

Overview of Greensboro Massacre (from Teaching Tolerance)

In Greensboro, North Carolina, on Nov. 3, 1979, in the absence of a dissuasive police presence, a caravan of white supremacists confronted demonstrators preparing for a “Death to the Klan” rally. The rally was being organized by the Communist Workers Party (CWP), previously known as the Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO).

The confrontation left five dead and at least ten others wounded. Klan and neo-Nazis, some of whom were filmed by news cameras as they shot into the crowd, claimed self-defense and were twice acquitted of criminal charges by all-white juries. In a subsequent civil lawsuit, the shooters and the Greensboro Police Department were found jointly liable for one of the five deaths. Many in the community felt that justice was not served.

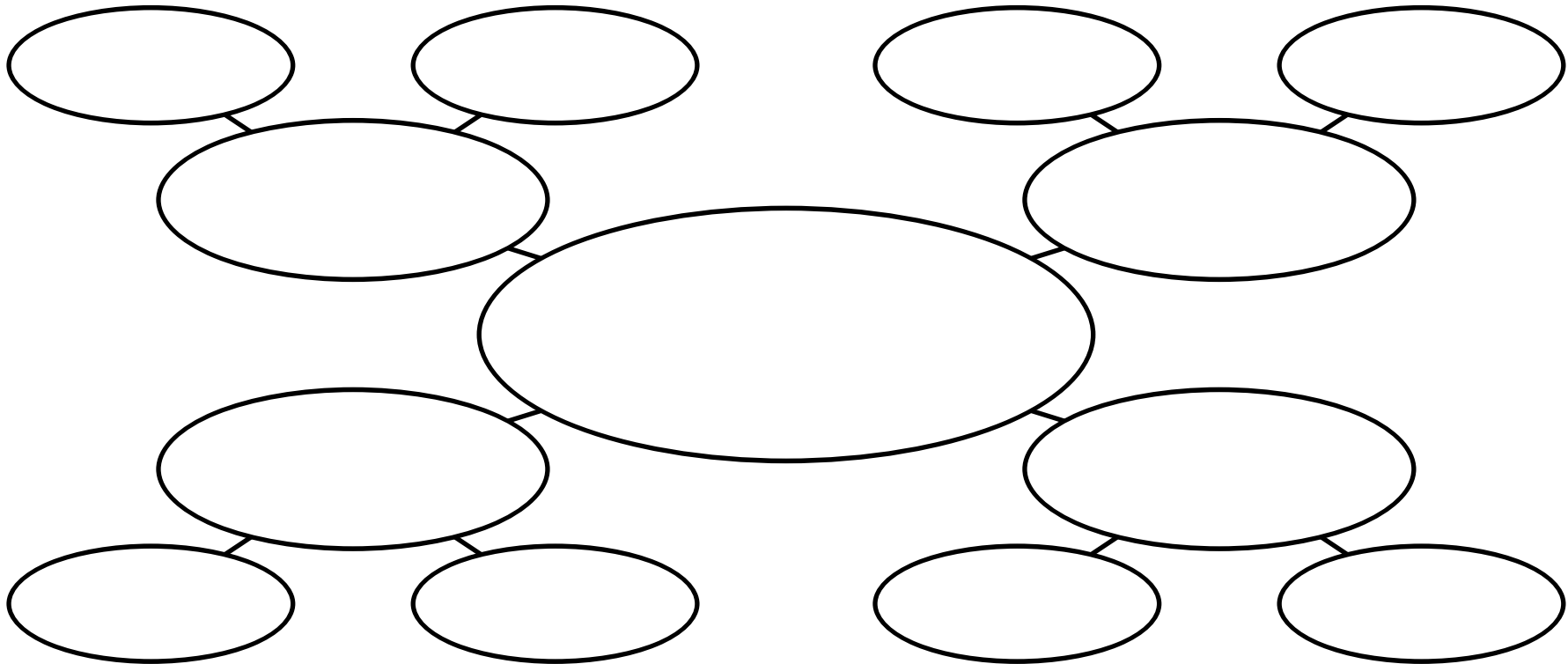
In 2004, the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission was convened to examine what has come to be known as the “Greensboro Massacre” in order to “heal relations between opposing sides by uncovering all pertinent facts, distinguishing truth from lies, and allowing for acknowledgment, appropriate public mourning, forgiveness and healing.” Toward those ends, the Commission reviewed information from the trials, records from law enforcement, newspaper and magazine articles, academic literature and some 200 interviews and personal statements given in private and at public hearings. The Commission’s final report, issued on May 25, 2006, pulled from all of these diverse resources to uncover a “collective truth” about what happened

