

Ruby Sales stood on the stage, her body tall, and a book in her hands.

“We are gathered here today to celebrate a man who saved my life. We are gathered here to celebrate Jonathan Myrick Daniels, and the sacrifices he made for this young country. I have with me his journal, and to start off today’s function, I would like to read an excerpt from it.”

*August 14th 1965*

*Growing up in Keene, I was shaped to follow suit and, like my father, practice medicine. I never wanted to be a physician like he was, but in admiration of him I studied at the storied Virginia Military Institute. My father, you see, he was my everything. I never needed anyone else. He instilled in me this voice that speaks on things the average man would be afraid to confront. I am the only white male who supports the blacks and acknowledges their freedom. Everyone else seems too shy to do so, almost as if they would be disgraced if they did stand up for our “enemies.” But I’m not like the others. I understand how unfair it is to discriminate against these people, so I give them a voice through me.*

*In fact, I am on my way to protest this discrimination at Fort Deposit in Lowndes County. My family told me to be careful and cautious for several months ago, the inspiring civil rights worker Viola Liuzzo was assassinated by the Klu Klux Klan in this same county. Her life was taken at this very same place for very similar reasons to what I’m fighting for. Who knows, maybe I will go down in history as the man who died because of what he believed in. But that is an extraordinary way to make history. I will not cower. I will do whatever I must to support those with no say.*

*With this passion that was laced within me, I paced back and forth, my stance strong and demanding. I studied the 22 other people who joined me in protesting, noticing the hurt in their eyes. And when I heard the sounds of sirens, my ears perked, and my chest puffed. I am not giving up to ensure my freedom. So be it, let them cuff my hands. Let them lock me away and shelter me from the world. I will let them do whatever they feel necessary. But never will I let them silence me.*

*August 20th 1965*

*Today was my release, and I felt so guilty. If I was any other race, I would be spending the rest of my life rotting in my cell. I wouldn’t be handed the privilege I have now. I would never say that I understood their pain because I don’t deal with a fraction of what they have to, and that is solely because of the lack of melanin present in my skin.*

*Shortly after being released, my dear friend Richard Morrisroe and I joined Ruby Sales and Joyce Bailey as they were on their way to The Cash Store to buy a can of cola. Although the public views these black girls as violent and odd, I can assure you that there is nothing odd nor violent about these beautiful young girls.*

“... and that, my fellow intellectuals, is how his journal ended.” Ruby Sales stood behind the podium, explaining to a crowd of a thousand, what exactly Jonathan Daniels did.

“This wonderful and brave martyr took a shotgun blast for a girl he hardly knew. Jonathan was a man we didn’t deserve. He supported every human, understanding how crucial it is to support one another. He was someone who didn’t see in color, but instead viewed people differently depending on their capacity of love. For, Jonathan Myrick Daniels loved everyone.” The crowd erupted in applause, as a tear fell down Ruby’s chocolate skin.

“This man never saw my people as oppressed. In the beginning of 1965, Jonathan took notice that no blacks were registered for voting, even though blacks took up 80 percent of the population. He fought for that. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. himself called Jonathan to join his march from Selma to Montgomery. And after that march, Jonathan stayed in Alabama noticing the heavy segregation. He wanted to change that. Jonathan volunteered in Selma, helping out a local health clinic. He was born to save lives. Jonathan made his way to “Bloody Lowndes” which is the most segregated county in all of Alabama. He challenged the idea that this county was the most violent in race relations. He did what he could.” Ruby Sales turned to the church she spoke in front of.

“It is a sweet moment to remember, in the midst of sadness,” she said to those who gathered around.

“Thanks be to God.” Ruby Sales spoke into the microphone, her voice shaking.

“The night of August 20th, still haunts me. It was under that Coca-Cola sign that Jonathan saved my life. He pushed me, a 17 year old black girl he hardly knew, away from the aim of that 12-gauge shotgun. He was killed instantly. I felt so guilty, I thought I robbed this man from the rest of the world. But now, standing here today, I have come to realization that I didn’t rob him his life... Racism did.”