

# Primary Source: Hecht's Lunch Counter Boycott Poster

**Themes:** activism, civil rights, race, segregation

**Questions:**

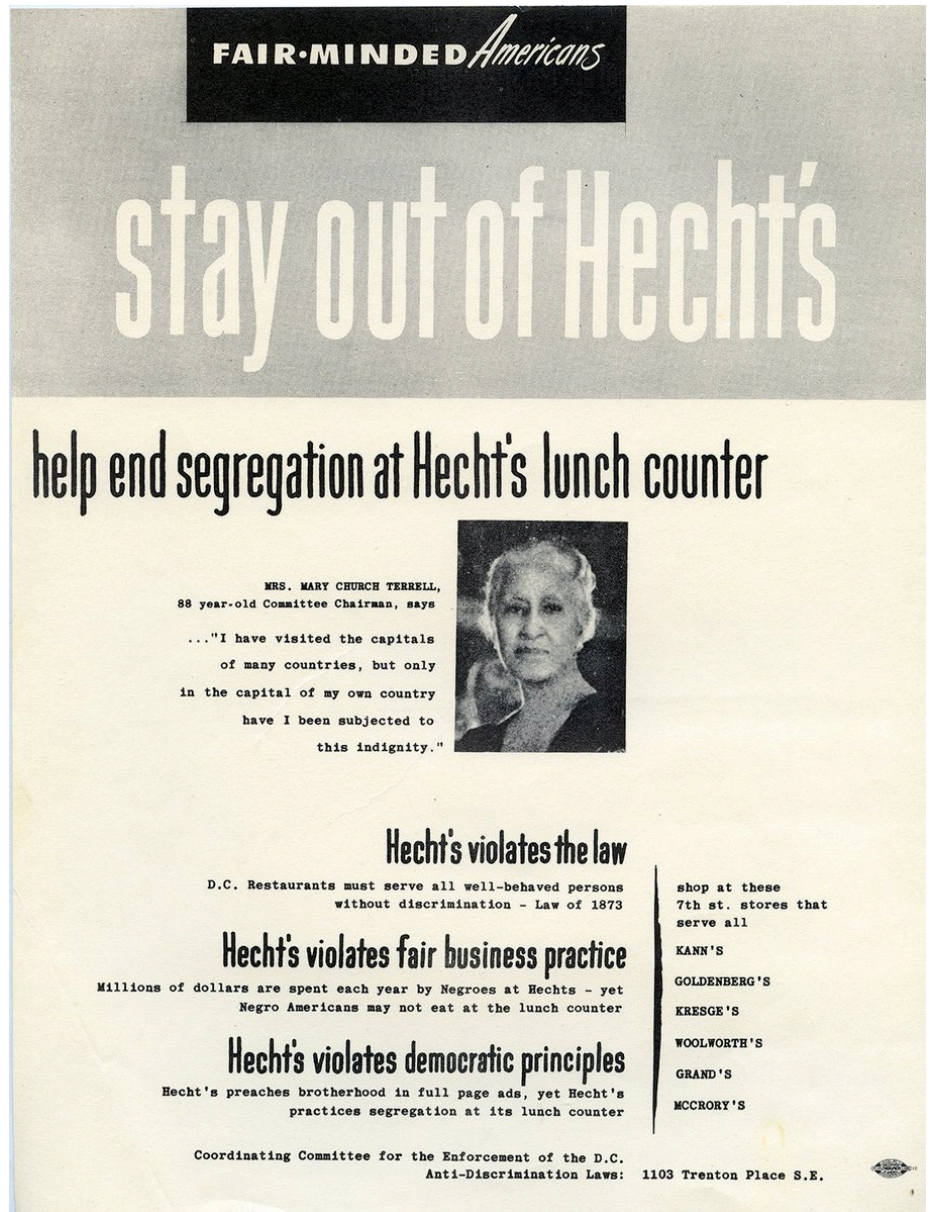
1. What can we learn from this document about Jewish relationships to segregation and the Civil Rights movement?
2. Why might activists choose boycotting, picketing or sit-ins as a tactic? What other examples have you seen of these tactics (in history or the present)? What other tactics might activists use to create change?

**Background:**

In 1949, Jewish radical Annie Stein, African American civil rights activist Mary Church Terrell, and other DC activists formed "The Coordinating Committee for the Enforcement of the DC Anti-Discrimination Laws." Their goal was to challenge segregation in DC's public places. In 1951, the group led pickets, sit-ins, and boycotts of the whites-only lunch counter at Hecht's, a Jewish-owned department store. This poster was a part of that effort.

The address listed for the Coordinating Committee on the poster was Annie Stein's apartment at Trenton Terrace—a housing development which served as the organizing headquarters of many Jewish labor and civil rights activists in the 1950s. The picture on the flyer is of Mary Church Terrell.

In the following months, the Coordinating Committee accumulated both local and national support for their efforts. After months of sustained protests, Hecht's began providing full service to Black customers in January of 1952.



**Extension:**

The 1873 law that this poster is referring to is one of DC's "Lost Laws." Look up the Lost Laws—what were they, and why were they useful to activists like Mary Church Terrell and Annie Stein?

**Item Information:**

Poster, Boycott of Hecht's for violating DC's anti-discrimination law, 1951. Courtesy of the DC History Center.

**Full Text**

Fair-minded Americans stay out of Hecht's

Help end segregation at Hecht's lunch counter

Mrs. Mary Church Terrell, 88 year-old committee chairman, says "...I have visited the capitals of many countries, but in the capital of my own country have I been subjected to this indignity."

Hecht's violates the law. D.C. restaurants must serve all well-behaved persons without discrimination - Law of 1873

Hecht's violates fair business practice. Millions of dollars are spent each year by Negroes at Hecht's—yet Negro Americans may not eat at the lunch counter.

Hecht's violates democratic principles. Hecht's preaches brotherhood in full page ads, yet Hecht's practices segregation at its lunch counter.

Shop at these 7th St. stores that serve all:

- Kann's
- Goldberg's
- Kresge's
- Woolworth's
- Grand's
- McRory's

Coordinating Committee for the Enforcement of the D.C. Anti-Discrimination Laws: 1103  
Trenton Place S.E.

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