Thought Web

Graphic Organizer

Name: _____

Write the main idea in the center bubble. Brainstorm related ideas in the connecting bubbles. Add details to the bubble connected to each idea. If you need more space, draw your own bubbles and connections.



Name

Date _____

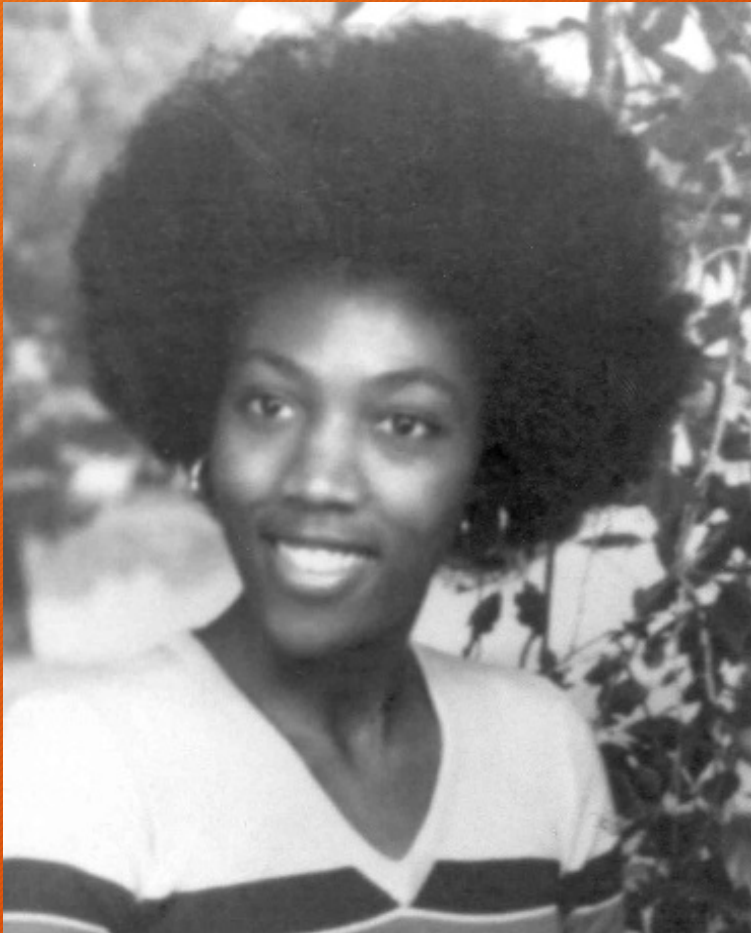
Period

Notes Topic:

