

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Gwendolyn Webb

reverend, student protestor

“The more we walked, the more children that came along with us”

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Background and Education

Born: February 15, 1949

Gwendolyn Webb grew up in Birmingham, Alabama. She went to Western-Olin High School in the 1960s. She was a cheerleader at her school¹. At the time, there was racial segregation in schools. This made her want to take action to fight against it.

Webb's Resistance

Webb was only 14-years-old when she went to the 1963 Children's March in Birmingham, Alabama. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. inspired her with his message of peaceful resistance. She even heard him speak at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, which was close to her house. In early May of 1963, thousands of Birmingham students went out to march in the streets to end racial segregation.

Her high school did not want students to leave and protest, so they chained the school doors shut². Webb still found a way out. She led her classmates out of a classroom window in order to go join the protest downtown. They walked five miles to join the other protestors. More young people joined the group along the way. The Birmingham police ended up arresting hundreds of protestors, including Webb. She was held in jail for seven days³.

Achievements

Gwendolyn Webb is a great example of how young people can make a difference. After she graduated high school, one of her friends asked her to apply for a job on the Birmingham police force. At first, Webb was not sure because of her experience at the 1963 march. Then, she decided to apply. She ended up becoming the second African American female to join the police force. She worked to make a difference inside the police force, and change it for the better⁴.

¹ Reverend Gwendolyn Cook Webb's Biography. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/reverend-gwendolyn-cook-webb>

² Pillon, D. (2019, March 7). Marchers to commemorate 1963 Children's Crusade protest this weekend in Birmingham. Retrieved from https://www.al.com/news/birmingham/2018/05/childrens_crusade_1963_march.html

³ Pillon, D. (2018, May 4). Re-enactment of 1963 'children's crusade' set in Birmingham. Retrieved from <https://www.apnews.com/1136aee22c6c4a2597f2afb2a6d67a82>

⁴ Stewart, S. (2018, February 26) Gwen Webb: From the Children's March to the Police Force. Retrieved from <https://wbhm.org/feature/2018/gwen-webb-childrens-march-police-force/>

