

Reference



SEPTIMA CLARK, famous crusader for Black people, was a visiting lecturer at UC Santa Cruz in October. Here she talks with students (l. to r.) Andrew Nevitt of San Mateo, Joy Halverson of San Diego, and Jennifer Moore of Catalina Island following a class in Contemporary American Society.

Septima Clark at UCSC

SANTA CRUZ—Septima Poinsette Clark, born in Charleston, South Carolina in 1898, the daughter of a slave, was leading seminars for students at UC Santa Cruz during the month of October.

Her whole adult life has been devoted to the education of black people, from her own teaching in public schools, to working in citizenship training.

Mrs. Clark's parents believed in getting an education in a time when, she says, all that black people were expected to do was "go out to work and service as farm hands or domestics."

She received a high school diploma in 1916, then taught in a number of elementary schools. After twenty years of summer school she earned her college degree (in 1942), and later an M.A. (in 1946).

In 1954 she lost her job as a public school teacher (just two years before retirement) because, she says, she refused to give up her membership in the NAACP.

She went to Monteagle, Tennessee to work for the Highlander Folk School, a "school of truth," she calls it. There she organized teaching programs for both blacks and whites. One of her students was Rosa Parks, the Alabama woman who refused to move to the back of the bus, and thereafter became one of the key leaders in the Montgomery bus boycott.

From 1960 to 1970, Mrs. Clark worked for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference under the direction of Martin Luther King, Jr. The years of

educational programs, citizenship training, and fighting for equality had explosive results in that decade. They were the years of the sit-ins, freedom rides, and the march from Selma to Montgomery.

Today, Mrs. Clark is retired from the conference but is called back for service from time to time. She keeps active in working for child care centers, food stamp programs, saving co-ops, and for better treatment of prisoners who are kept segregated in several Southern states. "It's a form of slavery still surviving," she says, "with pitifully few training programs."

At Santa Cruz, Mrs. Clark was sponsored by newly-opened College Seven and Cowell College.

She led seminars three to five times a week for 30 to 40 students interested in community development on the Sea Islands of South Carolina and in various parts of California.

Since the Cowell Extramural Program began, several dozen UCSC students have gone to Daufuskie Island. At first they worked as semi-skilled laborers. Now they concentrate on the island's young people, teaching in the school and participating in a teen club.

Acting Provost of College Seven, J. Herman Blake says, "Mrs. Clark gave our students deeper understanding of how community organization can be carried out, and how leadership qualities can be developed in people who do not appear to have such skills."

Reference—Tom O'Leary
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