



Celebrate  
Greensboro

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BY TARA TITCOMBE

A movement that inspired the nation

# The International Civil Rights Center & Museum

**A** must-see vital piece of history stands in the center of downtown Greensboro, welcoming and educating all who visit. The International Civil Rights Center & Museum tells the story of the non-violent civil rights movement that began 51 years ago in its very location.

On February 1, 1960, four African-American freshmen from Greensboro's N.C. A&T State University sat down at the F.W. Woolworth

store's "whites only" lunch counter and ordered coffee. They were denied service, ignored, then asked to leave. They remained seated until the store closed. The next day they returned with 25 others, the following day with more than 60,

and the following with more than 300. By the end of that March, similar protests were taking place in more than 55 cities and 13 states. The non-violent sit-in movement was born, and the nation would never be the same.

Today the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, housed in the former

Woolworth store in downtown Greensboro, celebrates that moment in history and remains devoted to the global struggle for civil and human rights.

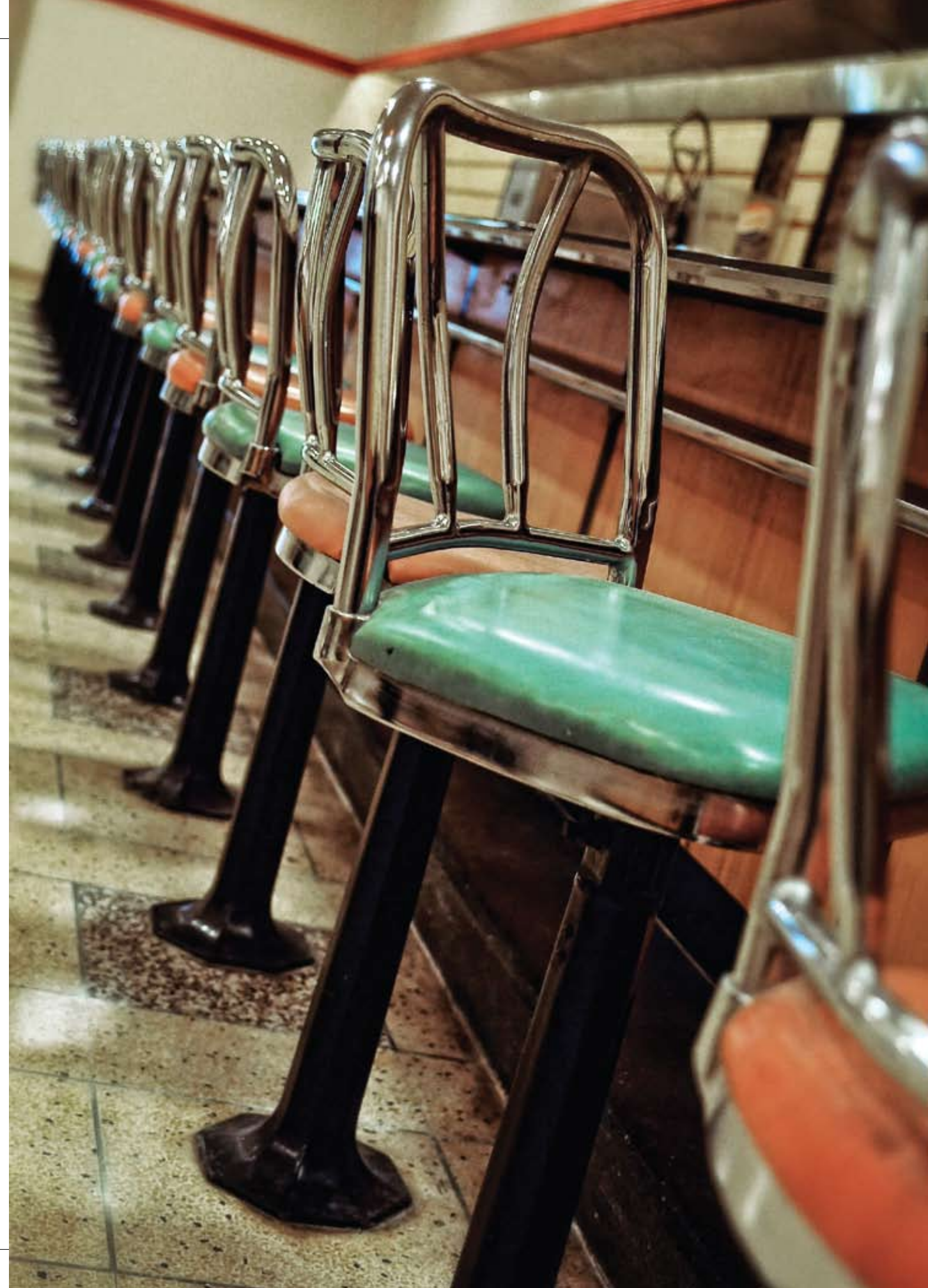
The two-floor, 43,000-square-foot museum opened on February 1, 2010 — commemorating the 50th anniversary of the sit-ins. The grand opening featured an emotional ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by co-founders Melvin "Skip" Alston, chairman of the Guilford County Commissioners, and Earl Jones, then North Carolina State Representative. After hearing plans to demolish the building to make a parking lot, the two

