# THE PAST IS POLITICAL: RACE, CULTURAL LANDSCAPES, AND THE CASE FOR COMMUNITY-DRIVEN HERITAGE IN SELMA AND SOUTH AFRICA

by

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# ABSTRACT

The process of preserving and interpreting cultural heritage is inherently political. Cultural heritage has the power to legitimize the present by grounding it in the physical remnants of the past. This is most obvious when examining the destruction of heritage, whether through casual neglect or deliberate violence. The heritage most often at risk is that which challenges the values and narrative of the dominant culture. The process of preserving cultural heritage requires public historians and heritage professionals to negotiate these competing narratives and ideas, yet these practitioners are themselves influenced by the cultural context in which they live. In the United States, most public historians and preservationists are white in a cultural context that works to render their whiteness both normal and invisible. Public historians and heritage professionals must acknowledge and accept their own personal biases if they are to effectively preserve heritage that reflects the experiences of people of color and marginalized communities.

This dissertation argues that rather than focusing on the outcomes of projects, public historians and heritage professionals ought to prioritize the process of preserving and interpreting heritage, which means creating true partnerships that allow communities to drive the work forward. The role of the professional is temporary in nature, and in order for a project to succeed in the long term (achieve cultural success), the community must be prepared to take over and advocate for the project. Engaging communities requires public historians to cede control, but this process can yield interpretation and material that is rich and rewarding both to scholars and outside audiences.

These challenges are not unique to any particular country, but this dissertation explores them using case studies based on fieldwork in Selma, Alabama and

Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa. This research examines the challenges of doing heritage in places coping with the legacy and history of a long period of racialization and race-based discrimination.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC African National Congress

DCIA Dallas County Improvement Association

DCVL Dallas County Voters League

IFP Inkatha Freedom Party

MK Umkhonto we Sizwe "Spear of the Nation"

NAACP National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NPS National Park Service

NVRMI National Voting Rights Museum and Institute

PAC Pan-Africanist Congress

SCLC Southern Christian Leadership Conference

SNCC Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

SRC Southeast Regional Council

TRC Truth and Reconciliation Commission

VEP Voter Education Project

VRA Voting Rights Act of 1965

WCC White Citizens' Council

# CHAPTER ONE:
# "AND IF WE ARE TO STRIVE FOR A BETTER FUTURE, MUSTN'T WE BE FAMILIAR AND RECONCILED WITH OUR PAST?"[1]

Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* is a magical realist novel intertwining the Holocaust, Jewish village life in Eastern Europe, and heritage tourism. The quote that opens this chapter is taken from the justification that the Venerable Rabbi gives for keeping a record book of events (capitals are in the original). Though a work of fiction, the layers of the narrative reflect the complex and sometimes illogical ways in which people connect their present circumstances with their past. This quote in particular gets at the motivation behind the desire to know and understand the past.

The desire for an origin story is deeply human. Origin stories pervade mythologies and religions, fiction and fantasy, and even science. One may not relive the past, but one may be doomed to repeat it. People look to the past to legitimize their experience and understanding of the present and to find clues about the future. As memory scholars and psychologists alike have pointed out, memory is complex. Selective and easily manipulated, individual and collective memories are constantly reshaped by the act of recounting them and the need to align them with present experiences.[2]

Cultural heritage can play a key role in the process of collective remembering and forgetting. Building on the work of Pierre Nora, Jens Meierhenrich modifies and applies

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[1] Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 196.

[2] Alessandro Portelli discusses this phenomenon in great depth in a number of his works. See: *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* to physical sites dedicated to memorializing the genocide in Rwanda.[3] Meierhenrich discusses the tension between official and unofficial sites; while many survivors prefer memorials, especially unofficial ones, as an end in themselves, Tutsi elites returning from exile desire larger scale monuments as a means of attracting tourists.[4] While the official memorials survive, the unofficial ones are in imminent danger of disappearing altogether along with many of the physical sites where the genocide took place. The loss of these sites severs the ties between the memories of genocide survivors and the cultural landscape.

Cultural heritage can be understood as "a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge, and traditions."[5] These resources may be either tangible or intangible, and particular pieces of cultural heritage may embody competing meanings and values for different groups. An antebellum plantation in the American South, for example, might be simultaneously a site of nostalgia and fantasy for some and a site of oppression and violence for others. Public historians, including heritage professionals, historic preservationists, and interpreters, are increasingly called upon to negotiate these complex, multilayered meanings. Just as history has evolved to include competing narratives about the past, so too has public history. The field of social history called historians to find ways to craft more inclusive

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[3] Jens Meierhenrich, "The Transformation of *lieux de mémoire*: The Nyabarongo River in Rwanda, 1992-2009," *Anthropology Today* 25, no. 5 (October 2009): 13-19.

[4] Ibid., 14.

[5] As cited in George S. Smith, Phyllis Mauch Messenger, and Hilary A. Soderland, Introduction, in *Heritage Values in Contemporary Society*, ed. George S. Smith, Phyllis Mauch Messenger, and Hilary A. Soderland (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2010), 15.

narratives that better reflect the past experiences of all people, including women and people of color, whose lives were previously treated as peripheral to the experiences of wealthy, influential white men.[6] These scholarly developments took place alongside the civil rights and feminist movements of the mid-twentieth century. By the 1990s, as historians embraced the abstract, postmodernist ideas about the social construction of historical experiences, black feminist writers were already discussing intersectionality, which looks at how race and gender inform the experiences of black women and how white supremacy and patriarchy come together to create unique structural challenges for women of color.[7] Similarly, academics across a number of disciplines began to engage with the social construction of whiteness and white privilege.[8]

Public historians have also worked to make their interpretations more inclusive by recognizing competing narratives, and exploring silences on a number of topics.[9] In his historic preservation book *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory*, for example, Daniel Bluestone uses a series of case studies to illustrate how the preservation impulse is tied to contemporary social and/or aesthetic values. In order to be preserved, a historic site must

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[6] Examples include Samuel Roberts, *Infectious Fear: Politics, Disease, and the Health Effects of Segregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Knopf, 1990); and Jennifer Jensen Wallach, *Closer to the Truth Than Any Fact: Memoir, Memory, and Jim Crow* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

[7] See: Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-99.

[8] See: Paula S. Rothenberg, *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism* (New York: Worth, 2012).

[9] This material will be discussed shortly, but it is worth mentioning in particular the work of Michel-Rolph Trouillot on silences in the historical and interpretive narrative: *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon, 1995).

not only have meaning for those who wish to preserve it, but the would-be preservationists must also have the power and influence to challenge the people who wish to destroy the site.[10] This analysis helps to establish the connection between the built environment and contemporary values. Bluestone contends that lack of political clout prevents some communities (especially communities of color) from being able to preserve the physical remains of their past, but this is only part of the story. This dissertation takes Bluestone's analysis a step further, arguing that the process of preserving and interpreting cultural heritage is a way of curating the material culture of the past in order to uphold the social, cultural, and political values of the present. Historic sites that tell stories that conflict with these values are destroyed not only because they lack advocates with the political clout to save them, but because their presence challenges the dominant narrative and its attendant values.

This is particularly evident in the selective preservation of the built environment. The South retains its white columned manor houses rather than its slave cabins; the eastern seaboard has kept its glamorous townhouses rather than its tenement alleys. Even when sites do survive, their interpretation often skims or ignores the uncomfortable aspects of the past. Southern plantation tours, for example, have been heavily criticized for glossing over slavery,[11] which has had lasting consequences on how contemporary

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[10] Daniel Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory: Case Studies in Historic Preservation* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2011), 14-17.

[11] James Oliver Horton, "Presenting Slavery: The Perils of Telling America's Racial Story," *Public Historian* 21, no. 4 (Autumn 1999): 28, accessed April 9, 2015, < http://www.jstor.org/stable/3379471>; E. Arnold Modlin, Jr., "Tales Told on the Tour: Mythic Representations of Slavery by Docents at North Carolina Plantation Museums, *Southeastern Geographer* 48, no. 3 (November 2008): 265-87, DOI: 10.1353/sgo.0.0025.

visitors imagine slave life.[12] Allowing these sites to disappear from the landscape often has the effect of erasing them from our collective memory. This is the fear that drives anxiety about gentrification; not only are older and poorer residents often displaced, they also must watch the physical evidence of their lives largely disappear.[13]

The destruction of heritage is not always a slow process. In *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*, Robert Bevan describes how genocide and ethnic cleansing often include active efforts to erase evidence of the existence of the targeted ethnic groups. Genociders remove evidence of the cultural accomplishments of the targeted group from the landscape, so that even if a few members survive, the material evidence of their historical legacy, which might support the legitimacy of their claim to the space, is no longer available.[14] Bevan argues the damage and destruction of elements of the built environment associated with particular communities or ethnic groups forms a key part of the cultural repression these minorities face.[15] By erasing the tangible evidence of the past, those who seek to eliminate a particular ethnic group ensure that the

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[12] There is considerable evidence that enslaved people lived inside manor houses, though few tours engage with this idea or perhaps even realize it. Michael Strutt, "Slave Housing in Antebellum Tennessee," in *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery*, eds. Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 223-32.

[13] On the social phenomenon of gentrification, see Japonica Brown-Saracino, *A Neighborhood That Never Changes: Gentrification, Social Preservation, and the Search for Authenticity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), accessed April 9, 2015, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=481223>; and William J. Wilson and Richard P. Taub, *There Goes the Neighborhood: Racial, Ethnic, and Class Tensions in Four Chicago Neighborhoods and Their Meaning for America* (New York: Knopf, 2006). The National Council on Public History's blog, History@Work, also includes a number of posts related to gentrification from a public history perspective, http://publichistorycommons.org/tag/gentrification/.

[14] Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007).

[15] Ibid., 9.

ethnic minority can no longer use these structures as proof of the longevity of their claim to belonging, and help erase their very existence from the memories of other residents.

While the loss of heritage through neglect or demolition in the United States is rarely as dramatic as what Bevan describes, the cumulative effect is not dissimilar. In *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston*, Stephanie Yuhl studies how preservationists and boosters in Charleston, South Carolina, between 1920 and 1940 used preservation and art to create a whitewashed version of the city's history that both elided its slave-owning and slave-trading past and helped to underpin both white supremacy and Jim Crow.[16] The decisions made by these activists have had a long-term impact on Charleston's built environment, making it more challenging for contemporary historians who wish to present a fuller picture of the city's past. This is not to suggest that more dramatic examples of destruction are absent from the American landscape. In *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race War and Its Legacy*, James Hirsch tells the story of what is commonly called the Tulsa race riot, which took place in May and June 1921 following the arrest of a young black man for supposedly assaulting a young white woman (who later declined to press charges).[17] Rumors of a possible lynching circulated through the thriving black commercial and residential district of Greenwood, Tulsa, prompting concerned blacks to march to the courthouse. The riot began when whites, primed for violence by the possibility of a lynching, saw the group of armed blacks and attacked. The whites then invaded Greenwood, looting homes of valuables and burning

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[16] Stephanie Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

[17] James Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race War and Its Legacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

them as they worked their way through the neighborhood, shooting as they went. Though the number of people killed is debatable, if one includes those who died of disease and exposure in the months following the riot, the number is surely well into the hundreds. Despite promises of assistance, city officials failed to help rebuild Greenwood, and thousands of black Tulsans lost everything. The story of the riot went unmentioned in textbooks, and no memorials were built to commemorate the lives lost. Evidence of the state's involvement and an incendiary newspaper editorial have disappeared from the historical record. It is a testament to the power of the dominant (white) narrative that so dramatic an incident could be so easily and smoothly erased from the collective consciousness.

