

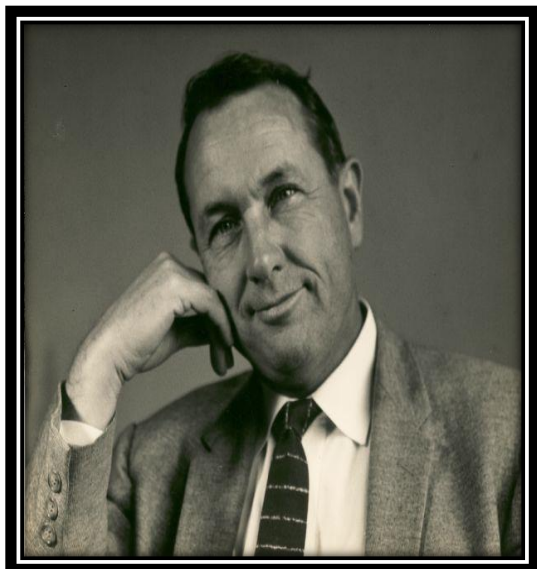
PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Myles Horton

educator, activist, organizer

“Nothing will change until we change - until we throw off our dependence and act for ourselves.”

Page | 1



COURTESY OF WISCONSIN HISTORY SOCIETY

Background Information

Born July 9th, 1905; Died January 1990.

Myles Horton was born into a poor family in Savannah, Tennessee. Both of his parents were teachers even though they never attended high school. While growing up, his parents stressed the importance of being peaceful and respectful to those around him.

Myles left home at fifteen to attend high school and later college. While in school, he spent much of his time working places like a sawmill and a box factory. These experiences had a major impact on how he saw the world.¹ Horton received college degrees from the University of Chicago and Cumberland University.

Horton's Resistance

As a teenager, Horton became involved with unions (unions are an organization of workers formed to create better working conditions for union members). During this time, he led and participated in non-violent protests to support workers' rights and make positive change.² He went on to open a school that developed these skills in students from all different backgrounds and of all different ages. Horton worked to provide an education that went beyond retaining information; it was about illuminating a different perspective for students. The Highland Folk School, opened in 1932, focused on enhancing students' critical thinking skills and civic engagement through culturally responsive materials and non-violent protests.³

Achievements

Horton efforts were widely lauded by numerous civil rights activists and community members. His school educated over 100,000 people including Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. He importantly pushed activists to focus on relationship building and collaboration rather than conflict and confrontation. These practices were modeled in leaders of the Civil Rights movement and current grassroots organizing.

¹ Horton, M., & Jacobs, D. (2003). *The Myles Horton reader: education for social change*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

² Horton, M., Kohl, J., & Kohl, H. R. (1998). *The long haul: an autobiography*. New York: Teachers College Press.

³ Monte. (n.d.). Remembering Myles Horton: A man who left academic sociology behind in order to change society - A Backstage Sociologist. Retrieved November 8, 2019, from <https://thesocietypages.org/monte/2014/08/24/remembering-myles-horton-a-man-who-left-academic-sociology-behind-in-order-to-change-society/>.

Essential Questions

1. How did his work experiences shape his activism?

2. The Highlander school focused on relationship building and collaboration rather than conflict and confrontation. What are the pros and cons of this approach?

3. Many of Horton's students were Black and he often fought against injustice directed at the Black community. How do you think his position as a White man helped or hurt these efforts?

4. ***"Nothing will change until we change - until we throw off our dependence and act for ourselves."***
 - a. Horton said this about racial injustice during the 1950s and believed people must act to make change. What issues of today could this quote be applied to and how can you act to make a difference?