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

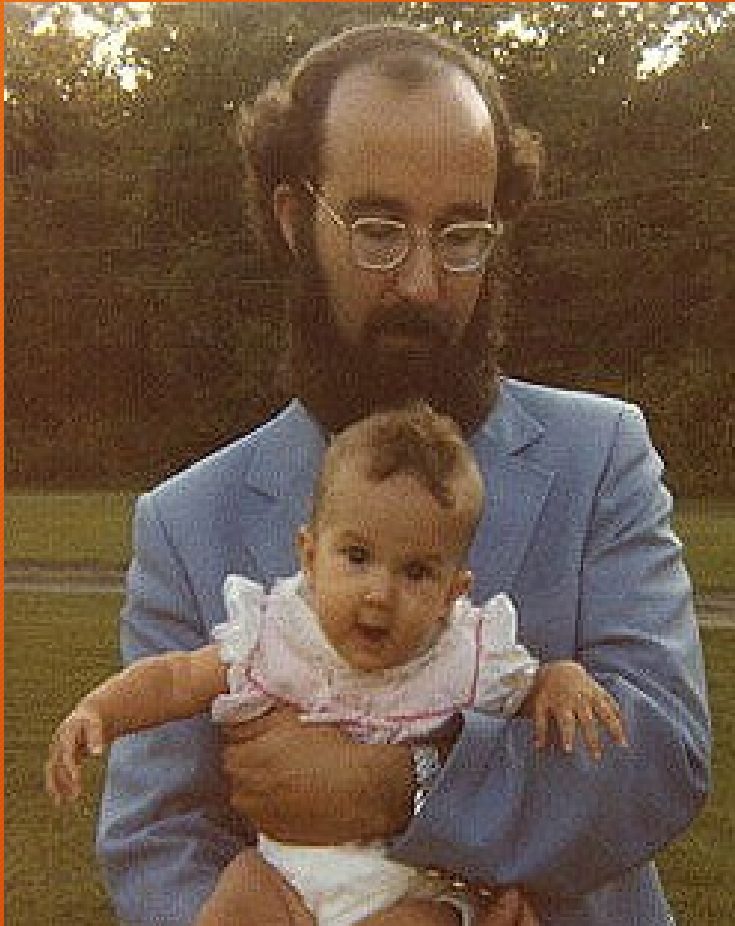
Walking Tour of those killed from The Greensboro Massacre of November 3rd

Sandi Smith



- Graduate of Bennett College in Greensboro, NC.
- Founding member of Students Organized for Black Unity (SOBU), later renamed to Youth Organized for Black Unity.
- Led African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) to fight apartheid.
- Opposed the Ku Klux Klan and supported the targeted Wilmington Ten

Dr. Michael Nathan



- Progressive graduate student of Duke University medical school in Durham, North Carolina.
- Helped the white settler-state of Rhodesia wage a liberation struggle that birthed the new African nation of Zimbabwe.
- Married to Marty Nathan, with a daughter named Leah.
- Workers Viewpoint Organization joined with black community members of China Grove, NC, to demonstrate against the showing of “Birth of a Nation” that glorifies the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

Bill Sampson



- Supported the Wilmington Ten.
- Member of the Workers Viewpoint Organization, employee of Cone Mill White Oak plant in Greensboro.
- Members of the White Oak plant respected him and chose him to run for president in the local union. The election was cancelled due to the ruling class.

Dr. Jim Waller



- In 1973, Waller organized medical aid and set up a clinic to aid American Indian movement activists under siege by the FBI (Wounded Knee, South Dakota).
- Moved to NC to teach at Duke University in Durham, NC, where he coordinated Brown Lung screenings in textile mills, co-founding the Carolina Brown Lung Association.
- Worked at the Cone Mills textile plant where he organized and eventually led the AFL-CIO union which grew in membership from low 20's to almost 200 during leadership.

<https://thenewliberator.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/jmwaller1.jpg>
g

Cesar Cauce



- Campus leader in the anti-war movement.
- Rejected a full scholarship from UC Berkeley to help unionize Duke Hospital workers.
- Participated in strikes against Goldkist in Durham, NC, in attempts to organize poultry workers.
- Was a writer for the Workers Viewpoint Organization where he wrote about class struggles.

Vocabulary Glossary Unit 4 and 5

truth-That which is in accordance with fact or reality; a fact or belief that is accepted as true

reconciliation -The establishing of an ability to coexist in harmony after a conflict

communist-A person who believes in a political theory derived from Karl Marx, advocating a society in which all property is publicly owned.

Ku Klux Klan - The Ku Klux Klan is a racist, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant and anti-gay movement. The groups goal is to achieve racial segregation and white supremacy.

