

an open Bible, the kind your granddaddy might have owned, with a thin black leather cover and gold-trimmed pages, thumbed over and dog-eared.

In a world where restaurateurs consider menu fonts and paint colors as carefully as the arch descriptions of appetizers, Mother's is a holy place, a rare destination—maybe a glimpse of our recent, less-than-glamorous past. But don't get nostalgic. Mother isn't studying that. She doesn't care about cultural norms, social issues, or how you think a restaurant ought to look.

This is how her restaurant looks: The floors are dirt-colored Marmoleum, the kind you remember from your elementary-school cafeteria. The countertops are aging Formica. Winter heat is provided by the open flame of a gas radiator, summer cold by a window unit. The remnants of wallpaper borders speak to the distant priority of decor. So do the favorite quotes, newspaper articles, and pictures thumbtacked to the wall. In a neglected corner an artfully rendered pastel portrait of Mother rests on the floor. A gift from the artist, it's a fine thing, discreetly propped there, nearly hidden by a table. It's as if Mother wants you to know this is her place but it's not about her. It's about lunch. It's about country-fried steak and gravy, black-eyed peas, lima beans, and cornbread.

Mother doesn't care how many degrees you have, who your people are, or which side of town you call home. She doesn't care if you publish essays, or read long novels, or know how to tango. She runs a kitchen, a good kitchen, about which people who don't write poetry write poems. 🍷

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*Melissa Dickson is a poet and mother of four who loves a good salmon croquette. Her work can be found in Bitter Southerner, Cumberland River Review, and Shenandoah.*

PHOTO, PAGE 20, by Melissa Dickson.



PROFILE

## BIGGER THAN A HAMBURGER

### SCENES FROM THE STUDENT SIT-IN MOVEMENT

PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON signed the Civil Rights Act into law on July 2, 1964. The legislation outlawed segregation in places of public accommodation, including restaurants. Though Johnson receives much of the credit for ending de jure segregation, the Civil Rights Act was the culmination of more than four years of peaceful demonstrations held at restaurants and lunch counters across the United States—not just in the South—and led, in large part, by students at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). What is so striking about this



▲ *PREVIOUS PAGE: Students from Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas, do their school work during a sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter, ca. November 1962. (Copyright Bettman/Corbis/AP Images)*

◀ *Students from St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, North Carolina, participate in a sit-in at a downtown lunch counter on February 10, 1960—just days after the first sit-ins at Woolworth's in nearby Greensboro. (Copyright Bettman/Corbis/AP Images)*

▼ *A woman closes a department-store lunch counter in downtown Memphis, Tennessee, to prevent a young man and woman from sitting down, June 1961. The protestors were most likely students at LeMoyne College or Owen Junior College. (Copyright Bettman/Corbis/AP Images)*

moment in history is how the students carried themselves with such dignity in the face of sometimes violent reactions from their adversaries. Their smart blazers and ties, tailored skirts and blouses, functioned as a sort of sophisticated armor. The leaders of the student movement were disciplined, organized, and professional in their approach, so much so that many people forget how very young they were. Looking at a collection of photos taken at sit-ins from Maryland to Texas, we begin to get a visual—and visceral—sense of the immense significance of the lunch counter. Where we eat is, as activist Ella Baker put it, “bigger than a hamburger.”





▲ Police arrest two students from Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, for sitting in at the lunch counter of a downtown Marshall drugstore in the spring of 1960. (Copyright Bettman/Corbis/AP Images)



▲ Police detectives remove an African American man from Hooper's restaurant in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 12, 1961. More than 30 were arrested in Baltimore that day for participating in a series of sit-ins at local restaurants. (AP Photo/William A. Smith)



▲ On May 28, 1963, Tougaloo College professor James Salter and Tougaloo students Joan Trumpauer and Anne Moody sit in at the lunch counter of Woolworth's in Jackson, Mississippi. White opponents of integration beat Salter over the head and sprayed him with condiments. (Copyright Bettman/Corbis/AP Images)