From the "Bland Leading the Bland to the Mississippi Freedom Vote: William Sloane Coffin Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement at Yale University, 1958-1963."

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Abstract
When Reverend William Sloane Coffin, Jr. arrived at Yale University in 1958, he found a campus he characterized as "the bland leading the bland." By the time sixty-seven Yale students went to Mississippi in 1963 to register voters during the freedom vote, Coffin had played a crucial role in creating a politically aware and directly involved student population. Coffin had infused the Yale campus with "energy." He did this gradually by preaching, introducing outside motivators and leaders, and encouraging the students to take action. The result was a student population that was politically engaged and actively involved in the civil rights movement. This essay explores Coffin's role in transforming the Yale campus and the impact he had on the civil rights movement through his work at Yale.
leading by example. Through his weekly Sunday sermons the civil rights leaders he brought to campus and his participation in Operation Crossroads-Africa and the freedom rides, Coffin was able to shift the climate of the Yale campus from apolitical and uninterested to socially active and involved. By 1963, Yale was a politically such that sixty-seven students traveled to Mississippi to join en masse in the 1963 freedom vote, a protest election to draw national attention to inadequacies of the Republican National Party and the Democratic National Party. The freedom vote also served to force the Kennedy Administration to provide national protection for civil rights workers. The issues involved in the freedom vote were not the rest of the country had been largely ignoring, including October and November of 1963, sixty-seven Yalies went to Mississippi towns such as Clarksdale and Natchez and for three weeks encouraged people to vote in the protest election, by canvassing and handing out pamphlets.

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