Neo-Nazi groups-Although they disdain other minorities, Neo-Nazi groups are hate groups that perceive "the Jew" as the cardinal enemy. They trace nearly all social problems to an imagined Jewish conspiracy that supposedly controls governments, financial institutions and the media.

white supremacist- One who believes that white people are racially superior to others and should therefore dominate society.

extremist - a supporter or advocate of extreme doctrines or practices

capitalist -A person who believes in capitalism: A *capitalist* nation is dominated by the free market, which is an economic system in which both prices and production are dictated by corporations and private companies in competition with one another, and places a heavy focus on private property, economic growth, freedom of choice, and limited government intervention. The U.S.is a capitalist country.

rally - a mass meeting of people making a political protest or showing support for a cause.

Caravan - a group of vehicles traveling together

protestors a person who strongly objects or opposes something

Anti-Klan -against the Ku klux Klan

party- a formally constituted political group, typically operating on a national basis, that contests elections and attempts to form or take part in a government.

textile mills-n a factory for making **textiles** (which is the cloth to make clothes). NC is a national leader in the textile business.

Commissioners- a group of people like a committee that are responsible for a certain task

remorse- regret or guilt for doing wrong

convictions- the act or process of finding a person guilty of a crime especially in a court of law.

Rhetoric-I is speaking or writing that's intended to persuade.

Informant- a person who gives information to the police

liable-responsible by law; legally answerable

supremacist- an advocate of the supremacy of a particular group, especially one determined by race or sex. "a white supremacist

memoir-collection of memories that an individual writes about moments or events, both public or private, that took place in the subject's life.

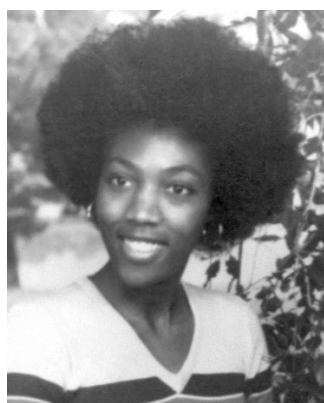
labor unions-an organized association of workers, often in a trade or profession, formed to protect and further their rights and interests.

Polarizing-to cause (people, opinions, etc.) to separate into opposing groups.

What was the background of the Greensboro Massacre? What brought people to an anti-Klan rally on November 3, 1979? Who were the people who organized the rally? What were they doing prior to it, and why?

Now imagine you are able to go back in time and meet some of the people who attended the ill-fated rally in Greensboro, N.C. in 1979. In the 1970s, personal computers, the Internet and cell phones were being invented and not yet in daily use.

You decide to travel back in time to live in the 1970s. Perhaps you or your friends have noticed some things in society today that are not right and that should be changed. If you befriend some young people alive back then and learn about their dreams, hopes and actions to create a better world, you think you might find it helpful in coping with your life today.



One young woman you meet early on is Sandi Smith, from South Carolina. Sandi went to Bennett College in Greensboro and her heart set on becoming a nurse. You see that she is actively struggling for the liberation of black people and for the betterment of the whole society. You completely understand how her strong stand against injustice led to her election as student body president at Bennett College. Sandi was a founding member of Students Organized for Black Unity (SOBU), which later became Youth Organized for Black Unity (YOBU). She was a community organizer for the Greensboro Association of Poor People (GAPP) and worked closely with Nelson and Joyce Johnson, who were already prominent leaders in Greensboro's black community and among progressive-minded whites.

It was easy to hang around Sandi, who was lively and fun-loving but very serious also. Keeping up with Sandi in the 1970s, you saw her in education campaigns to save black schools and secure a quality education for all. You saw her lead the local African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), fight to end apartheid in Southern Africa, opposed the Ku Klux Klan, and support black civil rights activists, like the Wilmington Ten, who were targets of political repression.

Upon graduating, Sandi put a nursing career on hold and became a textile worker at Cone Mills Revolution Plant. (The "revolution" referred to was a revolution in textiles, not in social justice.)



