

# WHY BOGALUSA MATTERS

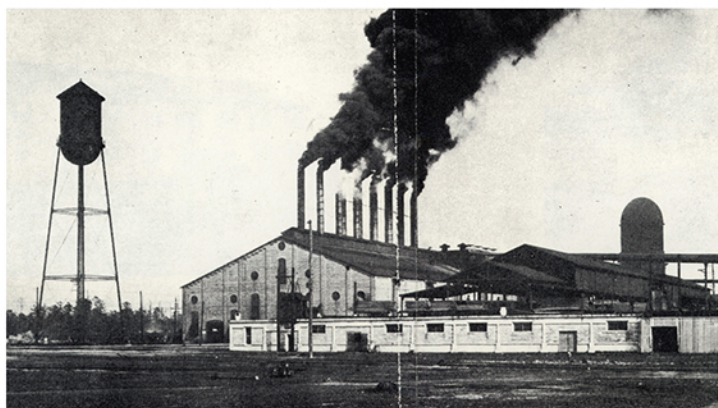


## What Happened in Bogalusa **Affected** the Nation

In the 1960s, a small Louisiana mill town called Bogalusa gave birth to a Civil Rights Movement unlike any other. When faced with violence, the Black community of Bogalusa did not hesitate to stand up and defend themselves and their allies. Their fierce struggle for equality would require intervention from the U.S. president, the Department of Justice, the FBI, Louisiana state troopers and the National Guard. This is a small part of **their story**.

# BOGALUSA'S BEGINNINGS

The land that became Washington Parish was once inhabited by the Choctaw, Acolapissa and Creek people. In the 19th century, white settlers forced the **Indigenous** people off their land, and then in 1906, the Great Southern Lumber Company took their name and trademarked it: Bok Lusa (or Black Creek) became Bogalusa.



The Great Southern Lumber Company mill, circa 1913.

From its beginnings, Bogalusa was a brutally segregated company town. Great Southern owned everything—houses, schools, parks, churches, even a large private army. Black mill workers lived in the “colored quarters” where houses were smaller and lacked the indoor plumbing and electricity provided to white workers. The town’s first mayor hired **bloodhounds** that, he said, were capable of tracking down any “Negro guilty of the crime.”



Robert Hicks bought this 1906 Mill House, moved it to his property and lived in it with his wife, Valeira, and five children during the early to mid 1950s.



## The **Lynching** of Lucius McCarty

In August of 1919, a mob of white supremacists shot Black WWI veteran Lucius McCarty more than 1,000 times and dragged his bleeding body through the streets before **setting it on fire**. A day later, in defiance of the company's ban on "race mixing," 2,500 Black and white union workers marched together in a Labor Day parade through segregated Goodyear Park.



In Bogalusa's early years, Black workers were often recruited from sharecropping farms in Mississippi, lured by the promise of a better life for their families.

## The **Brave** March of Sol Dacus

In November 1919, the day after a white mob fired shots into his home, Black labor leader Sol Dacus marched down Bogalusa's main street, flanked by two white union workers. At union headquarters, they were met with a posse of white vigilantes and company



In 1919, angered by the formation of a biracial union alliance, a white mob shot into the home of Black labor leader Sol Dacus, killing his dog and narrowly missing his wife and children.

gunmen who shot and killed four white unionists, while Dacus miraculously escaped. Their spirit of **resistance** would rise again almost 50 years later when Black union workers at the Crown Zellerbach paper mill, together with Gayle Jenkins and other activists, led the fight for equality and justice.

# THE SPARK THAT IGNITED A MOVEMENT



## Testing the Bogalusa Waters

At the start of 1965, Bogalusa was virtually untouched by the 1964 Civil Rights Act. An attempt by white city leaders to host a meeting to simply discuss integration was met with a campaign of Ku Klux Klan terror and cross burnings. Under pressure from the Bogalusa Civic and Voters League, the mayor reluctantly agreed to let CORE, a national civil rights organization, come to Bogalusa for a single day of “testing” on Jan. 28, 1965. It was a **ruse**. The mayor had persuaded the white businesses to serve the Black customers, but only for one day. When the activists, mostly students, returned to the same businesses the next day, they were met with verbal and physical **assaults** and turned away with guns.



