

Student Body Walk-Out

In October 1951, after enduring years of separate but unequal school facilities, the 12A-1 class of Adkin High School came up with a plan to call attention to the circumstances. The lack of equality had been on-going for years, but there comes a time when you have to decide whether or not you will continue to take injustice or do something about it. They decided to do something about the situation.

In the midst of the basketball season, our “Old Barn,” the gym, burned. The teams – varsity, junior varsity and girls – were relegated to playing mostly away games or playing home games outside or in the rec building. Enough was enough! Something had to be done to rectify the injustices perpetrated upon the students of Adkin High School. The senior students in a social studies class decided that it was time to take steps to remedy the situation.

Members of the class chose a committee to spearhead the action. After some concrete plans were made, it was time to bring the Juniors, Sophomores, and Freshmen on board. Those classes were asked to select members to represent them on the committee. Thus, a radical action of the students, for the students, and by the students was set into motion. Contrary to what some preferred to think, there were no adults involved in the planning, only young Black students from classes who were thought to be too inept to formulate a coherent sentence, much less a fairly complicated and secret plan of action on a scale of such magnitude.

Nevertheless, it was planned and carried out without a hitch. A list of “requests” was compiled in preparation for a meeting with the superintendent of Kinston City Schools and the “powers that be,” who were in charge at that time. Needless to say, that Monday night meeting between the students and adults produced no positive results. On the Tuesday morning before Thanksgiving in 1951, the afore-planned password was given over the intercom unwittingly by the school secretary, and the action went on as planned. The seventh and eighth graders who were not privy to the planning stages were told to leave their classrooms when the doors were opened. They did so, and the march down Queen Street ensued.

The student body met in Carver Theater Building and was given instructions. The students returned to school on Monday after Thanksgiving knowing that they had done what was necessary to call attention to the plight of their school.

This was probably one of the first Black student body demonstrations advocating equal school facilities according to the separate but equal southern school regulations. As a result of the walk-out, the building now known as the Adkin Complex was erected in 1953.