Cultural heritage matters, because it grounds abstract ideas about the past in a visceral reality; it demonstrates that a community has roots in the past that legitimize both its present and its presence.[18] Thus, the destruction of cultural heritage, whether through wanton violence or casual neglect, can delegitimize the authenticity and claims of the groups whose heritage is destroyed. Public historians and heritage professionals must be particularly aware of their role in negotiating this process. Historic preservation has come a long way from its early roots in preserving properties associated with great white men and high-style architectural gems, as exemplified by Ann Pamela Cunningham's quest to save Mount Vernon.[19] Later generations have come to value the significance of

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[18] Bevan, *Destruction*, 8.

[19] For a full explanation of this trend, see: Diane Lea, "America's Preservation Ethos: A Tribute to Enduring Ideals," in *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Robert E. Stipe (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 1-22; and Norman Tyler, Ted J. Ligibel, and Ilene R. Tyler, *Historic*

vernacular architecture as a built record of how people lived in the past, an important context for the social and economic lives of ordinary people.[20] With this expansion of interests has come an increasing effort to preserve sites associated with marginalized communities, though institutionalized barriers still exist. Efforts to preserve historically black neighborhoods, for example, often face a number of integrity[21] issues for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. These neighborhoods are often made up of smaller homes on small lots, so the only way for one property get a larger yard is through the demolition of an adjoining property. These empty lots make reaching the threshold of intact properties for a district nomination difficult, even though these types of changes could be seen as part of the evolution of the neighborhood into a more desirable place to live. Similarly, some historic working-class neighborhoods have a high degree of tenancy, so it can be extremely difficult to convince landlords that the nomination process is worthwhile, let alone that they should support zoning protection on investment properties.

Despite, or perhaps because of, these challenges, the effort to save these neighborhoods and other sites associated with the United States' painful racial legacy

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*Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), 27-62. Cf. Bluestone, *Buildings*, 14-39.

[20] See: Thomas Carter and Elizabeth C. Cromley, *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture: A Guide to the Study of Ordinary Buildings and Landscapes* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008); Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia: A Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975); Bernard L. Herman, *Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); and Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[21] The National Register of Historic Places defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey its significance, which normally means that it looks much like it did during the period of significance.

takes on even greater urgency. Allowing these sites to disappear from the landscape makes it easier for the history associated with them to disappear from collective memory, which in turn makes it easier for the dominant culture to dismiss the historical experiences of marginalized people. If there are no more separate entrances for "white" and "colored," it is that much easier for white people to consign Jim Crow laws to the nebulous past and deny that there is any connection between present-day racial inequalities and those of the past, despite significant evidence to the contrary. This type of denial has real-world consequences, as U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts made clear when he wrote for the majority in *Shelby County v. Holder*, which struck down a key component of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Roberts essentially claimed that the Voting Rights Act had accomplished its goals and that its protections were no longer necessary in part because of the election of black mayors in Philadelphia, Mississippi, and Selma, Alabama, both sites of horrendous anti-voting rights violence.[22]

This is the line that public historians must walk when they negotiate the preservation and interpretation of cultural heritage, particularly when engaging with cultural heritage of marginalized communities. Even well-meaning professionals, blinkered by their own personal biases, can overlook this. Given the field's emphasis on reflective practice, it is perhaps surprising that there is so little reflection on the impact of whiteness on the practice of cultural heritage preservation and interpretation.[23] While

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[22] Chief Justice John Roberts, Opinion of the Court, *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, Attorney General, 570 U.S. ____ (2013), 15-16.

[23] On reflective practice, see: Noel J. Stowe, "Public History Curriculum: Illustrating Reflective Practice," *Public Historian* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 39-65, accessed April 9, 2015, DOI: 10.1525/tph.2006.28.1.39; N.B. this entire issue of *The Public Historian* is well worth reviewing for its investigation of reflective practice.

public historians and heritage professionals often acknowledge the political motivations of the communities with which they work, they are less inclined to analyze their own political motivations and beliefs as influences on their work and process. The act of creating and interpreting heritage is fundamentally political both in its process for communities and professionals and in its outcomes.

The inherently political nature of heritage can be particularly challenging for practitioners who strive to be apolitical in their work and interpretations. The reality is that apolitical history and cultural heritage do not exist, and material that presents itself as such is that which upholds status quo social, political, and cultural values like white supremacy and patriarchy. A U.S. Civil War site that sidesteps the question of slavery is not only avoiding a contentious issue, it is also participating in white supremacist narrative that dismisses not only the historical experience of enslaved people but also the impact of that past on the contemporary experiences of African Americans.[24] When a civil rights site ends its narrative of the civil rights movement with the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., it discourages visitors from seeing the connections between the freedom struggle of the mid-twentieth century and the ongoing freedom struggle against institutionalized racism. When a site in the western U.S. encourages visitors to see the West as a vast, untamed wilderness, they participate in the silencing and erasing of Native American stories from the landscape, a practice with profound consequences for the basic rights of Native Americans today.

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[24] See: Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *Atlantic*, May 21, 2014, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>.

While these types of practices may create a less complicated experience for white visitors, they have the opposite effect on visitors of color who are often alienated by these practices, which negate their stories and connections to the past. Passively upholding these status quo values also deprives visitors of the opportunity to develop a dialogue and find language to discuss the complicated impact of these histories on the present. In the wake of the 2014 shooting death of black teenager Michael Brown by Darren Wilson, a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, a group of interested activist-scholars began a monthly conversation on Twitter called #museumsrespondtoferguson. Much of the discussion centers on how museums can do more to engage with the racial and cultural issues and confront their own inherent interpretive biases. The Incluseum (http://incluseum.com/) is a Seattle-based website whose contributors explore how museums can be more socially (and racially) inclusive both as they develop exhibits and interact with visitors. These discussions are important, and many of the discussions on #museumsrespondtoferguson focus on solutions; but what is truly needed is a paradigmatic shift in the way that white public historians understand their role and the impact of their whiteness, and of whiteness more broadly, on how they approach both cultural heritage and communities.

This raises the question of community interaction, which is at the heart of public history as a field. Public history is not the same as public intellectualism or history done in public, where the public is simply the consumer. Rather, public history embraces a methodology that regards the public or community as partners in the entire process—or attempts to, at least. Public historians often discuss the idea of shared authority. In an essay in *Letting Go?: Sharing Historical Authority in a User-generated World*, Michael

Frisch revisits his own earlier and often-cited work on the topic. Frisch underscores the difference between "sharing authority," which implies that public historians have authority that they ought to share with stakeholders or narrators and "a shared authority," which recognizes that public historians do not have sole authority over interpretation and the making of meaning; the authority to do so is shared with the audience and participants.[25]

Both of these concepts are useful. Frisch is correct to point out that the authority to make meaning and interpret is shared, and this perspective provides excellent insight into how public historians can be true partners with communities (more on this later). The concept of sharing authority, however, is also helpful because it recognizes that public historians operate from a place of authority, which one might also call a place of privilege. A historic preservationist, for example, has authority that derives from her or his position and relationship with authority figures, as well as her or his educational background and training. Further, the majority of public history professionals are white, and their whiteness carries authority and privilege that they would do well to recognize. This type of authority is not something a public historian can truly share, but it can be put to work for communities when public historians acknowledge and accept its presence.

What Frisch is truly getting at is the idea that the public, including community partners, has its own authority when it comes to cultural heritage. This is particularly true when working with marginalized communities or groups whose narratives challenge the

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[25] Michael Frisch, "From *A Shared Authority* to the Digital Kitchen and Back," in *Letting Go?: Sharing Historical Authority in a User-generated World*, eds. Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski (Philadelphia, PA: Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011), 127, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=767292>.

dominant or accepted truth about a moment or movement in history. Regardless of intentions or training, public history professionals are often best equipped to see what their cultural values and education have taught them to see. This is part of the challenge of doing multilayered interpretation that respects competing viewpoints. When visiting a historically segregated city like Selma, Alabama, for example, a preservationist might tour the city and view the downtown area, with its impressive buildings, collection of businesses, and attractive religious edifices as the center of the city, and perhaps it was for white residents. The architecture is certainly designed to convey that idea. However, in speaking to black residents, it becomes clear that the downtown area was a space of alienation and only grudging commerce during the Jim Crow period. Considering that the city was more than sixty percent black, and people of color were not fully welcome downtown, is that still the city center? Or is the city composed of many centers based on race, geography, and myriad other factors? By recognizing that the authority to make meaning of the historic city lies with all its residents, the public historian can gain a much more accurate and nuanced idea of which buildings were truly significant for residents. When heritage professionals do not take these steps, however, they can end up focusing solely on what their own privilege and cultural experience trains them to see and end up reinforcing values like white supremacy by participating in the silencing of alternative narratives.

The cultural heritage of marginalized communities is both vulnerable and profoundly valuable. It is at risk because its existence challenges the values and narratives that the hegemonic classes use to justify their privilege and dominance. It is at risk because it is often invisible except to those whose historical experience it embodies

or reflects. It is at risk because the same forces that privilege the dominant classes and work to silence competing narratives also deprive those groups of the resources necessary to preserve and protect their cultural heritage. This cultural heritage is valuable because it provides tangible evidence of the multitude of historical experiences that comprise the past. It is valuable for communities because it plays a key role in authenticating their historical experiences, experiences that helped knit the community together and create a sense of identity and belonging.

The process of preserving cultural heritage requires communities to partner with public history professionals and to work with local, state, or national authorities. Often the heritage professional is among the first authority figures the community encounters, and the professional's response to the community's request and story can color how and whether the community chooses to proceed with a project. In order to be effective partners, public historians must consider that their words and actions, however well-meaning, have the power to either encourage and build the confidence of communities or to discourage and undermine their efforts. As the majority of heritage practitioners in the United States are white, this means being cognizant of their own privileges and willing to take a self-reflective approach to interrogating their own complicity in structural white supremacy. The burden is on the public historian, not the community, to confront these issues, and to be open to feedback and criticism rather than becoming defensive.

This openness also means being respectful of the point of view of communities and their own interpretation of the significance of their history. Communities that experienced race-based segregation, for example, often have complicated relationships with their pasts. One the one hand, their lives were shaped by racism, oppression, and

inequality, yet they were also part of closely knit communities and lived rich and varied lives. There can be tension between the accepted historical facts about the past and people's recollections of it, but these discrepancies exist for a reason.[26] Nostalgia is part of how people make sense of their past and imbue past experiences with value. It is also often prompted by contemporary challenges; for example, a string of neighborhood burglaries might encourage people to reminisce about a time when cars and homes were left unlocked. Nostalgia is not always harmless—recall how a plantation tour might encourage white visitors to yearn for a "more elegant time" without considering that the elegance they imagine is based on romantic, fictional accounts firmly at odds with the historical reality of a lifestyle predicated upon race-based violence and exploitation. By being aware of the nostalgic tendencies of communities, public historians can develop respect ways to present and interrogate these ideas. There is no need to transform complicated, occasionally contradictory narratives for audiences; by engaging with these topics, heritage professionals can help model ways to consider complex, multifaceted issues.

Public historians must also confront more mundane, practical challenges in doing this type of work. Often, professionals must answer to higher authorities like government officials or a board of directors. Boards and governments are often made up of a fair number of white people, particularly men, who may not be comfortable engaging with their own whiteness, or the history of white supremacy and patriarchy. These authorities

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[26] Barbara Shircliffe offers an interesting look at nostalgia in the reflections of African Americans who attended segregated schools in the United States: "We Got the Best of That World": A Case for the Study of Nostalgia in the Oral History of School Segregation," *Oral History Review* 28, no. 2, (Summer-Autumn 2001): 59-84, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3675778>.

may want to avoid controversial approaches and topics, but of course such avoidance only reinforces the status quo values. The other major challenge is financial. Much cultural heritage work is funded through grants, which require fixed schedules and quantitative evaluations. This type of funding rarely recognizes the more nebulous aspects of the work, let alone accounts for the time-consuming nature of building partnerships. This type of results-oriented public history encourages professionals to prioritize efficiency and results over process.