You attend a rally on May 22, 1977 where Sandi is speaking as the Chairperson of the Revolution Organizing Committee (ROC). Sandi led the union drive at that textile factory. She fought grievances for workers and passed out union cards for them to sign. The workers wanted safer working conditions and decent pay. Sandi stood up against the sexual harassment that women workers, black and white, were constantly experiencing from male supervisors. The company made no effort to stop the harassment, but Sandi stood up for the women.

You recall that in the previous month, on April 3, 1977, Sandi invited you to attend a large gathering in which the union drive at Revolution Plant was publicly announced. Workers and community supporters came from all over and their determination and enthusiasm were infectious. Cone Mills White Oak workers, who made denim, were there to support the union drive. So were Cone Mills Granite Finishing Plant workers, who made corduroy.

So, yes, you met Sandi Smith in the 1970s and you also knew her as a member and a leader in the Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO) and as one of the organizers of the anti-Klan rally in Greensboro on November 3, 1979.



In 1978, you travel to Durham, North Carolina. You've heard that Dr. Michael Nathan (standing) had collected thousands of dollars of medical aid for the liberation forces in Southern Africa.

Like Sandi Smith, Dr. Mike Nathan was a supporter of the Workers Viewpoint Organization. When you meet and talk to him, you see that he is filled with the spirit of internationalism. He

really identifies with oppressed peoples around the world and that is why he helped the white settler-state of Rhodesia wage a liberation struggle that birthed the new African nation of Zimbabwe.



Throughout medical school at Duke University and his training as a physician, Mike Nathan was politically active in progressive causes on campus and in the community. In 1979, you receive an announcement that he and his wife, Marty Nathan, had a daughter, named Leah.



A few months afterward, in July of 1979, the WVO joined with the black community of China Grove, North Carolina, to demonstrate against the showing of “Birth of a Nation,” a movie glorifying the Ku Klux Klan. Dr. Mike Nathan was there to oppose the Ku Klux Klan and members of a Nazi organization, who were lined up on the porch of a town assembly building with guns pointed at marching counter-demonstrators holding protest signs. Like his friend, Dr. Paul Bermanzohn, Mike had lost family members in Nazi concentration camps in World War II.

Marching and confronting the Ku Klux Klan with Mike were Nelson and Joyce Johnson, Willena Cannon, Paul and Sally Bermanzohn, Cesar and Floris Cauce, Sandi Smith, Jim and Signe

Waller and other WVO supporters from Greensboro and Durham. A few workers from the textile mills were there, as well as many black China Grove residents who had invited outside support. It was a bold move. Counter-demonstrators were not brandishing weapons as were Klan and Nazi members. A few counter-demonstrators were armed with rocks. Only two police officers from the town were in sight. After some very tense moments of loud shouting back and forth, the Klansmen and Nazis retreated into the building with their weapons still at the ready. Marchers burned a confederate flag, marched around the building once and then returned to the black community center where they provided a protective presence to the residents for hours afterward.



Another person you get to know is Bill Sampson, shown in the picture above on the left playing guitar and singing. Bill was supporting workers at Trader Chevrolet in Greensboro who went on strike in 1978. You see that Bill is a humble and brilliant person, capable of mastering many fields of study. He had been student body president at Augustana College, spent a year studying abroad in Paris, and graduated *summa cum laude*. He earned a Masters Degree at Harvard Divinity School.

Bill's love for his country and desire to make it more democratic led him to fight for civil rights. In the photo above, he holds a sign in a 1978 march in Raleigh to free the Wilmington 10.

By 1977, Bill had decided where he was most needed and could best realize his ideals. He joined the WVO and got a job at Cone Mill White Oak plant in Greensboro, working in the dye house, one of the dirtiest and most dangerous places in the mill. As a labor organizer, Bill was very much respected by his fellow workers of all races because he respected all of them. In 1979, the workers at White Oak had chosen him to run for president of the union local. However, powerful members of the ruling class who opposed trade union democracy cancelled the election.