Months later, police presence was required for Blacks to attempt to be served at white-only restaurants.



## Protecting the Hicks House

During the testing, white CORE workers Bill Yates and Steve Miller stayed with Robert Hicks and his family. On the evening of Feb. 1, 1965, the chief of police and a deputy sheriff knocked on the door, threatening

Hicks that if he didn't turn the white activists over, a mob would burn down

the house and kill everyone inside. When Yates asked if they could stay, Hicks replied, "You

are guests in my house." The family began making calls, the children were sent to a safe house and soon armed Black men arrived from all directions to protect the home.



For the next four years, the Hicks House became a base of operations, meeting place and safe haven for the Bogalusa Civil Rights Movement. The house was guarded day and night by the Deacons for Defense and Justice.



The police drove off and the mob never appeared. The events of that night shaped the direction of the Bogalusa Civil Rights Movement, characterized by self-defense in the face of racist violence.

# THE DEACONS

## FOR DEFENSE AND JUSTICE

As tensions rose, Bogalusa civil rights activists called a meeting with a Black self-defense organization recently formed in Jonesboro, Louisiana: the Deacons for Defense and Justice. Bogalusa launched its own chapter on Feb. 21, 1965. The Bogalusa Deacons provided armed **protection** at marches and picketing, guarded the homes of Bogalusa civil rights leaders and patrolled Black neighborhoods. When Black citizens and civil rights workers were threatened, a call would go out through a clandestine network of two-way radios and the Deacons would assemble to protect and defend.



While armed self-defense presented a major challenge to the principles of non-violence espoused by most civil rights organizations, CORE Director James Farmer welcomed the Deacons, stating: "I don't feel that I have any right to tell a Negro community they don't have the right to defend the sanctity of their homes." Pictured: Deacon Candy Nelson



From Bogalusa, the Deacons spread throughout the South, opening at least 20 chapters in towns throughout Louisiana and Mississippi, as well as a few small chapters in Northern cities. Pictured: Robert "Bob" Hicks examining damage to a van belonging to CORE volunteers, after Klansmen attacked his house.



# A CITY IN TURMOIL



## The Student Walk-Out

On April 8, 1965, Central Memorial High School students organized the city's first civil rights march, bringing the elementary school students with them. Before they reached their destination, they were turned around by police barricades and **K-9 dogs**. Students played a leading role throughout the Bogalusa Civil Rights Movement.



## Bogalusa's **First** Major Civil Rights March

On April 9, 1965, the Voters League brought in CORE Director James Farmer to lead a march. Surely, a national figure would put pressure on police to protect marchers. Still, violence ensued. Marchers and journalists were badly beaten. A man lunged at Farmer with a blackjack. The march had an immediate impact. The mayor announced he was ready to negotiate. However, those talks didn't happen. A season of bloody **protests** had begun.

## Integration of Cassidy Park

On May 18, 1965, members of the Voters League tried to peacefully integrate Cassidy Park. As children played on the swings, a mob of white men brandishing guns, bricks and brass knuckles launched a ruthless attack. Police joined in the violence. Among the injured were 14-year-old Greg Hicks, who was bitten by a K-9 dog, and an elderly woman, Mary Williams, who was knocked unconscious. The attacks led to the successful Hicks v. Knight lawsuit which forced Bogalusa law enforcement to protect civil rights activists against assaults and intimidation.

## The Murder of Oneal Moore

In 1964, Oneal Moore and David Creed Rogers became the first African American deputies hired by the Washington Parish Sheriff's Office. Moore was a 34-year-old Army veteran, husband, and father of four daughters. On June 2, 1965, Moore and Rogers were driving home when they were ambushed by a truck sporting a Confederate flag decal. A man inside the truck shot at them with a high-powered rifle, instantly killing Moore and blinding Rogers in one eye. That same night, Ernest Ray McElveen, a member of the White Citizens Council, was arrested, but soon released on bond and never prosecuted.