Community involvement is not a revolutionary concept in public history. Historic preservationists have also shown increasing interest in the area of community engagement. Thomas F. King's *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice*, now in its fourth edition, emphasizes the importance of community meetings throughout any cultural resource project, since these projects are undertaken in the public interest and public involvement can help prevent the misunderstandings that create strife between practitioners and communities.[27] More recently, Andrew Hurley's *Beyond Preservation: Using Public History to Revitalize Inner Cities* has argued for a more holistic approach to preservation, incorporating archaeology and oral history in particular to unearth layers of meaning in the cultural landscape of the inner city.[28] Hurley advocates for a preservation approach that puts community members at the center of project development and interpretation. His text is based largely on his own work with the Community History Research and Design Services unit of the Public Policy Research Center at the University

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[27] Thomas F. King, *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice*, 2nd ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), 70-75.

[28] Andrew Hurley, *Beyond Preservation: Using Public History to Revitalize Inner Cities*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2010).

of Missouri, St. Louis, and his primary case study focuses on North St. Louis. Hurley makes a convincing case for greater community involvement in preservation projects, and lays out guidelines and suggestions for preservationists working in other communities. However, he fails to make a meaningful connection to the historical context of his work. He goes on at some length about the evolution of the preservation process in Old North St. Louis, but he does not do the same for the city's history. While he points out that the residents were disconnected from the neighborhood's history, he does not expound on why this is or how it came to be. He discusses race, but makes no mention of segregation or housing discrimination. There is no discussion of how learning more about Old North St. Louis can speak to broader narratives about the city's history or about the evolution of the inner city in the post-Jim Crow Era. Despite these shortcomings, Hurley's work is significant for its argument in favor of an approach to preservation that looks beyond the economic advantages that have typically been used to garner support for historic preservation.[29]

The central argument of this dissertation is that the best way to address the myriad challenges facing public historians and heritage professionals is to shift the focus of heritage work onto the process of creating it, rather than on the final product. Doing so will enable public historians to build stronger partnerships with communities and will result in better heritage products, as communities' feelings about a heritage product—whether it is a museum, exhibit, driving tour, or historic district—are often shaped more by their experience of the process than by the final product. Rather than viewing

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[29] Most notably Donovan Rypkema, *The Economics of Rehabilitation*, (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1991).

communities as stakeholders who must be brought on board, this dissertation argues that communities themselves should drive the heritage process, determining its pace and serving as true partners in the identification of cultural heritage and in the interpretive process. The role of heritage professionals is by its nature temporary; once the product is complete and the professional moves on and the community must take the reins. A successful process is one in which the community is equipped to take on the task of protecting their resources, which includes having the skills and confidence to advocate for themselves to future partners or government officials. This argument builds on the growing shift in public history, and in historic preservation specifically, away from capitalistic, economically-driven arguments and toward more holistic approaches that regard the cultural success of projects.[30]

The challenges—which face public history professionals and marginalized communities—are not limited to the United States, though of course each location has its own cultural and political environment which present a unique context. The case-study approach remains popular in the United States, whether it is a full-length work dedicated to the particular challenges of a project or, more commonly, a collection of essays by different authors describing work in different countries.[31] When works do attempt to draw broader lessons, they tend to be more theoretical than practical, pulling examples

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[30] See Kristen Baldwin Deathridge, "From Sacred to Secular: The Adaptive Reuse of America's Religious Buildings" (Ph.D. dissertation, Middle Tennessee State University, 2012. Cf: Donovan Rypkema, *The Economics of Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide* (Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1994).

[31] For example, see Kendall R. Phillips and G. Mitchell Reyes, eds., *Global Memoryscapes Contesting Remembrance in a Transnational Age* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011); and Smith, Messenger, Soderland, eds., *Heritage Values*.

from multiple places without investigating any of them in depth.[32] These works invite comparison, but few are specifically designed to be comparative; and few bridge the gap between theory and practice by focusing on what aspects of their success or failure might be useful for practitioners elsewhere. This dissertation builds on this groundwork, opening the door for a more formal conversation across international borders on practical, community-driven solutions to the problems of public history. It uses transnational, comparative case studies to look at sites with histories of race-based segregation in Selma, Alabama, and Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa.

When comparing South Africa with the United States, there is an understandable tendency to equate apartheid with Jim Crow. Both apartheid and Jim Crow were deeply institutionalized systems of racism with a long-term impact on the societies in which they functioned, and both shared the goal of maintaining and defending white supremacy. Despite the shared goal and many shared characteristics, however, the two systems were indeed different. In the United States, Jim Crow manifested itself in both de jure and de facto segregation—that is, legal segregation enforced by the judicial system and the everyday segregation maintained by custom and enforced informally, arbitrarily, and often violently. The apartheid system was a highly regulated and legally managed de jure system. The rigidity of the system and its reliance on legal language meant that all aspects of race had to codified. While in the US, a person's race was generally (though with notable exceptions) a matter of cultural truth, in South Africa, it had to be legally determined—and not just for people of color. Whiteness, too, had to be defined.

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[32] See: Bevan, *Architecture*; Daniel Alan Herwitz, *Heritage, Culture, and Politics in the Postcolony* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

It is important to be clear that race is socially constructed, and so whiteness is as much a construction as blackness in any society. However, because apartheid was so intensely codified, it is easy to see the construction of race that underpins the entire system. In the United States, ideas about race and in particular about whiteness are implied and so become much more difficult to tease out, though they are no less central to the operation of Jim Crow. These ideas and constructions need to be pulled out and discussed, especially at sites that engage with the history related to segregation or the civil rights movement, because these ideas about race stretch far into the present. When we fail to interrogate the construction of race, and particularly of whiteness, we tacitly support the white supremacist precept that views whiteness as "normal" and blackness as "other."

Chapters Two and Three focus on Selma, Alabama, as a case study of the community-driven approach in historic preservation. Chapter Two provides an overview of the history of the Voting Rights Movement in Selma, rather than original scholarship to serve as the context for the fieldwork discussed in Chapter Three. The chapter also includes a discussion of possible directions for the evolution of civil rights scholarship and the shortcomings of the currently accepted approaches in terms of interpretation for the broader public. Chapter Three includes a discussion of my own extensive fieldwork in Selma with the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University. The historic preservation project, which led to the creation of the Selma Civil Rights Movement (1865-1972) Multiple Property Submission to the National Register of Historic Places, opened up the opportunity for an oral history project doing interviews

with people who were students during the movement and whose voices have largely been silent in the official narratives

Chapters Four, Five, and Six are based on fieldwork and research in Johannesburg and Cape Town. These chapters focus on the visitor-experience side of community-driven heritage. Chapter Four provides a short synthesis of the history of apartheid in South Africa, simply supplying the context for the chapters that follow rather than offering new contributions to the scholarship. Chapter Five looks at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, which exemplifies professional heritage interpretation and the authority of heritage professionals. Chapter Six examines the District Six Museum in Cape Town, which illustrates how a community-based approach can yield strong results that meet the needs both of local people and of outside audiences. Both Chapters Five and Six offer examples of sites that engage directly with the political nature of the heritage they present and work to connect it to the impact of this history on the present, underscoring how public history can directly engage its politics while still providing quality visitor experiences. These sites demonstrate how sites can challenge problematic dominant narratives, like those surrounding race, in simple choices about how to frame a story. In particular, the South African sites (and in fact, all of the sites I visited in South Africa) approach the question of race through the definitions of apartheid, which engage with the question of whiteness. As a result there is no normalized white experience of apartheid, but simply a variety of experiences of apartheid.

# CHAPTER TWO

# SELMA: HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

The civil rights movement in Selma has not lacked historians. Among the most prominent texts are David J. Garrow's *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Voting Rights Act of 1965*, published in 1978, which was one of the first scholarly works on Selma and remains an important contribution to any study of the city's role in the movement. Taylor Branch's *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965* (1998) follows Garrow's lead in focusing on the role of King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).[1] J. Mills Thornton's *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma* (2002) devotes one third of its text to a detailed study of local politics in Selma during the civil rights period, including a nuanced assessment of the variety of opinions on either side of the racial divide.[2] Gary May's *Bending Toward Justice: The Voting Rights Act and the Transformation of American Democracy* (2013) is a recent and important addition to this list, as the first half includes a detailed history of the Selma movement before exploring the legislative and political history of the Voting Rights Act.[3] Alston Fitts III's *Selma: Queen City of the Black Belt* (1989), which is less often considered, offers a history of the

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[1] David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978); Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998).

[2] J. Mills Thornton III, *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002).

[3] Gary May, *Bending Toward Justice: The Voting Rights Act and the Transformation of American Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

city that includes the civil rights period as told through the perspective of a local historian.[4]

There are also numerous first person accounts from local and national figures. *Selma, Lord, Selma* (1980) tells the story of Rachel West Nelson and Sheyann Webb, who were children during the movement.[5] J.L. Chestnut's *Black in Selma* (1990) recalls his life in Selma and his role as the only black lawyer in the city.[6] John Lewis' *Walking with the Wind* (1998) chronicles his life and covers his time as the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the Selma campaign.[7] Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson's *The House by the Side of the Road* (2011) offers a personal account of her interactions with the movement and particularly with Dr. King and the SCLC leadership from a black middle class perspective.[8] Bernard LaFayette's *In Peace and Freedom* (2013) recounts his early involvement in SNCC's Selma Project.[9]

Taken together, these dispassionate analyses and personal voices of the past have created a story of what happened in Selma and why, one that has been repeated and reified by scholarly work and National Park Service interpretation until it has become the dominant narrative and the functional popular truth not only of the events of the Selma

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[4] Alston Fitts III, *Selma: Queen City of the Blackbelt* (Selma, Alabama: Clairmont Press, 1989).

[5] Sheyann Webb and Rachel West Nelson, *Selma Lord, Selma* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1980).

[6] J.L. Chestnut, Jr. and Julia Cass, *Black in Selma* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990).

[7] John Lewis, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998).

[8] Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson, *The House by the Side of the Road: The Selma Civil Rights Movement* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011).

[9] Bernard LaFayette, Jr. and Kathryn Lee Johnson, *In Peace and Freedom: My Journey in Selma* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013).

civil rights movement, but also of its significance. The fieldwork conducted for the creation of a Multiple Property Submission to the National Register of Historic Places, surprisingly, found opposition and resistance to this dominant narrative, as residents considered it incomplete. In particular, community members objected to the deep focus on 1965 and the attention paid to First Baptist Church and Brown Chapel AME Church. Though they did not dispute the important role of these institutions, residents believe that by concentrating only on them, scholars overlooked the contributions of the many smaller churches throughout the city that played key roles in establishing the city's Civil Rights Movement. There were also tensions between classes, often in combination with religious affiliation, and notably among generations, especially between those who were adults during the movement and those who were young people, especially teenagers. This will be explored further later in this chapter and in Chapter Three.

In order to explore both the dominant narrative and challenges to it, this chapter opens with an overview of Selma's history through 1972, focusing on the question of civil rights and the history of the African American residents. This history expands on the established narrative and includes relevant facts and topics that emerged during the fieldwork process for the Selma projects. It describes and comments on the existing interpretive framework established by the National Park Service and presented at the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute in Selma. It also discusses the challenges of civil rights historiography and examines the strengths of alternative narratives created for non-academic audiences.

