



## Naomi Rothschild, civil-rights advocate and longtime Englewood volunteer, dies at 94

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Naomi Rothschild, a longtime Englewood resident who died Sunday at 94, took a celebrated stand against racial discrimination 74 years ago.

She and six other New York University students spearheaded a protest after word that a star black halfback would be benched for the NYU-Missouri football game because the University of Missouri didn't want him on its field.

The Oct. 18, 1940, demonstration drew more than 2,000 students and sympathizers to NYU's administration building and gained national attention. "End Jim Crowism at NYU," "No Missouri Compromise" and "Bates Must Play," the picket signs read.

NYU would not be swayed. The black player, Leonard Bates, didn't travel to Missouri with the team; NYU lost 33-0, and anger mounted over what was called "the gentlemen's agreement" — if one college team objected to blacks participating, the opposing team would agree not to suit up its black players.

And NYU retaliated against the "Bates Seven" — including Naomi Bloom, a Manhattan dentist's daughter — by suspending them.

Naomi's leadership role in the movement was very much in character, according to her son, Dr. Michael Rothschild.

"She was incredibly tough and strong and stood up for what she believed was right," he said. "She wasn't one to be pushed around."

NYU lifted the suspensions after three months. Naomi graduated and returned to NYU for a master's degree in art education. She also had been booted from her sorority and, to her annoyance, was never reinstated.

At the annual athletic dinner in 2001, NYU honored the seven students who stood up for Leonard Bates and the school's other black athletes. Mrs. Rothschild told The New York Times that she appreciated the acknowledgment, albeit late.

"When it happened, I got no support from the school, no support from my family," she said. "For all these years, I felt slightly guilty that maybe I had done the wrong thing. Now I maybe see that I didn't do anything wrong."

Naomi Bloom married Dr. Carl Rothschild and in 1949 they settled in Englewood. Mrs. Rothschild ran her husband's medical office and pursued a career of volunteerism.

She joined the local ambulance corps and gave her time to, among others, the Center for Food Action and Englewood Hospital and Medical Center. She stopped volunteering at the hospital last month, after surpassing 19,000 hours.

When she was 89, Mrs. Rothschild was seriously injured in a Route 4 traffic accident and had to be extricated from her car.

"But she kept pushing herself, kept incentivizing herself," her son said, and within a year she was walking the 2 miles from her home to her favorite gourmet shop in town.

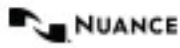
Michael Rothschild said there's a lesson to be learned from his mother's long life of activism and service: "Do what you can to make this world a better place."

Mrs. Rothschild, who was widowed in 1994, is survived by her son, of New York City, a brother and three grandchildren. Services will be at 11:15 this morning at Riverside Memorial Chapel in Manhattan.




RECORD FILE PHOTO

Naomi Rothschild


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