

AMONG AMAZING ALABAMIANS
REV. FRED SHUTTLESWORTH

BACKGROUND

"As Birmingham goes, so goes the Nation..."

These are the words used by Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth when he personally invited a young pastor by the name of Martin Luther King Jr. to join him in the crusade for equality in Birmingham, Alabama. Shuttlesworth's relationship with King evolved according to the needs and developments in the civil rights movement. In an interview twenty years later, Shuttlesworth described King's role in galvanizing the movement to include a broader section of the American public:

"I think one of the very important things that must be said is, that Dr. King spoke with a new voice. Not only was it a new movement, but it was a new voice that you must love, you must not hate the people who hate, or who act like they hate you, you must, and the best thing to make out of your enemy is a friend. So, this had a very profound effect upon not only blacks, but whites at this time."

As the pace of the protests and marches increased, so did the bombs and terrorism levied against Birmingham blacks. Shuttlesworth explained why waking up to find himself in a building destroyed by a bomb blast only strengthened his resolve:

"You can outlaw a movement, but you cannot outlaw the determination in people's minds and hearts to be free. I don't think you can do it. Then, now, anytime. You can keep a man in prison, but... you can't imprison his mind, he has to do that. By accepting the walls, actual or imagined. Freedom is something that I think people will always aspire to. And when you tell people they can't have it, this was... in effect saying, you can't hope. You can't kill hope in people's minds and therefore we were determined. So it was on this [basis] that the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights was organized."

QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions in complete sentences or paragraphs.

1. What mental and spiritual longing did Shuttlesworth credit with keeping the determination to struggle against segregation alive? Explain.
2. How did Alabama officials attempt to "outlaw" the Civil Rights Movement? Were they successful? Why or why not?
3. How can a man's mind become imprisoned, according to Shuttlesworth? Give an example from real life in which someone's mind became imprisoned. Explain what they might have done to prevent this from happening.
4. Explain the significance of the statement, "As Birmingham goes, so the Nation goes."
5. How did white supremacists use fear to try and keep Birmingham's blacks from becoming equal citizens of the United States?
6. How did Rev. King and Rev. Shuttlesworth understand their faith with respect to the struggle for civil rights? Why? List five Bible verses they might have used to support their position.

PRIMARY DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The primary document below is a telegram from Rev. King to Rev. Shuttlesworth. Read it carefully and then

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answer the questions below in complete sentences. Use reference books and texts to assist you in formulating more insightful responses.

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REV FRED SHUTTLESWORTH
REVELATION BAPTIST CHURCH 1556 JOHN ST CIN
THESE ARE THE KIND OF TIMES THAT TRY MEN'S SOULS. KNOW THAT I AM WITH YOU IN THIS HOUR WHEN MEN SEEK TO QUESTION YOU. YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH IS NOT ONLY A MATTER OF RECORD, IT IS A MATTER OF HISTORY; BUT MEN ALWAYS STONE THE PROPHETS AND PERSECUTE THOSE WHO WOULD LEAD THEM IN THE TRUTH. MAY GOD STRENGTHEN YOUR SPIRIT AND UPLIFT YOUR HEART THAT EVEN YOUR ACCUSERS WILL BE FORCED TO ADMIT THAT TRULY YOU ARE A MAN OF COURAGE, CONVICTION AND INTEGRITY. YOUR BROTHER IN CHRIST
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR
(18).

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1. To what "times" is King referring? Why does he say these times "try men's souls"? Explain.
2. What is King speaking about when he refers to "this hour when men seek to question you"? Why were blacks who participated in the civil rights movement viewed with suspicion?
3. How does King relate Shuttlesworth's experience with that of the prophets? Do you agree or disagree with this comparison? Explain.
4. What does King hope for Shuttlesworth's accusers? Why?
5. It has been said that no one is free in a society where some live in chains. Explain this in the context of this telegram.

WRITING ACTIVITY

In an interview at the age of 80, Rev. Shuttlesworth admitted he never imagined he would live past the age of 40. "I thought I was going to get killed," he said. "Everybody thought I would get killed". Imagine that you are Fred Shuttlesworth, sitting in a Birmingham jail after having been told by your lawyers that you would probably not be going home for the night. Write a letter to your wife or close family member explaining how you feel and why you believe the struggle is worth the cause. Address concerns about your life and why you have chosen not to let these concerns stand in the way of your struggle. Include details about recent events and experiences.