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Selma, the seat of Dallas County, Alabama, is situated in the heart of the Black Belt, an area stretching through Mississippi and Alabama noted for its rich, dark soil. Roughly fifty miles west of Montgomery on U.S. Highway 80, the city today is home to approximately 20,000 people.[10] The city's sleepy, decaying façade belies its rich history and active citizenry. Before the 1732 arrival of French settlers, who would call it Écor Bienville, Muscogee or Creek Indians inhabited the area that would become Selma. The Muscogee lived in the area until the early nineteenth century, when a civil war among various tribes under the Creek Confederacy became a corollary of the War of 1812. When the Creek War ended with the Treaty of Fort Jackson in 1814, both of the tribes that had fought for and against US forces led by Andrew Jackson were stripped of millions of acres of land, most of which was ceded to the federal government (some land was also given to the Cherokee Nation, which had sided with the United States). The land cession opened the area up to American settlement, and in 1820, Selma was incorporated by the Alabama legislature.[11]

Like most Black Belt cities, Selma's early success derived from its status as a center of commerce for the cotton industry, which relied on the labor of enslaved black workers. During the Civil War, Selma served as a center of arms manufacturing for the Confederacy. This strategic role led to the Battle of Selma on April 1-2, 1865, during

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[10] "State and County Quick Facts: Selma, Alabama," US Census Bureau, http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/01/0169120.html.

[11] Herbert J. Lewis, "Selma," in *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, April 22, 2013; http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1635. For more on the Creek War, see: Kathryn E. Holland Braund, ed., *Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War and the War of 1812* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012); Henry S. Halbert, T. H. Ball, and Frank Lawrence Owsley, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1815 [I.E. 1814]* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).

which Federal forces overwhelmed Confederate defenses and destroyed foundries and iron works, along with a number of businesses and private residences. Though Emancipation brought freedom to the thousands of formerly enslaved residents of Dallas County and its environs, violence and uncertainty marred the Reconstruction years. Describing the situation in Selma in 1865, Major J.P. Houston, U.S. Provost Marshal at Selma, stated:

> There have come to my notice officially twelve cases, in which I am morally certain the trials have not been had yet, that negroes were killed by whites. In a majority of cases the provocation consisted in the negroes' trying to come to town or to return to the plantation after having been sent away. The cases above enumerated, I am convinced, are but a small part of those that have actually been perpetrated.[12]

Houston enumerated several of these instances, including one in which a local court acquitted white men who openly admitted to killing black men. Some of the themes of these killings would become disturbingly familiar when Reconstruction ended and Jim Crow began its reign. In one instance:

> A negro was killed in the calaboose of the city of Selma, by being beaten with a heavy club; also, by being tied up by the thumbs, clear of the floor, for three hours, and by further gross abuse, lasting more than a week, until he died.[13]

Though this particular crime took place in a jail, the murder has many of the hallmarks of the lynchings of the early twentieth century.

Despite the threat and reality of violence, Selma's black citizens established a thriving community based around churches and schools, expanding on the community created by Selma's small antebellum population of free blacks—nearly fifty according to

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[12] Major J.P. Houston to General Carl Schurz, August 22, 1865, http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/cnsth10.txt.

[13] Ibid.

the 1860 census.[14] First Baptist (Colored) Church was the first independent black church in Selma, formed from the black congregation of Selma's First Baptist Church. The black Methodist church also had an early presence in post-Emancipation Selma. Reverend James Wadsworth founded Clinton Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in 1866, and Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church formed in 1867 when black Methodists split from the Methodist Episcopal Church South.[15] The black churches continued to evolve well into the twentieth century, when they would play a pivotal role as an organizing base for the civil rights movement.

Educational opportunities for blacks also expanded significantly after Emancipation. Missionary societies coordinated with the Freedmen's Bureau to open schools that often began by operating from church basements. The Burrell Academy, the first black school in Selma to have its own building, opened in 1869 and used faculty from the North to teach black children from primary to normal school. Another school, Knox Academy, opened as a mission of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The first public school for black children was Clark Elementary School, which opened in 1890 as a result of the efforts of Richard Byron Hudson, who would be its administrator for about forty years. Education was an uphill battle for Selma's black students. White authorities did not prioritize the education of blacks, shortening the school year on the grounds that black children were needed as agricultural and industrial laborers who did not require

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[14] Fitts, *Selma*, 12.

[15] National Register of Historic Places, The Civil Rights Movement in Selma, 1865-1972, Selma, Dallas County, Alabama, National Register #64501182, 3.

education.[16] Despite these challenges, black Selmians worked hard to create a successful education system, and the city soon had a growing middle class black population.

The Reconstruction Era was also a period of political awakening for Selma's black citizens. Benjamin S. Turner was elected as the first Selmian ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1871. Roderick B. Thomas became Alabama's first black judge, and Jeremiah Haralson was Dallas County's first black state senator and later the Alabama's last black congressman of the period. The city council included both Benjamin S. Turner in 1869 and a black carpenter, Ed Northrop. Before its demise, Reconstruction saw a number of other black Selmians and Dallas County residents rise to positions of authority, including four city councilmen, ten state legislators, five county commissioners, a tax assessor, and a coroner.[17]

Even before the official end of Reconstruction in 1877, white Selmians had begun the process of reestablishing white supremacy, passing laws to undermine the social and political aspirations of Selma's black citizens. Their limited success in this endeavor contributed to the calling of a constitutional convention in 1900, which included no African Americans or women; all but eleven of the delegates were Democrats. Convention president John Knox described the goal of the convention:

> And what is it we want to do? Why it is within the limits imposed by the Federal Constitution, to establish white supremacy in this state. . . . We must establish [white supremacy] by law—not by force or fraud. These provisions are justified in laws and in morals, because the negro is not discriminated against on account of his race, but on account of his

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[16] Fitts, *Selma*, 92-93.
[17] Ibid., 77-81.

> intellectual and moral condition. There is in the white man an inherited capacity for government, which is wholly wanting in the negro.[18]

Delegates were equally open about their goal of finding methods for disenfranchising blacks. Any number of crimes could result in loss of voting privileges, ranging from felonies like murder or rape to crimes like vagrancy, adultery, or homosexuality. Poll taxes, literacy tests, and property requirements (with clauses allowing one year exemptions for poor white veterans) further limited the franchise, and the 1901 state constitution also instituted de jure segregation.[19]

Alabama's black residents did not simply accept these restrictions, which effectively amounted to a loss of citizenship. R.B. Hudson of Selma served as secretary at a meeting of prominent black leaders in Montgomery who gathered to compose an appeal to the Constitutional Convention. Booker T. Washington composed most of the final draft, which described African Americans' roles as productive citizens, property owners, and defenders of the nation. In closing, the letter appealed to the Constitutional Convention delegates to retain equality under the law, arguing that inequality would threaten both the peace and prosperity of the whole state.[20] Unsurprisingly, these pleas fell on deaf ears, and voters soon ratified the 1901 constitution, albeit under questionable circumstances.[21]

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[18] Wayne Flynt, *Alabama in the Twentieth Century* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 7.

[19] Ibid, 8-9.

[20] "To the Members of the Alabama Constitutional Convention," Alabama Secretary of State Constitutional Convention Proceedings, SG17778, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama. Available at: http://www.archives.alabama.gov/teacher/ccon/lesson3/ccon.html

[21] The vote counting process was suspect as many ballots from black voters were not counted. See Flynt, Chapter 1.

Selma's economy and population continued to grow through the early part of the twentieth century. In addition to the growth of the banking sector, Selma emerged as a medical center for west central Alabama, with hospitals and sanitariums for white patients. In addition, in the early 1900s Dr. Lincoln L. Burwell, a black physician, opened the Burwell Infirmary, which served Selma's African American community well into the midcentury.[22] R.B. Hudson continued his campaign to advance the education of black schoolchildren and expanded the facilities at the Clark Elementary School, which taught students through the eighth grade. High school education for black students remained in the hands of private schools, which were mainly supported by various black churches. Most notably Selma University, which functioned both as a normal school and a Baptist seminary, attracted black Baptists from across the state, while Alabama Lutheran College (now Concordia College) served Lutheran students starting in 1921.[23] Daniel Payne College did likewise for A.M.E. Zion adherents.[24] Churches for black congregations also expanded, reflecting the doubling of Selma's black population from roughly 4,500 to 9,000 between 1900 and 1930.[25]

With this growth came an increase in the number of middle class blacks. The Alabama Penny Savings Bank, which catered to clients of color, opened a Selma branch in 1911, though the bank would fail in 1915 after the boll weevil decimated the cotton

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[22] Fitts, *Selma*, 102-103.

[23] Tryan L. McMickens, "Alabama Lutheran College," in *Encyclopedia of Alabama Online*, March 27, 2013, http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-2493.

[24] Wilson Fallin, Jr., *Uplifting the People: Three Centuries of Black Baptists in Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 132.

[25] U.S. Census data, 1900 and 1930.

crop.[26] Other black businesses included funeral homes, pharmacies, dental offices, barber and beauty shops, groceries, and the Interlink Cotton Gin Company, one of only a few cotton gins owned and operated by African Americans in Alabama at the time.[27]

The Depression years hit Selma's black communities hard. Religious institutions that had provided the secondary educational opportunities for young African American students faced serious challenges, and several closed, leaving students the choice of attending private high school classes at Selma University or Alabama Lutheran College or having no secondary education. In light of the severity of the situation, in 1936 Samuel Boynton (a county agricultural extension agent) and Charles J. Adams (a notary public) joined Selma's small chapter of the NAACP and revived the Dallas County Voters League (DCVL). The DCVL was founded in the early 1920s, but was defunct by 1926 due to a lack of success in getting African Americans registered to vote. The re-formed DCVL held classes to help potential registrants pass the arbitrary and onerous literacy test.

The DCVL soon served as the city's initial secular civil rights center for black residents. Boynton and Adams had long believed that the downtown area needed a community building with restrooms for black Selmians who were not welcome to use the facilities at white businesses and city buildings. With the effort of these organizers, as well as Amelia Platts Boynton, Samuel Boynton's wife and a local activist, and through the intervention of Dr. E.W. Gamble, a white rector at the Episcopalian church, Works Progress Administration funding was secured for the construction of a "Colored

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[26] Fitts, *Selma*, 102, 108.

[27] Charles E. Cobb Jr., *On the Road to Freedom: A Guided Tour of the Civil Rights Trail* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2008), 227.

Community Center" (now the George Wilson Community Center) on land donated by the City of Selma. The building was completed in 1937 and included waiting rooms, an auditorium, space for the home demonstration agent, a kitchen, library, recreation rooms, and, of course, restroom facilities. The building was a tremendous success, and during World War II it hosted USO events for servicemen stationed at Craig Army Air Base just east of town, with entertainers like Nat King Cole, Duke Ellington, and Earl Hines.[28]

In 1937 the Fathers of St. Edmund, a (white) Catholic mission charged with ministering to Selma's black communities, arrived. The Edmundites set up their mission on Broad Street. In 1940, they opened the St. Elizabeth School to cater to the needs of young black Selmians. The school was operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph, who would later administer Good Samaritan Hospital (built in 1944) and the Good Samaritan School of Practical Nursing (started in 1950), which served the black community and offered training for African American women interesting in nursing.[29] The Edmundites would later play a key role in the civil rights efforts of the mid-twentieth century, where their influence was strongly felt by black youth in particular.[30]

In 1940 the U.S. Army began leasing 2,000 acres of property located on U.S. Highway 80 for the construction of Craig Army Air Base, a training facility for fighter pilots named for Bruce Kirkpatrick Craig, a white Selma native killed in a test flight

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[28] Amelia Boynton Robinson, *Bridge Across Jordan: The Story of the Struggle for Civil Rights in Selma, Alabama* (New York: Carlton Press, 1979), 85-86.