Through your acquaintance with Bill and Sandi, you meet their friend and fellow labor organizer, Dr. Jim Waller, who is shown here beside Bill. They are at the beach on vacation for a couple of days in the summer of 1978. Jim Waller had just led a wildcat strike at the Cone Mills Haw River plant. Although you are soon to learn that Jim was fired when he returned to the mill, his organizing efforts brought a weak, ineffective union local to life and increased the union membership from about a dozen to some two hundred workers. You hear that the workers around Jim do not buy the company line that they fired Jim because he did not state on his job application that he was a medical doctor, but rather because he was a trusted and effective union leader who could rally workers to fight for decent wages and safe working conditions.



North Carolina was in the mood to strike in 1978. When Goldkist poultry workers struck in Durham because of low wages and intolerable working conditions they were supported by Cesar Cauce, shown above, and others in the community. Cesar was a Cuban immigrant who graduated Duke University *magna cum laude*. He was a leader in a long struggle for a union for Duke Hospital workers and often wrote for the Workers Viewpoint Organization newspaper.



Reading a few Workers Viewpoint newspapers, you learn that foremost in the work of the WVO is securing full civil and human rights for people of African descent. The WVO mobilized people to attend annual African Liberation Day (ALD) events. You decide to participate in Washington DC on May 12, 1979. African Liberation Day was part of a strong, world-wide anti-imperialist movement that, since the early 1970s, brought tens of thousands of people together in U.S. cities and in Canada and the Caribbean islands. You spot two anti-racist labor organizers from N.C., Jim Wrenn (second row left) and Cesar Cauce (second row right).

You learn that the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) had grassroots chapters in Greensboro and Durham, North Carolina, and across the U.S. The committees met regularly in between annual ALD rallies and organized for racial justice in their communities. ALSC taught people that the liberation struggles in Africa were closely linked to the struggles of blacks in the U.S. for economic and social justice. The same system of Monopoly Capitalism, ALSC taught, oppressed and exploited people of color here and abroad for the profit of the same ruling class.



While you are at the Annual African Liberation Day rally in Washington, DC, in 1979, you listen to some speeches. You hear the husky voice of Dr. Jim Waller proclaiming, “Brothers and sisters, I bring you revolutionary greetings from the Trade Union Educational League,” Jim is the president of the TUEL, an organization open to all workers, union and non-union, who are want

to build democratic labor unions and aid other workers. The TUEL opposes *Right to Work* laws which actually weaken or destroy trade unions. The law does not give workers the right to a job. It says that workers are not required to join the union or pay dues even if the majority has voted to unionize. Since all workers benefit from gains made in union contracts, even those who don't join the union or pay dues, workers are not incentivized to join and pay dues if they don't have to. Thus, unions fail to grow larger or stronger.



Above, pediatrician-turned-labor organizer, Dr. Jim Waller (front, left), is on a picket line urging workers to be in solidarity with the strikers.

It is almost time for you to end your trip back in time. You have noticed what your new friends in the 1970s had in common with each other--a commitment to the rights of working people and desire to end racism. These values were manifested in their day-to-day activities.

Plans for a November 3 rally included an *anti-Klan march* and a *labor conference* after the march. The labor forum never materialized because of the deadly attack to the march. But you are beginning to understand why the young people you met planned to rally for workers' rights and for an end to racism. These two issues were connected and intersecting matters for them. They needed to be engaged in order to transform the society into a real democracy, of the people, by the people and for the people.

In sum, the WVO organized and educated people around some basic beliefs. The group was anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and pro-labor, civil and human rights. Its members believed in the revolutionary transformation of our society's social and economic structures. They thought those who work to create wealth in society should benefit from their work. They believed people should be treated equally. They thought it wrong for a few to be super wealthy while many others lived in want. They understood that Capitalism concentrates the social wealth in very few hands, no matter how much wealth there is, and wanted a democratic and classless society.