#### VISIT, EXPLORE, LEARN

For more information on Greensboro's International Civil Rights Center & Museum, stop by 134 South Elm St., call 336.274.9199 or 800.748.7116, or check out [sitinmovement.org](http://sitinmovement.org). Admission: Adults, \$10; students and seniors (65+), \$8; children (6-12), \$6; under 6, free.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS CENTER & MUSEUM





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Yvonne Johnson, former Greensboro mayor, reads to children during Saturday Children's Story Hour.



### Movement Momentum

"By August 1961, more than 70,000 people had participated in sit-ins, which resulted in more than 3,000 arrests. Sit-ins at 'whites only' lunch counters inspired subsequent kneel-ins at segregated churches, sleep-ins at segregated motel lobbies, swim-ins at segregated pools, wade-ins at segregated beaches, read-ins at segregated libraries, play-ins at segregated parks, and watch-ins at segregated movie theaters."

[Source: sitinmovement.org]

created Sit-In Movement Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to buying and renovating the Woolworth building.

Today the museum features signature exhibits depicting the struggle for civil rights, as well as a state-of-the-art auditorium, archival center, traveling exhibits gallery, and a children's education and activity center. Its centerpiece is the original lunch counter and stools where Joseph McNeil, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair, Jr., and David Richmond, referred to alternatively as the "A&T Four" or the "Greensboro Four," began their protest.

Permanent museum exhibits transport visitors to a time when segregation permeated society. Guests see a filmed re-enactment of the planning session between the four young men on the night before the historic sit-in. Exhibits also include a reproduction of the facade Greensboro Rail Depot that served as a portal to the "Jim Crow" South; life-size images depicting the differences between black and white school rooms; an interactive voter experience with ballot boxes, poll tax receipts, and an electronic version of Alabama's literacy test.



### Naming Rights

February One Place, the street just south of the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, was named in commemoration of the day of the first Greensboro sit-in.

Jail bars frame the wall of the Jail, No Bail! Exhibit, featuring 1,200 mugshots of protestors who were arrested across the South. The Wall of Remembrance pays respect to dozens of men, women, and children who lost their lives in the battle for civil rights.

Not only does the International Civil Rights Center & Museum serve as a memorial to all of the brave men and women who took a stand during that time, but it also looks to the future. The museum's main objective is to engage visitors and residents in conversation and to serve as an educational center for

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS CENTER & MUSEUM AND (TOP LEFT) COURTESY OF OTIS HAIRSTON

the exploration of civil and human rights issues.

The center publishes a monthly roster of "Educational and Public Programs" for the entire community. The programs encourage dialogue on contemporary issues and explore how people of all ages and backgrounds can effect social change. A weekly Children's Storytelling and Reading Hour invites community leaders and activists to connect with children over inspirational stories and books.

Most importantly, the International Civil Rights Center & Museum underscores how

even a small number of people can change the world. On July 26, 1960, not even six months after the first Greensboro sit-in, the F.W. Woolworth counter was desegregated.

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