[29] See: Amy L. Koehlinger, *The New Nuns: Racial Justice and Religious Reform in the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 150-51.

[30] Donetta Barlow, in discussion with the author, August 2013; Henry Allen, in discussion with the author, August 2013.

crash in San Diego.[31] The base boosted and diversified Selma's largely agriculture-dependent economy, particularly after the United States entered World War II. By 1942, the base employed 2,000 military personnel and 1,400 civilians.[32] Though the white establishment welcomed the economic advantages of direct military spending, they were less pleased when federal authorities also provided opportunities to the African American population.

Though the military was not a post-racial paradise, in the years after 1948 it was desegregated, which was a new experience for the majority of Selma's black population. The boundaries of this desegregation went beyond Craig's gates; Selma law enforcement occasionally found itself answering to officers from Craig for actions taken against black servicemen and personnel.[33] For black servicemen stationed at Craig from other parts of the country, life under Jim Crow in 1950s Selma chafed, and many white servicemen from other parts of the country were disturbed by the intolerance they witnessed in Dallas County. Selma's black veterans, returning after serving their country in places relatively free of racial segregation, were also more willing to challenge Jim Crow, as they were made even more sharply aware of their status as second-class citizens.[34]

The postwar years saw Selma's white authorities begin taking the education of black students more seriously, prompted by federal court rulings and new state laws. A public high school system for black youth finally emerged, adding a grade a year starting

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[31] Fitts, *Selma*, 123.

[32] Carl C. Morgan, "Craig Air Force Base: Its Effect on Selma 1940-17977," *Alabama Review* 42 (April 1989): 88.

[33] Thornton, *Dividing*, 420.

[34] Glenn Feldman, *Politics, Society, and the Klan in Alabama, 1915-1949* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 287; Chestnut and Cass, *Black*, 37.

with the tenth grade in 1945. In 1949, a new, modern high school, named after Richard B. Hudson, was built for African American students near what was then the north edge of town where Lapsley Avenue becomes Summerfield Road. R.B. Hudson High became a community center as well as a school, and in the early 1960s it would be an organizing base for the young people who were integral to the voting rights effort in Selma.

In 1952, the city accepted federal funding for the establishment of the George Washington Carver Homes, a federal housing project on Sylvan Street (now Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard) between First Baptist (Colored) Church and Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church. Though the project benefited the African American community, it also displaced a historic black community that was, according to some, a freedmen community that predated Emancipation. The combination of the new educational opportunities and facilities, the establishment of a practical nursing program, and the new housing project in such a narrow window of time marked a significant change from the days when the Boyntons and Charles Adams had fought tooth and nail for the construction of a public rest room in the downtown area. These changes did not in and of themselves signal equality, but they made it clear that tangible progress was possible.[35]

Despite these advances, white supremacy remained the order of the day, as evidenced by the Fikes rape trial. From March to May of 1953, a series of rapes and attempted rapes by an unknown African American man against white women, including Jean Heinz Rockwell, the daughter of Selma's Mayor, Chris B. Heinz, terrorized the city. Private organizations, including the black Elks Club, raised a total of $1,300 in reward

[35] Thornton, *Dividing*, 419.

money. Groups[36] of white men patrolled the city, and on May 16, 1953, two citizens detained William Earl Fikes, who was then taken into custody by the police.[37]

Fikes was a 27-year-old mentally-impaired gas station attendant. Authorities initially held Fikes at Selma, but soon moved him to Kilby State Prison, some fifty-five miles from Selma and eighty miles from his home city of Marion. He was kept in isolation for a week and prevented from having any contact with family, friends, or an attorney. Authorities questioned Fikes several hours a day for five days until he confessed in a series of yes or no answers to leading or suggestive questions. During the second week of his incarceration, authorities again questioned Fikes, resulting in a written confession. Fikes answered questions while a prison stenographer took down his confession and read it back to him before he signed it. It is worth noting that Fikes had left school at the age of sixteen, though he had not advanced past the third grade.[38]

An all-white jury in Selma found Fikes guilty of a number of charges including burglary and rape and sentenced him to ninety-nine years in prison because one of the jurors opposed the death penalty. This outcome did not satisfy the white community, which demanded the death penalty. When County Solicitor James Hare tried Fikes again, this time for the attempted rape of Jean Heinz Rockwell, Samuel Boynton and his NAACP colleague John Hunter were prepared. They took up collections in local churches to build a defense fund and arranged for two black Birmingham lawyers, Peter A. Hall and Orzell Billingsley, Jr., to take Fikes' case. Hall and Billingsley were the first

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[36] It is unclear whether or not these were posses; there is no comment in the sources on whether they were deputized or organized by the sheriff. Readers should be wary of drawing comparisons to Sheriff Clark's posses in the 1960s.

[37] Thornton, *Dividing,* 387.

[38] William Earl Fikes, *Petitioner v. The State of Alabama,* 352 U.S. 191 (1957).

black lawyers to appear before a court in Dallas County on equal legal footing, that is, on their own qualifications without a white lawyer vouching for them. Despite their efforts, another all-white jury found Fikes guilty and sentenced him to death. Hall and Billingsley ultimately succeeded in appealing to the United States Supreme Court, where the case was overturned due to the coerced confession and three psychiatrists' testimony that Fikes was schizophrenic. Unfortunately, the appeal only overturned the verdict of the second trial, and Fikes remained in prison serving his ninety-nine year sentence until Selma attorney J.L. Chestnut, Jr. won his release in 1975. Fikes left prison and never returned to Selma.[39]

The Fikes case, along with the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954, 1955), galvanized both Selma's black civil rights organizers and those in power who opposed civil rights at all costs. White authorities closed ranks, and in November 1954, Dallas County became home to the first White Citizens' Council in Alabama.[40] White Citizens' Councils began in Mississippi as a way to coordinate massive resistance efforts. Though they openly eschewed violence, Councils promoted extreme segregation and the defense of states' rights. The Dallas County White Citizens' Council recruited 600 charter members from a mass meeting of 1,200 whites.[41] The WCC became so tightly enmeshed with the city government under Mayor Heinz that it was difficult to tell the two institutions apart.[42]

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[39] May, *Bending*, 9-10; Thornton, *Dividing*, 387-391.

[40] Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council; Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 43.

[41] Ibid., 43.

[42] Thornton, *Dividing*, 392.

The WCC became the organizing force behind opposition to desegregation and racial equality. The council worked to undermine black leaders by making it difficult or impossible for them to keep a job, get credit, or obtain or renew a mortgage. When twenty-nine black Selmians signed a petition following news of the Supreme Court's decision on *Brown v. Board (II)* in 1955 to force a quick integration of the Dallas County schools, sixteen petitioners lost their jobs within a month.[43] Five others then withdrew their names from the petition, and the issue faltered. The black leadership, however, was not so easily dissuaded and responded with a boycott of one of the businesses that had fired a petitioner, the Cloverleaf Dairy[44] This tug of war between white authorities and black resistance continued through the 1950s, with the WCC publishing the names of businesses and professionals who were not members of the council in the *Selma Times Journal* in May 1959:

> Your Dallas County Citizens' Council has never asked anyone to trade or not to trade with a particular person or company and we never will. We have published this list for your own information. We feel that there are two organizations in this struggle—the NAACP, which wants to destroy everything we stand for, and the Citizens' Council, which wants to maintain segregation, peace and good will. It's high time everyone decided which side he is on and joined one or the other.[45]

In 1957, the Ku Klux Klan established a chapter in Selma, an occasion marked by cross burnings at town entry points and a motorcade led by a car with a four-foot lighted

[43] Fitts, *Selma*, 132.

[44] See Thornton, *Dividing*, 396.

[45] "Local Councils Are Active During Month," *The Citizens' Council*, Vol. 4 (May 1959): 4, http://www.citizenscouncils.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=newspaper&file=15-Apr59-Jun59.swf.

cross through the African American neighborhoods.[46] City officials did not cite the Klansmen for failing to obtain a parade permit, in contrast to how they would treat voting rights activists fewer than ten years later.[47] This tacit approval by authorities allowed the Klan to function as something of an armed wing of the WCC. Though it is impossible to compare the membership rosters or learn whether they directly colluded, the two organizations shared a common goal of defending white supremacy and functioned in complementary ways, both with the approval (and alleged involvement) of city officials.[48] Mirroring the actions of the Klan, in 1960, Sheriff Jim Clark held a ceremony on the steps of the newly expanded Dallas County Courthouse at which he deputized hundreds of white citizens into mounted and unmounted posses which then paraded through town, including through the African American neighborhoods.[49] These actions underscored a power structure in Selma described by activist John Lewis in which Sheriff Jim Clark functioned as an extension of Circuit Court Judge James Hare, and Judge Hare served as extension of Governor George Wallace. The two-tiered state-local system helped make Selma one of the most rigidly segregationist cities in the South.[50]

It is difficult to convey the level of ongoing harassment experienced by Selma's black population. Though Klan marches are frequently discussed in interviews with people who were teenagers during the period, the narratives are equally interspersed with stories that remind the listener that the police and indeed any white man could be a threat

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[46] Thornton, *Dividing*, 406.

[47] Ibid., 407.

[48] Thornton has hinted at Mayor Heinz's possible connections to the WCC and Klan, and in off-the-record comments, several Selmians have indicated to me that particular city officials were members of the KKK or WCC.

[49] Garrow, *Protest*, 14.

[50] Lewis, *Walking*, 306; Thornton, *Dividing*, 392.

depending on his whim. This relationship did not undergo an immediate change following the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Jack Willis' 1966 documentary, *Lay My Burden Down*, includes footage of interviews and interactions between black and white men that reflect the continuing power imbalance characteristic of the Jim Crow South in the aftermath of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.[51] Comparing the film footage to the stories relayed by oral history narrators, however, offers a unique view into the generational differences between the teenagers of the movement and their parents' generation, and illustrates a cultural shift that ties both to the movement and the slow but steady improvement in educational opportunities. The narrators often comment on how they were different from their parents, a generation gap made even more vivid by the footage in the documentary, while also underscoring the courage of older black Selmians who challenged the racial order. One scene in particular shows an older black man in Selma being asked point blank by a group of middle-aged white men whether things were really so bad before. The older man demurs, intimidated by the white men's implicit threat.

Another court case in 1959 would further underscore the commitment of Selma's white authorities to the defense of white supremacy. The pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church, Reverend Louis L. Anderson, was involved in an automobile accident that resulted in the death of an African American pedestrian. An all-white grand jury charged him with second-degree murder, and Anderson found himself on trial defended again by Birmingham attorneys Hall and Billingsley. Despite evidence that Anderson had been

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[51] *Lay My Burden Down*, directed by Jack Willis, National Education Television: 1966.

concussed by the accident and conflicting testimony about the specifics of what happened, the all-white jury convicted Anderson of manslaughter, sentencing him to an unheard of ten years. The U.S. Supreme Court eventually overturned the conviction in 1961 on the grounds that African Americans had been systematically barred from jury service in Selma.[52] Yet the overturning of the Anderson verdict, along with the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 had little impact on daily life in Selma, where federal opposition only encouraged local authorities to further entrench their position.

The 1960s were a tumultuous period in Selma's history, and the years from 1963 to 1965 have been particularly well documented.[53] What follows is a brief summary of the scholarly version of these events, after which I will discuss alternate narratives that exist alongside mainstream academic studies.

