King and his brother, Reverend A.D. King. They had forced a dialogue and forced a president and a governor into the showdown that desegregated the University of Alabama and brought scores to the March on

Washington.

MAY 12

On May 12, 1969, Winnie Mandela was detained in a raid on black South African townships. She would spend 491 days in detention - many wedged between solitary confinement and a revolving door. In February 1970, the state withdrew all charges against her. But as she turned to leave the courtroom, she was redetained. Finally, the following June, with world opinion mounting, charges were brought against her. In September, she was again acquitted. Two weeks later, as she left home to visit with the husband she had not seen in two years, a new banning order restricted her travel and placed her under house arrest each night after work. As she became a cause célèbre in her own right, her days were studded by death threats. For years, while her husband remained locked at Robben Island for life, this was how she lived.

A happier May 12 finally came in 1984, when she, her daughter Zeni, and her youngest grandchild were escorted into the office of the prison warden, Sergeant Gregory, for their first "contact visit" in twenty-two years. "Can you imagine! We last touched his hand in 1962," said Mrs. Mandela. "We kissed Nelson and held him a long time. It is an experience one just can't put into words. It was fantastic and hurting at the same time. He clung to the child through the visit. Gregory, his warden, was so moved, he looked the other way."

This is an excerpt from the book "Freedom Days." Permission for reprint was given by John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

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"The Negro today is not struggling for some abstract, vague rights, but for concrete improvement in his way of life"
By Martin Luther King