

REmail: March 24, 2005

Subject: Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins. By Carole Boston Weatherford.
ISBN: 0-8037-2860-3.

In Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins, Carole Boston Weatherford gives us a child's eye view of one chapter in the Civil Rights Movement. The storyline and the beautiful illustrations make the discrimination palpable and personal and the final victory joyous and sweet. Connie, the main character, is an eight-year-old African American girl. She cherishes the times she and her mother go downtown shopping together. When they get tired or thirsty, they always go to Woolworth's for a Coke, but, of course, this is 1960 and they can't sit at the counter...yet. As the story unfolds, we are introduced to Aunt Gertie from New York who won't comply with the segregation rules and an elderly white woman who cheers the protesters on at the lunch counter. The reader can feel the excitement and consternation and alarm of the many characters as powerful social assumptions begin to give way.

Weatherford deftly weaves many elements of the Civil Rights Movement into this brief story. Dr. King comes to town and preaches a stirring sermon, a voter registration drive takes place, there is a non-violent sit-in at the Woolworth's lunch counter, Connie's older siblings join the NAACP, the shopping trips downtown stop as the family boycotts local merchants, Sister is arrested in a protest, and the sit-ins spread across the South. Finally, the lunch counter is open to all and Connie has her banana split at the counter!

Freedom on the Menu is such a well-told story, rich in Quaker themes, that it can be used in a variety of ways in your First Day School. It was probably written for third graders, but it will hold the interest of even Middle School students and with some explanation be comprehensible to even kindergarteners. You could create a one-day lesson around the story or use the book to open a unit on non-violence or anti-racism. The Greensboro Sit-Ins would work up nicely into a simple skit to share with your Meeting.

A guest teacher who had a personal involvement in the Civil Rights Movement would add a rich complement to lessons drawn from the book. Friends in your own Meeting may have participated in freedom rides or helped to rebuild African American churches in the South that had been burned. Children hunger to hear the service and faith stories of adult Quakers. Personal vignettes about living the testimonies through acts of conscience and non-violent resistance add a reality and texture to the Quaker faith they are learning about in First Day School. This is Quaker community building at its best!

As a final lesson possibility, make a very large menu decorating the cover with a picture of your Meeting and the title "Freedom on the Menu." Inside, have your whole Meeting help the children add the "dishes" you are serving up in 2005 to keep freedom on the menu. Contact your Peace and Social Justice Committee and Working Party on Racism in advance. They may have Minutes to add to the menu.

In the Light,
Beth

Reminder: It's time to register for the CE Curriculum Workshop in Portland, ME on Saturday, April 30. Find out what children are ready to learn at each age and what prepared lessons are the best match for your Meeting. Send me the hard copy of the registration form or an email indicating your interest.