Selma had been on the radar of civil rights organizations before 1963. In April 1962, Amelia Boynton reached out to the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council (SRC) to ask for funds to assist with the DCVL's effort to register more black voters in Selma. Despite earlier civil rights legislation, the number of black voters registered in Dallas County was about 156, or 0.9% of eligible black voters. It is worth noting that neighboring rural Lowndes and Wilcox Counties had no black registered voters, though blacks constituted more than 75% of their residents.[54] In May, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sent a representative to meet

[52] Thornton, *Dividing*, 409-11.

[53] See: Garrow, *Protest*; J. Mills Thornton, *Dividing Lines*; Taylor Branch, *American in the King Years*, 3 vols, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988-2006); Charles E. Fager, *Selma, 1965* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974); May, *Bending*.

[54] 1963 SNCC field report, accessed May 10, 2014, PDF link available from: http://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc50_field-reports.pdf, page 3.

with students at Selma University to explore starting a campaign among local college students. Since the spring term was about to end, the students suggested that SNCC return in the fall. That November, Bernard LaFayette made his initial visit to the city. LaFayette was a veteran of the Nashville Student Movement and the Freedom Rides, and a founding member of SNCC. Though the Voters' League was not uniformly pleased by the arrival of a more radical organization like SNCC, LaFayette ultimately gained its support by working as part of the DCVL. At the suggestion of Marie Foster, LaFayette returned with his wife Colia Liddell LaFayette and Frank Holloway in February 1963 and began running voter education classes with Foster and Amelia Boynton.[55]

Through the efforts of the DCVL and SNCC, the number of black applicants to vote rose steadily.[56] By spring, LaFayette was ready to escalate the Selma movement with a mass meeting, though he had no luck finding a church willing to serve as a venue. Samuel Boynton, who had been in poor health after suffering a series of small strokes, passed away on May 13, 1963. He had been a strong advocate of voting rights and served as president of the DCVL. Together with Amelia Boynton, LaFayette decided to it would be fitting to honor Mr. Boynton's life by using his memorial service as a mass meeting. The "Memorial Service for Mr. Boynton and Voter Registration" was held at Tabernacle Baptist Church on May 14, 1963, after much debate and controversy within the church. Reverend L.L. Anderson only managed to win the deacons over by threatening to hold the meeting on the sidewalk in front of the church.[57]

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[55] Thornton, *Dividing*, 447-450.
[56] Ibid., 450.
[57] Chestnut and Cass, *Black*, 163.

The meeting at Tabernacle attracted an estimated 350 black Selmians, plus Sheriff Jim Clark and several deputies who stood in the church during the meeting to prevent "insurrection." One of the speakers, James Forman, executive director of SNCC, gave a sermon entitled "The High Cost of Freedom" in which he exhorted the community to stand up for itself in front of Jim Clark and anyone who tried to stand between them and their constitutional right to vote. When the meeting ended, attendees were stopped on the church steps by a white mob that included Clark's posse men, all armed with nightsticks made from table legs (from a table leg manufacturer in town). The crowd finally dispersed when the (white) high school football coach arrived and started naming his current and former players and telling them to go home.[58]

Despite the tension in the aftermath of the first mass meeting, others were soon held with increasing attendance at churches around the city. Jim Clark escalated his harassment of LaFayette and the SNCC workers, arresting them with little or no cause, and he and his men frequently took the license plate numbers of cars parked near mass meetings and issued tickets. DCVL activist Frederick D. Reese was also subject to legal harassment, along with other local leaders. The escalation was disturbing to Selma's more moderate black leaders, who formed the Dallas County Improvement Association (DCIA) in protest to the radicalism of the DCVL. The DCIA's efforts at finding moderate solutions were thwarted, however, both by the white radicalism created by the economic and social pressure of the WCC and the direct intervention of local SNCC members who worked to undermine the authority of the DCIA.[59]

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[58] Branch, *Pillar*, 83-84.
[59] Thornton, *Dividing*, 451-452.

SNCC's mobilization campaign continued to gain traction with Selma's youth, especially with the students from R.B. Hudson High School. The earliest effort, before the first mass meeting, included having students assist with the Voter Registration Project. Students assisted with citizenship classes, as they were called, and canvassed the city's black communities for eligible voters. SNCC encouraged the students to establish their own democratically-controlled leadership, which would prove crucial later that year.[60] On June 12, 1963, Bernard LaFayette was attacked and brutally beaten as part of a three-state conspiracy that included the beating of a Congress on Racial Equality worker in Louisiana and the assassination of Medgar Evers by Byron De La Beckwith in Mississippi. After his wounds were sutured, LaFayette wore the blood-stained shirt he'd been attacked in for several days as a visual reminder of what was at stake.[61]

On September 13, SNCC leadership applied for parade permits to begin a marching campaign scheduled to run from September 16 to October 15, which meant that the first march took place the day after the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.[62] Despite plans for a march, Bernard LaFayette had gone to Birmingham to help his wife Colia, who was pregnant and had been hit with the fire hoses Bull Connor was using against the demonstrators. He was therefore not in Selma on the day of the Sixteenth Street Church bombing. Some of the local student leaders (Charles Bonner, Terry Shaw, and Cleophus Hobbs) got together and planned their own demonstrations in protest of the bombing. While attempting to integrate the lunch counter at Carter's Drug

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[60] 1963 SNCC Field Report, accessed December 29, 2012, PDF available from <http://www.crmvet.org/docs/sneeprts.htm>, 3.

[61] LaFayette, *In Peace*, 74-77.

[62] Thornton, *Dividing*, 454.

Store, Willie C. Robinson was struck in the head with an ax handle by the owner, Mr. Carter, and police arrested four students. After this incident, students who had been reluctant to get involved joined the cause.[63]

Large numbers of Selma's black citizens marched daily until October 3, and roughly 350 were arrested—250 of them were students under the age of sixteen. When the local jail was full, students were packed off to prison camps far from the city that were normally used to house state prisoners on road work detail. The marches ended on October 3, after the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court overturned Judge Daniel Thomas' decision upholding the practices of the board of registrars. The decision included an injunction to halt further discrimination practices, though it did little to stop the practice; only 11 of the 215 black applicants in the month of October were registered as voters, as compared to 219 of the 296 white applicants for the same period, not including the hundreds of African Americans who were not even permitted to apply.[64]

SNCC declared October 7, 1963 "Freedom Day" and brought in comedian Dick Gregory and author James Baldwin to attend mass meetings and observe the marches. The situation remained tense but calm all morning until some SNCC workers approached those waiting in line with sandwiches and drinks. As they passed the line of sheriff's deputies, they were beaten and literally dragged to jail. Baldwin later called Selma "one of the worst places [he] ever saw."[65] Freedom Day was a success, however, and Amelia Boynton enthusiastically contacted Martin Luther King, Jr. in an effort to bring him and

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[63] Charles Bonner and Bettie Mae Fikes, interview by Bruce Hartford, 2005, available at: http://www.crmvet.org/nars/chuckbet.htm.

[64] Thornton, *Dividing*, 458.

[65] Branch, *Pillar*, 152.

the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to Selma.[66] Enthusiasm continued after Freedom Day, and from 1963 to 1964, mass meetings took place at black churches around the city. There were other successes as well; a boycott of downtown merchants ("Don't Buy Where You Can't Work") began in December 1963 and continued fairly successfully through the spring of 1964.[67] The public library, which had voluntarily desegregated in early 1963 but had been forced to remove its tables and chairs so that blacks and whites would not sit together, brought its furniture back in February 1964.

On July 2, 1964, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 encouraged youth activists in Selma to take action. Small groups went to test the law at the Thirsty Boy Drive-In and some of the lunch counters. They were not served and police arrested the activists. Over the following few days, more restaurants were tested and owners again refused service to African Americans. An attempt to test a downtown movie theater nearly resulted in a riot, and arrests of demonstrators continued. SCLC sent Ralph Abernathy to speak in Selma, and the DCVL began an organized campaign to test Selma's public accommodations. In addition to arrest and violence at the hands of the sheriff and his deputies, demonstrators also faced retaliation from organized groups of whites like the Dallas County National States' Rights Party. In an effort to halt the violence (and further his own segregationist goals), Circuit Judge James A. Hare, with the support of Jim Clark and Mayor Chris Heinz, issued a draconian injunction directed at a number of civil rights organizations and activists. It forbade meetings of three or more persons, the blocking of any street or highway, and any meeting that encouraged or

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Thornton, *Dividing*, 466.

suggested that attendees violate the law.[68] Freedom of assembly and freedom of speech came to a halt in Selma.

The injunction legally stalled the Selma campaign. The election of Joe Smitherman as mayor opened other doors. Smitherman was not from the Southern aristocracy, having grown up in East Selma, a mixed race, working-class section of town. He was also a businessman who, along with many of Selma's moderate businessmen, agreed with segregation but was concerned that the rabidly segregationist position adopted by ex-mayor Heinz and Jim Clark (and supported by the Citizens' Council) would damage Selma's ability to attract outside (Northern) investment. Smitherman convinced the city council to establish an Office of Public Safety, of which Wilson Baker would be the chief. Baker believed in a professional, courteous police force, and was an enemy of Sheriff Clark. As Chief of Police under Smitherman, Baker was able to reassert the boundaries of Clark's authority as sheriff, limiting him to the area immediately surrounding the courthouse and outside the city limits.[69]

On November 11, 1964, Amelia Boynton went to Birmingham to meet with Dr. King and urge him and SCLC to take a stronger role in Selma. James Bevel and C.T. Vivian, friends of Bernard LaFayette's from their time at American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, were fully on board with SCLC launching a full-scale campaign in Selma. It ticked all of the boxes necessary for a successful campaign: an active, energized citizenry and a short-tempered and violent sheriff after the mode of Birmingham's Bull Connor. The following day, Boynton met again with King, describing

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[68] Ibid., 461-463.
[69] May, *Bending*, 40.

the impact of Judge Hare's injunction and the toll it had taken on the movement by sowing conflict between activists. With Ralph Abernathy's support, King decided SCLC would indeed make Selma its next battle, and sent Bevel to look after the direct action side of the campaign and Vivian to gain the support of the Dallas County Voters League. Vivian got the DCVL on board, and they formally invited King to Selma for January 2, 1965.[70]

A mass meeting was set to coincide with King's arrival—the first in nearly six months. City officials made it known that Judge Hare's injunction would no longer be enforced, as it was pending review by Federal Circuit Court Judge Thomas. The meeting was held at Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church and was attended by approximately 700 of Selma's black citizens. Sheriff Clark was out of town at the time of the meeting, and Smitherman and Baker worked hard to find ways to keep Clark from policing any protests, though Clark was hardly cooperative. King left Selma after the meeting and returned on January 14 for another mass meeting during which he announced SCLC's plan to begin testing public accommodations at restaurants and marching to the courthouse on registration days (which were only twice a month). Monday's march was quiet, as Smitherman and Baker successfully managed to keep Clark out of it. King and his SCLC advisors grew concerned that without Clark's explosive reactions, the movement would stall. On Tuesday, however, Clark was back on the streets and assaulted Amelia Boynton for failing to move quickly enough, dragging her by the collar half a

[70] Ibid., 41-43.

block to a waiting patrol car. In the aftermath, he and his deputies arrested sixty-seven marchers for failing to go to the alley where he told them to wait.[71]

The marches continued over the next several days while King was out of town, resulting in more arrests and a standoff between Baker and Clark over how to deal with the protestors. The sit-ins continued, but arrests slowed down. Finally, when King returned on Friday, Frederick D. Reese led a group of 105 black teachers from Clark Elementary School to the Dallas County Courthouse in support of the demonstrators. They met the superintendent and school board members on the steps. The teachers then marched back to Brown Chapel. Following this confrontation, there were no activities until January 24 when another group marched to the courthouse to wait to register to vote. After a long, tense day in line, a nurse, Annie Lee Cooper, knocked Jim Clark down with a punch to the head. Three deputies wrestled her to the ground, and Clark managed to land at least one blow with his nightstick. Photographs of Cooper being knocked down made the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* (pages one and two, respectively). [72] National news was made again on February 1 when deputies arrested Martin Luther King, Jr. He published another editorial letter from the Selma jail, modeled after his letter from a Birmingham jail, but it lacked the impact of the first letter, at least in part because King was already free when the letter was published on February 5.[73] While King was in jail, the more radical Malcolm X spoke at Brown Chapel, later claiming to Coretta Scott

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[71] Garrow, *Protest*, 39-43.
[72] Ibid., 44-47.
[73] May, *Bending*, 67-68.

