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SHOULD NEGROES  
BOYCOTT  
SANTA CLAUS?

OCT. 17, 1963

**BARBARA TRENT**  
Pretty New Jersey  
model helps showcase  
newest styles in the  
Ebony Fashion Fair

New  
Fashion  
Setters





## **NEGROES READY TO GO FOR BROKE**

By JOHN H. BRITTON

There are ghetto children, comedian Dick Gregory cracks, who don't believe in Santa Claus because they think no white man will dare come into their neighborhood after dark. The red-suited, bewhiskered old man may soon be the butt of some more barbs this year, but they won't be funny. On the eve of Christmas, 1963, will keyholes at Negroes' homes be stuffed with lead to keep out the jolly old gentleman? Will chimneys be filled to the brim with cement? Will fires be left burning in fireplaces to make it too hot for Santa to land? Will Negroes boycott Santa this Christmas?

The answers, and the method and scope of a boycott depends upon which leadership opinion prevails, or if leaders can agree on the matter.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., wants a "sacrificial Christmas," commemorating the deaths of six children killed in



*Baldwin (l) and Dr. King agree on Xmas boycott, but approach it differently; but NAACP's Wilkins won't lock out Santa.*



## AT THE 'WORD' FROM LEADERS



*Gus Courts was pioneer fighter in Mississippi and knows power of money squeeze. Though he is a Santa, he hails boycott.*

**Birmingham; the ambush of Medgar Evers, and all others who died this year in the struggle for equality.**

Roy Wilkins' NAACP steers clear of any "consumer strike," or boycott that is not organized well enough to guarantee successful impact. A sweeping boycott without the full resource and power of all civil rights groups behind it is "a dangerous risk," says Wilkins' top aide, Dr. John Morsell. "If," continued Dr. Morsell, "a merchant opens his cash register and finds that he made only \$11 less than he did before the boycott started, he obviously will not be impressed."

Civil rights leaders (especially CORE) are aiming at the big cities. Some, attempting to assure that Negro kids won't be punished by a sweeping national boycott, are designing boycott projects to carry out "constructive goals" (like merit employment demands) as well as to commemorate the death of the Birmingham bomb victims. Other groups say they favor selective buying campaigns at stores which



## Withhold Dollar, Make White Man Holler—Adam Powell

don't hire Negroes in numbers. The rights groups say they intend to raise money and collect toys and clothing for needy families to exempt kids from the boycott. Plans to set up a "toy house" to refinish and repair the collected toys to be distributed to the kids have already begun in big cities.

But the boycott plan, originally proposed by authors James Baldwin and Louis Lomax and the committee of Writers and Artists For Justice, intends to strangle moral commitments to equal racial justice from the entire white business community with a "no exceptions" dollar-squeezing revolt at Christmas time. The writers are trying to stop shopping altogether.

Dr. King later mentioned a national "selective patronage" campaign for Christmas, but details of his plan are yet to come. Generally, he says, he does not want the nation to forget the six lives sacrificed in Birmingham in the name of civil rights.

The NAACP favors selective buying programs on local levels in connection with Christmas, with the money saved being donated freely to civil rights causes. But, Wilkins emphasized: "Each person should decide how best he can react effectively" to the Birmingham bombing. "Organizationally," he said, "we (NAACP) cannot sponsor a nationwide Christmas boycott." Nowhere has a concrete plan of action emerged. Yet, intense study is being given the nation-wide boycott idea.

A white marketing research firm in New York released a study on the matter. After examining the Negro market, William Capitman, president of the Center for Research in Marketing, Inc. (in Peekskill) reported:

1) About 89 per cent of the nation's Negro population stand ready to take part in any boycott whenever and wherever it is called by one of their national leaders.

2) Acting individually, 30 to 40 per cent of the Negro population are individually engaged, *at the present time*, and without any prompting, in withholding patronage





*SNCC's James Forman wants tangible boycott goals for bombed Birmingham kids, like girl of the Chris McNairs (l).*

from some stores and products because of treatment of Negro customers and employes.

3) Because the Negro market (\$23.5 billion) represents a sales potential as large as the entire population of Canada, and because of the exciting new pride Negroes feel, the market represents, now, both the greatest danger and the greatest potential existing in the American market place for expanded sales.

Bluntly put, available research, even that from white sources, scream loudly that Negroes, just like Congressman Adam Clayton Powell urges, are ready at a moment's notice to "withhold the dollar to make the white man holler."

However, the idea of boycotting Santa Claus gains momentum only slowly.

"I wouldn't go against it," (the boycott) said a parent, whose child died in the Birmingham bombing, "but I wouldn't advocate it either."

Comedian Dick Gregory agrees that Christmas *ought* to be a day of love, not hate—as should every other day. "Unfortunately," he said, "we know that's not the case."



## Urge Negroes Spend Christmas Money On Civil Rights

So it seems perfectly right that on Christ's birthday the nation be reminded of its terrible failure at 'Peace on earth and good will toward men.'" Continued Gregory: "It makes good sense that in memory of six children who will have no Christmas, the money usually spent on new clothes, expensive toys, Christmas party liquor and the like, go to those organizations fighting for the cause of dignity and human rights. I can't imagine a better way to celebrate the spirit and true meaning of Christmas."

Others at the grass roots say they like the idea. The reported much-tortured (in his hometown Belzoni, Miss.) Gus Courts, now living in Chicago, and a Santa Claus at a department store for years, knows a boycott's effectiveness as it has been used against him as a storeowner (in Mississippi) when he insisted on voting, and he says he has used it against others.

"I'm for a Christmas boycott if it can be done right," he told JET. "After all, white folks taught us how effective it is and let us know the power behind it."

Many believe it will be the kids that will make a Christmas boycott difficult. Said Wilkins, reviewing his talks with other Negro leaders: "It seemed . . . that it would be unfortunate to further deprive Negro children, already brutalized by segregation, by denying them the annual joys of a Christmas tree and toys."

Retorted Congressman Powell: "Santa Claus is a white man's invention—nothing to do with Christmas."

Baldwin said tell the children on Christmas morning that "Santa didn't come because your brothers and sisters were killed in Birmingham by your co-citizens . . ."

Said author Lomax: "Tell them Santa Claus didn't come because the bombers did come . . ."

One New York department store executive, Lawrence Lachman (of Bloomingdale's) "could not say" what such a boycott would do to business.

"I will say however, that it would not be helpful at all. It would create a bad situation."