You learn, too, that around the time of the massacre, the Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO) was changing its name to the Communist Workers Party (CWP). The WVO had started

as a small study group, grown geographically and in numbers, and was maturing into a political party.

You notice, from your trip back in time, the racial, national, ethnic, gender and religious diversity of people in the Workers Viewpoint Organization. The five people killed in the Greensboro Massacre were Cesar Cauce, Dr. Mike Nathan, Bill Sampson, Sandi Smith and Dr. Jim Waller. Of these, three were Christian and two Jewish (Nathan and Waller); Cauce was Latino; the four men were white, and Sandi was the only woman and the only African American.

You realize that you have just scratched the surface and that many more questions, answers and discussions are needed. You have yet to learn about what exactly transpired on November 3, 1979 and what the aftermath was of that horrific day.

DEATH TO THE KLAN



ANTI-KLAN MARCH AND CONFERENCE
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1979
GREENSBORO, N.C.

MARCH
ASSEMBLE
 11:00 A.M.
 PARKING LOT OF
 WINDSOR COMMUNI-
 TY CENTER
 1601 East Lee St.

CONFERENCE
 2:00 P.M.
 ALL NATION PENTA —
 COSTAL HOLINESS CHURCH
 1800 Freeman Mill Rd.



HATED SYMBOL OF THE KLAN
 GOES UP IN SMOKE IN CHINA
 GROVE, N.C.

SPONSORED BY THE WORKERS VIEWPOINT ORGANIZATION - FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL (919) 682-1014 or (919) 272-1692

Virtually all WVO members in North Carolina were involved in planning, organizing and mobilizing for the November 3 anti-Klan rally. The main organizer and leader, however, was Nelson Johnson, an Air Force veteran, leader in the Black Power Movement and African Liberation Support work since his days as a student activist at A & T State University in the late

1960s, and the head of WVO in Greensboro. Nelson had help from other WVO area leaders, specifically Sandi Smith, Jim Waller, Joyce Johnson, Paul Bermanzohn, Cesar Cauce and Bill Sampson, in preparing for the anti-Klan rally.

The announcement, above, and several fliers were widely circulated in Greensboro and Durham. Jim Waller's wife, Signe, designed a flyer with the prominent slogan, "Death to the Klan." How do you interpret this slogan? Paul Bermanzohn created a flier in the form of an open letter to the Ku Klux Klan that angrily denounced the Klan and invited them to come out from under their rocks and face the wrath of the people. This "invitation" was never sent or given to Klan members; it was part of the mobilization effort to get people to attend the anti-Klan march and labor conference. What do you think about this open letter tactic?

Now that you know some of the background of the Greensboro Massacre, you may want to learn more. Here is a brief preview of some topics to come in this history and social studies lesson.



Some of the widowed and injured from the Greensboro Massacre were arrested and spent more time in jail than their Klan and Nazi assailants. Above, Nelson Johnson, wounded and arrested on November 3rd, is shown with wife, Joyce Johnson, upon his release from jail.



In 1980, the documentary, “Red November Black November” premiered in Greensboro. It contained biographies of the five people who were killed and set forth the political views of the WVO/CWP about social revolution. The survivors, widowed and injured of the massacre continued to fight for justice. They were glad to be able to reach out to the public with this powerful film. Shown above, from left to right, are Joyce Johnson, Dale Sampson (Bill’s widow), Sally Bermanzohn, Paul Bermanzohn (critically injured on November 3), Marty Nathan (Mike’s widow) holding Leah, Nelson Johnson, (wounded on November 3), Signe Waller (Jim’s widow) and Sally Alvarez, who produced the documentary with Carolyn Jung (not shown here).



Above are a few of the plaintiffs in the Civil Rights Suit of 1985 brought by the widowed and injured in the Greensboro Massacre. From right to left are Dr. Paul Bermanzohn, Signe Waller, Dale Sampson and Floris Cauce.

Your teacher will guide you through the rest of the story about the Greensboro Massacre and the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Report years later.