While the investigation of Deputy Moore's murder was reopened by the FBI three times, in 2016 they announced that that they were "no closer to solving it today than they were fifty years ago." Moore's widow, Maevella Moore, told reporters: "I'm hoping and praying that one day justice will be served."



## The Shooting at Pine Tree Plaza

During a march on July 8, 1965, a mob violently assaulted Bogalusa teenager Hattie Mae Hill and then attacked the white volunteer nurse who was



trying to help her. In an attempt to fend off the mob, **Deacon** Henry Austan fired a warning shot into the air. The mob rushed him. Austan then shot at and wounded the white man at the front of the mob. The shooting captured national headlines and the attention of President Lyndon Johnson, who quickly dispatched his top civil rights aide to Bogalusa to resolve the crisis.

## Four Seniors and Two First Graders Integrate Bogalusa Schools



In September 1965, four Black seniors—Edwina Torrence, Frederick Cooper, Frank Sellers and Michael James—and two Black 1st graders—Lindsey Ray Keys and Sharon Packard—integrated the previously all-white schools. They endured racist hostility and abuse throughout the year.

## The Murder of Clarence Triggs

On July 30, 1966, the body of a Black Bogalusa bricklayer and civil rights supporter, Clarence Triggs, was found, shot in the head, near a wrecked car registered to the wife of a Klan leader. As was the case with Oneal Moore, Triggs' killers escaped justice.

# THE TRUTH MARCHES ON



On Aug. 10, 1967, Bogalusa activists, led by A.Z. Young, Gayle Jenkins and Robert Hicks, embarked on the sweltering 105-mile, 10-day March from Bogalusa to Baton Rouge. They were armed with a list of grievances for the Louisiana governor. In the two years since the Movement began, the Bogalusa civil rights community had won significant **victories**.





Through a series of pivotal federal lawsuits, Bogalusa schools and public accommodations had become desegregated, and injunctions had been placed on both local law enforcement and the Klan. But desegregation had not led to significantly increased access to “white-only” jobs, elected office or justice in the Louisiana courts. This march was about these issues.



The marchers traveled down a **notorious** stretch of highway directly through a KKK stronghold.

Despite protection from hundreds of National Guardsmen, state troopers, and the Deacons for Defense, they **endured** burning crosses, crowds throwing bottles and eggs, and violent assaults as they walked on a highway covered with nails and broken glass to deter them. Even at the end, Klansmen in hoods and robes staged a parallel rally in front of the State Capitol. The



Bogalusa to Baton Rouge March marked a shift in the Louisiana Civil Rights Movement from the demand for integration to the struggle for equity and justice, a struggle which continues today.

# EXPERIENCE THE HISTORY



Bogalusa civil rights leaders Robert Hicks, A.Z. Young & Gayle Jenkins meeting in 1988.

## HISTORIC SITES

### A.Z. YOUNG HOUSE AND LAND MARKER

1119 Young Brothers Road, Bogalusa, LA 70427

*A.Z. Young was the President of the Bogalusa Civic and Voters League.*

### GREATER EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH AND LAND MARKER

1104 Poplas St., Bogalusa, LA 70427

*The only church in Bogalusa that allowed civil rights rallies and meetings.*

### ROBERT "BOB" HICKS HOUSE & 1906 MILL HOUSE AND LAND MARKER

924 and 930 ½ Robert "Bob" Hicks St., Bogalusa, LA 70427

*Site of future Bogalusa Civil Rights History Museum.*

### ONEAL MOORE LAND MARKER

Close to intersection of Highway 21 and Main St. in Varnado, LA 70426

*Site where Deputy Sheriff Oneal Moore was murdered.*

### CASSIDY PARK

625 Willis Ave, Bogalusa, LA 70427

*Bogalusa children were attacked when they tried to integrate the park on May 18, 1965.*

### TANGIPAHOA AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MUSEUM AND VETERANS ARCHIVES

1600 Phoenix Square, Hammond, LA 70403

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*Murals, photos and artifacts tell the story of Louisiana's African American history.*

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