

# Black History Month

## A Florida Focus

### A CIVICS IN REAL LIFE SERIES: CIVICS CONNECTION SPOTLIGHT

#### Spotlight #11: Rodney Hurst & Jacksonville Sit-Ins

In 1960s [Jacksonville](#), [Rodney Hurst](#) was the 16 year old president of the NAACP Youth Council, where he and his colleagues helped organize training for and provided guidance to young civil rights activists. His goal was to prepare them to engage in lunch counter sit-ins, like those that occurred in [Greensboro, North Carolina](#). This type of effective anti-segregation effort was happening all over the nation, being led by mostly young people and students. According to Hurst, "In Jacksonville, most of the demonstrators came from Black high schools. The peaceful protests of teenagers who dared to challenge segregated white counters is not a myth or an urban legend." On August 13th, 1960, Hurst, along with other young people, went to the local Woolworths to have lunch at the whites-only counter. The goal was to try and force integration through economic pressure, [a strategy similar to that of our Founding Fathers against the British on everything from tea to stamps](#). They were denied, and the counter was closed. The push for integration in Jacksonville, led in this case by Hurst, had kicked into high gear. Over the next couple of weeks, tensions grew and incidence of violence began to appear, as [white and black students](#) began non-violent protesting in support of these civil rights efforts. Then on August 27th, violence was on full display when members of the [Ku Klux Klan, White Citizen Councils](#), and local residents attacked the student protestors with ax handles. This event would become known as '[Ax Handle Saturday](#).' Local African-American gangs offered to protect the protestors, themselves engaged in retaliatory violence, but Hurst and the leaders of the movement objected to the violence and rejected that protection. Instead, the NAACP and its Jacksonville Youth Council organized an effective and lasting boycott of segregated businesses and public facilities. As a result of this economic pressure, a year later, Jacksonville was a mostly integrated city. The efforts begun by Rodney Hurst had been successful in helping the City of Jacksonville fulfill the [promises of the Declaration of Independence](#) to its residents.

### CONNECTION QUESTIONS

- What does the ultimate success of the Jacksonville Woolworth Lunch Counter Sit-Ins and the associated boycott suggest about way in which citizens can impact their communities?

16-Year-Old Youth Heads Jax NAACP



Lou Frey  
Institute