King that his goal had been to scare Selma's whites into following King's lead by presenting himself as the face of violent opposition to Jim Crow.[74]

Meanwhile, a power struggle emerged between Circuit Judge Hare and Federal District Judge Daniel Thomas. Judge Thomas, who was reviewing Hare's injunction against mass meetings, issued his own injunction requiring the Selma judicial authorities to uphold the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and cease interfering with the registration process. Thomas insisted that those who were waiting in line to register and the people waiting with them to act as vouchers were not violating any law. Clark used the ruling to justify his arrests of demonstrators over the first one hundred to get in line throughout January. On January 30, Judge Thomas amended his order to clarify that he had not meant to limit the number of people in line. On February 1, Clark began arresting anyone in line for contempt of court, at the request of Judge Hare who claimed that the demonstrators were disrupting his court sessions. From February 1 to February 3, 1,286 people were arrested, 1,175 of them juveniles. On February 3, Judge Hare issued a further injunction against all protests at the courthouse, which brought the arrests to over 2,000. Judge Thomas was finally forced to act, issuing an injunction against the use of a state supreme court-sponsored voter registration test from August 1964. The order also required the board to accept up to eight applicants at a time and process at least 100 applications per session. If an applicant failed, he or she had to be informed of exactly why, and told that the applicant could seek a review by Judge Thomas. The board was required to make monthly reports to Judge Thomas, and any applications received by June 30 had to be

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[74] Ibid., 69.

processed by July 31 or they would be turned over to a federal voting referee for a decision.[75]

Though Judge Thomas' injunction did address many of the issues regarding voter registration in Dallas County, Jim Bevel and SCLC pressed onward, not wanting to lose the momentum and national attention the campaign had begun to receive. This created friction between the DCVL, which was primarily focused on registering black voters in Dallas County, and SCLC, which saw Selma as one piece of a national campaign. The potential rift was averted by Jim Clark's inadvertent intervention. On February 10, Clark and a group of deputies began chasing a group of 120 students who had been silently protesting at the courthouse. They drove behind the students, forcing them to run and hitting them with cattle prods from their vehicles when they began to fall behind. This harassment continued for several miles into the countryside. After about three miles, the young people broke ranks and began peeling off into black homes they spotted along the route. White moderates were horrified, and the *Selma Times-Journal* published an editorial denouncing the incident. Clark's actions united the DCVL and SCLC, and the potential split disappeared.[76]

In nearby Marion, the seat of Perry County (which borders Dallas County on the north and west), the SCLC and local protestors had also been intensifying their own demonstrations for voting rights. Hundreds of black citizens, including many students, had been arrested during protests and attempts to desegregate restaurants. James Orange, an SCLC field secretary for Birmingham and one of the main SCLC leaders coordinating

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[75] Thornton, *Dividing*, 481-482.
[76] Ibid., 484-485.

with local efforts, was arrested on February 18 for contributing the delinquency of minors; he had been helping with a school boycott. That night, local protestors marched from a black church to the county jail. The streetlights were either turned off or shot out, and chaos ensued as troopers, police, and deputies attacked the peaceful marchers.[77] While attempting to protect his family members, a 26-year-old Baptist church deacon, Jimmie Lee Jackson, was shot in the stomach twice. Jackson was rushed to the local hospital in Perry County before being sent to Good Samaritan Hospital (run by the Sisters of St. Joseph) in Selma for surgery. While Jackson was in the hospital, Colonel Al Lingo, director of the Alabama Department of Public Safety, charged Jackson with assault and battery with intent to murder a peace officer. Jackson finally died on February 26 as a result of massive infection at the site of the gunshot wounds.[78]

Jackson's death at the hands of a state trooper angered and galvanized protestors in Dallas and Perry Counties. Bernard LaFayette and Jim Bevel visited Jackson's family's home on February 26, where LaFayette in particular was appalled by the tiny shack, which had neither electricity nor running water.[79] They returned to Selma that night, and Bevel spoke at Brown Chapel and called on them to prepare to march to Montgomery and bring Jimmie Lee Jackson's body to Governor Wallace. Though that did not happen, Bevel had committed SCLC and King to the idea of a march, and one was planned for Sunday, March 7. King was unconvinced about the march, and SNCC leadership considered it to be a publicity stunt that would end only violently without

[77] Thornton, *Dividing*, 486.
[78] May, *Bending*, 77-80.
[79] LaFayette, *In Peace*, 120-121.

helping the local community. While SNCC would not condone the march officially, individual members were permitted to participate.[80]

When the day of the march arrived, King was in Atlanta preaching at Ebenezer Missionary Baptist, his father's church. There was significant confusion among SCLC leadership as to whether the march should take place. Selma's marchers had gathered at a playground in the George Washington Carver Homes near Brown Chapel. When they finally got King's consent, they began marching, led by John Lewis, chairman of SNCC acting on his own, and Hosea Williams of SCLC. The marchers arrived at the Edmund Pettus Bridge at 4 p.m. and saw what John Lewis described as a "sea of blue": state troopers joined by Jim Clark and his deputies and posse men, fifteen of whom were mounted on horses.[81]

The Edmund Pettus Bridge is arched, so it was not until the marchers crested the bridge that they could see what was waiting for them. The front line of the marchers halted in front of the troopers. Major John Cloud refused to talk to Williams and Lewis and gave them an ultimatum to turn around and return in two minutes. Lewis called on the marchers to kneel and pray with him. Some attempted to do so, but before the time allotted had expired, Cloud called out, "Troopers, advance." Chaos descended immediately as the troopers, deputies, and posse men let loose on the marchers with tear and nausea gas, nightsticks flying.[82] They made no attempt to arrest any of the marchers, who were beaten and run over by horses as law enforcement chased them back to the

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[80] May, *Bending*, 81-84.
[81] Ibid., 85-87.
[82] Ibid., 87.

Carver Homes.[83] Marchers, injured and sickened by the gas, sought refuge in people's homes along the way and in Brown Chapel and First Baptist churches, which stand on either end of the housing project. Officers and deputies chased fleeing marchers into the churches. With some effort, leaders were able to stop the marchers and Carver Homes residents from responding to violence with violence. A total of fifty-six black marchers were hospitalized, though countless others suffered injuries of varying severity. Miraculously, no one was killed.[84]

That evening, Selma's stunned black community gathered again in a mass meeting at Brown Chapel and rededicated themselves to the movement and the Selma campaign. Film footage of what would become known as Bloody Sunday was processed as quickly as possible by news outlets, and ABC interrupted its broadcast of the movie *Judgment at Nuremburg* to show a fifteen-minute segment of what took place in Selma. The next morning, newspapers across the country expressed outrage at the inhumanity of the events in Selma. In response, King called for a "ministers' march" to Montgomery on Tuesday, March 9. Hundreds of clergy, black and white, poured into Selma, and hundreds more volunteers from across the country followed them.[85] That day, some 2,000 marchers set out, this time led by King. They still did not have permission to march, nor had the White House agreed to send the National Guard to protect the marchers. When King crested the bridge and saw the troopers waiting, he halted the march and led prayers and

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[83] Thornton, *Dividing*, 488.
[84] Ibid.
[85] May, *Bending*, 92-93.

singing. In a controversial decision, he then led the marchers back to the church. SNCC would derisively call the event "Turnaround Tuesday."[86]

White ministers and clergy from around the United States responded to the Selma outrages by coming to the city as a sign of Christian solidarity. Violence immediately came their way, white or not. While walking back to their quarters from a black downtown cafe, a group of three ministers passed the Silver Moon Cafe, which catered to hardline white supremacists. The cafe's reputation was such that the largely fearless activists in Selma had avoided testing it after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Men armed with clubs left the cafe and attacked the ministers. Someone struck white Unitarian minister James J. Reeb of Boston in the head. Reeb's injuries were serious, and necessitated his transport to a hospital in Birmingham, which took four hours after the first ambulance broke down and was detained by police.[87] Reeb later died of his injuries.

The attack on Reeb and his subsequent death hardened the resolve of the would-be marchers in Selma. Police Chief Wilson Baker halted an attempt to march in memory of Reverend Reeb, and police strung up a clothesline to mark the Carver Homes neighborhood, warning demonstrators not to cross that line. Protestors manned the blockade around the clock, and referred to it as at the Berlin Wall.[88] The authorities finally gave in on March 17, and Judge Daniel Johnson issued an injunction allowing the march and ordering the state to protect the marchers.

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[86] Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-1968* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 58.

[87] Garrow, *Protest*, 91.

[88] Ibid., 90-92; Branch, *At Canaan's Edge*, 83-84.

The Selma to Montgomery March took place over five days from March 21 to March 25. Protestors marched steadily from Selma all 54 miles to Montgomery. They camped overnight on land owned by black farmers in Lowndes County. Though thousands began the march, leaders selected a core group of 300 marchers who passed physical examinations in the basement of First Baptist Church to walk the entire route. When they finally arrived at the state capitol, the crowd swelled to 25,000 to hear King speak from the steps. The triumph of the march was dampened, however, that night when a group of Klansmen murdered Viola Liuzzo, a white housewife from Detroit who was driving marchers back to Selma.[89]

After the march, Selma quieted. White moderates openly split from the White Citizens' Council, but this did not change the reality of life for Selma's African American citizens. Moderates were still white supremacists dedicated to segregation.[90] Attendance at mass meetings fell off, and black boycotts of white merchants broke down. With more intervention from Judge Thomas, voter registration continued slowly but steadily. Stokely Carmichael, a SNCC organizer, focused his attention on voter registration in Lowndes County.[91] The Dallas County School Board dismissed teacher Frederick D. Reese, using the excuse of his absenteeism during the demonstrations, though he was later reinstated after charges that he had embezzled from the DCVL were thrown out. In June 1965, the school board followed the rising trend across the South and adopted a "freedom of choice" plan in a weak attempt to stave off full-scale desegregation. These policies, later found unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Green v. County School Board* in 1968,

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[89] Thornton, *Dividing*, 489.
[90] Ibid., 496-498.
[91] Garrow, *Protest*, 127.

allowed students to apply to attend the school of their choice, though the process was deliberately convoluted to prevent any more than token integration.[92] The move allowed twenty black students to enter the first four grades while the upper classes remained fully segregated. Despite the token nature of decision, white parents withdrew en masse and established the private (and all-white) John T. Morgan Academy in 1965.[93] Selma's public schools would not fully desegregate until 1970, and white students continued to flee to private schools rather than face integration.

The passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 came in August. While the law itself had been in the works since at least 1964, the public outcry and interest generated by the Selma campaign of March 1965 contributed significantly to the passage of the bill. The impact of the Voting Rights Act was first felt in Alabama in the primary elections of 1966. In Selma, Wilson Baker faced off against Jim Clark for sheriff and won, carried by newly registered black voters, though not without the intervention of Judge Thomas when white officials attempted to have black precinct results discounted.[94] Voters did not elect black candidates in either the primary or the 1968 general election; however, in 1972 five black men were elected to the city council: Ernest Doyle, Reverend Lorenzo Harrison, William Kemp, J.C. Kimbrough, and Reverend Frederick D. Reese. That same year, Father James Robinson of the Edmundite Mission in Selma was able to negotiate what were later known as the "Selma Accords" with Mayor Joe Smitherman (who had been reelected with the support of black voters). The agreements negotiated the settlement of a

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[92] Charles T. Clotfelter *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 24.

[93] Thornton, *Dividing*, 492-498.

[94] Ibid., 498.

number of lawsuits filed in connection with civil rights to allow Selma to receive approximately $3 million in federal funding for housing and infrastructure improvements.[95]

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This narrative history of Selma is a long form of the version of Selma's civil rights history most people are familiar with, particularly the section on the 1960s. One of the challenging aspects of civil rights historiography is that the focus on scholarly history results in a tendency to treat memoir accounts of the movement as primary documents rather than seeing them as part of an ongoing conversation about the movement. While certainly not every memoir that discusses the movement is a contribution to scholarship, neglecting to treat these works as part of the body of literature on the civil rights movement is a mistake. Popular accounts often face a similar fate, even when written by the figures whose stories are covered in grand scholarly works. There is a need for a public historiography of the civil rights movement—a historiography that encompasses traditional histories, scholarly work, memoirs, and the full scope of popular and alternative literature on the movement.

A number of recent books attempt to bridge this divide. Gary May's *Bending Toward Justice* includes a lengthy narrative discussion of the voting rights campaign in Selma and its environs. His analysis also includes extensive reference to primary accounts and interpretation from activists, relying on sources from the website <www.crmvet.org> (Civil Rights Movement Veterans). These sources allow him to

[95] Alston Fitts III, "Edmundite Southern Missions," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, October 3, 2012, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1898> (accessed May 15, 2014).

create a more in-depth discussion of the motives and activities of the local youths who drove the movement when SNCC was the outside organization committing resources. The second half of the text follows the legislative history of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) and the various legal challenges it faced during its history. While this book came out only months before the Supreme Court invalidated Section 4 of the VRA, May's work paints a clear picture of how and why the VRA has been so consistently under threat from Southern conservative lawmakers and jurists.[96] By tying the historic process of the law's creation to its present, May draws the question of civil rights into the present, extending the idea of the "long civil rights movement" forward in a way that shows the significant connections between past and present.[97]

This is also the great strength of the gold standard of civil rights memoirs, John Lewis' *Walking with the Wind*. Lewis' memoir contextualizes his personal story alongside an in-depth analysis of the events he witnessed. In particular, he provides useful insight into how the movement reformulated itself after Selma and in particular after King left; he gives us a personal perspective into the well-documented tension between SCLC and SNCC, and the challenges SNCC faced with the rise of black nationalism. Lewis carries his story into the then-present (1999). In looking at Selma specifically, Bernard LaFayette's *In Peace and Freedom* offers a personal account of his early involvement, a period that brings together the better-known institutional history of

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[96] Section 4 included the "preclearance" language that required states and counties identified in the VRA to get approval before making alterations to voting laws and practices. This section meant that any action that might impede voter access would be halted before it took effect, so that voters would be protected in the first place, rather than waiting until after the fact to lodge a complaint or file a lawsuit.

[97] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263.

the movement and the less-known local story. Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson's *The House by the Side of the Road* offers a middle-class perspective on the movement from a woman who was close to many of the key figures, including Dr. King, and demonstrates how local people's experiences and memories of the movement varied dramatically. Amelia Boynton Robinson's *Bridge Across Jordan* is an early (1979) take on her and her husband's involvement in Selma's voting rights movement from the 1930s on. While not of the same scope as Lewis' book, it is a raw and personal account of a story that is often depersonalized by broader narratives. While not scholarly in nature, these texts are important reminders that past events happened to ordinary people, and that these people had to find ways to contextualize their experiences during the movement with their lives and the changes that did or did not take place.

One of the benefits for scholars of the civil rights era is that there is a fair amount of interest from a more general audience, especially for material related to Dr. King. Taylor Branch's *America in the King Years* series, which made the *New York Times* bestseller list, is a testament to the enduring appetite readers have for such stories. This popularity has also opened the market up to other genres that explore these stories. Charles E. Cobb, Jr.'s *On the Road to Freedom* offers a "guided tour" of civil rights sites in the South.[98] Arranged by state and city, Cobb takes a conversational and approachable tone and engages with different perspectives on the movement. Where historians often feel a compulsion to impose order and categorize opinions and responses to the movement, or at least assign some chronological limits and narrative structure, Cobb

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[98] Cobb, Jr., *On the Road.*

takes a more relaxed approach.[99] Because the story is grounded in the landscape, the chronology moves around freely, starting with a better-known event and then jumping back in time to an earlier event and allowing the reader to make connections for him or herself. Where the academic author might feel the need to justify and explain every choice, Cobb moves comfortably through several civil rights movements, using text boxes to share perspectives from other activists. The guidebook format also allows Cobb (and the guests interviewed in text boxes) to engage with the interpretive materials he finds at certain sites, which both adds to the conversational tone and creates a sense of immediacy. The civil rights movement Cobb describes is not part of a distant, unreachable past; it is a living, breathing thing.

This sense of continuity with the past is something that should be of particular interest to public historians. While the events in Selma of March 1965 ended some fifty years ago, the impact of those events is still being felt today, both in Selma and far beyond. The Voting Rights Act has been the subject of ongoing legal challenges that continue today. The issues at the heart of the civil rights movement—racial injustice, inequality, poverty, discrimination—remain challenges today, and indeed many of the same people who were involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960s (John Lewis, Julian Bond, John Conyers, Angela Davis, C.T. Vivian, Bernard LaFayette, James Lawson, and Bob Moses, to name a few) remain engaged in these issues today. Hundreds of people who staged sit-ins and marches in Selma as students are still alive today.

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[99] Frye Gaillard's *Alabama's Civil Rights Trail* offers a more academic take on the same concept, looking at some of the same sites with a less personal, slightly more instructional tone. Frye Gaillard with Jennifer Lindsay and Jane DeNeefe, *Alabama's Civil Rights Trail: An Illustrated Guide to the Cradle of Freedom* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010).

This is not to suggest that academic historians are somehow unaware of the ongoing issues sparked by the civil rights movement; it is simply a hazard of the field to discuss the past as if it really were dead when we know, to paraphrase Faulkner, that it is not even past. Yet one gets the sense that for much the American public, the civil rights movement ended in 1968, about fifteen years after it began. This idea has typically been put forth by textbooks that focus on compressing facts into memorable chunks to be regurgitated as answers to multiple-choice standard exams.

The National Park Service (NPS) reiterates this view to the general public in is role as the authoritative voice of interpretation at a number of sites, including Selma. The Park Service's website "We Shall Overcome: Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement" concludes its coverage with a section entitled "The Prize" that focuses on the passage of the Voting Rights Act and makes some brief mention of ongoing inequality.[100] Though there is no date provided on the website, it is worth noting that the Park Service is chronically underfunded and understaffed, and so updating existing material to keep pace with scholarship falls low on the priority list. The NPS also operates two interpretive centers for the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, one in Lowndes County roughly at the midpoint of the trail, and one in downtown Selma. These centers include museum exhibits and a documentary film that serves as the introduction to the story of the march. At the Lowndes County Interpretive Center, the material presented provides an overview of Jim Crow, focusing on restrictions for voting and the segregation of public spaces, and then uses displays to illustrate the realities of the march.

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[100] National Park Service, "We Shall Overcome: Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement, The Prize," http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/prize.htm (accessed May 17, 2014).

The Park Service also offers a brochure for visitors that provides an extremely distilled version of the narrative already described that focuses even more closely on the march itself (which is of course the designated subject of the site).

While this interpretation is likely adequate for outside visitors, it does little to ground the story in Selma in terms of either the landscape or even the people mentioned. While there is nothing inherently wrong with the Park Service's presentation of facts, it can be used to highlight some of the problems facing interpretation of the Selma movement more generally. The following names are mentioned specifically[101] in the brochure:

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|---|---|
| Jim Clark* | George Wallace |
| Martin Luther King, Jr. | John Lewis |
| Mohandas Gandhi | Hosea Williams |
| Frank Johnson* | James Reeb |
| Amelia Boynton* | Jonathan Daniels |
| Frederick D. Reese* | Viola Liuzzo |
| Lyndon Johnson | Jimmie Lee Jackson* |

The names with asterisks indicate people who lived or worked in or near Selma.. This means that only four of the fourteen individuals named are in fact local. While I do not dispute the contributions of the other individuals named, this is reflective of the tendency of scholars to focus on the influence of outsiders rather than looking within Selma. In particular, the Selma civil rights activists named (Amelia Boynton and F.D. Reese) were both adults during the movement. The names of the young people are missing entirely, and when they are referenced, they are treated as a bloc: "the students" or "the children." Similarly, the sites mentioned on the tour (like Brown Chapel and the

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[101] I did not include references to musicians that were included in the text or mentioned as performing on the last night of the march.

Dallas County Courthouse) are also those most often associated with outsiders; the community's view of significant places is much broader.

Another useful comparison comes from contrasting the NPS presentation in Lowndes County to that offered by the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute in Selma, which is operated by a group of local Selmians. While the examines the entire history of Voting Rights, rather than just the Selma movement, its exhibit space on Selma includes extensive discussion of the Dallas County Voters League alongside a concerted effort to identify and describe the contributions of what they call "foot soldiers" in the movement: the young people who did the majority of the marching.

One of the primary contributions of the Voting Rights Museum is that its narrative deviates from the "MLK slept here" model that has been the focus of much scholarly and popular interpretation.[102] By contextualizing King's efforts within the larger story of voting rights in the country, and the local involvement, they allow visitors to understand King's work as part of a much larger program. While Dr. King's role in the Selma campaign was critical—it was his presence that brought the media attention that would put Selma on the national stage and helped unite the factions within the black community—he and SCLC were not the driving force behind the Selma campaign. Dr. King understood his role to be one of bringing the media spotlight and pulling groups together, which is exactly what he did in Selma:

> Selma was even more of a mass movement than any of the others, very different from, say, Birmingham, where there were lots of generals on the

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[102] This is based on my own visit to the NVRMI, but this perspective is shared by Owen J. Dwyer and Derek H. Alderman, *Civil Rights Memorials and the Geography of Memory* (Chicago: Center for American Places at Columbia College Chicago, 2008), 33-34.

> scene, lots of staff and leaders—the Fred Shuttlesworths and the Dr. Kings—carefully planning every move, all of it organized from the top down. Selma was more of a bottom-up campaign, of the people acting with minimal direction from the leaders. We were there to guide and help carry out what the people wanted to do, but it was essentially the people themselves who pointed the way.[103]

Though it was King who came to "pull the trigger" in Selma in 1965 as John Lewis put it, the way was laid for him by locals and activists over a much longer period of time. Following his assassination in 1968, however, many use King and his image as an icon representing the entire civil rights movement, in the mode of the "Great Men" model of history often used in American memorial sites.[104] The Voting Rights Museum breaks with this interpretation by focusing on the role of ordinary, local people who risked their lives for the right to vote, featuring their stories and putting their work at the forefront of the museum's exhibit space.

In evaluating the competing approaches to civil rights memorials in *Civil Rights Memorials and the Geography of Memory*, Owen J. Dwyer and Derek H. Alderman divide interpretation into two camps: the "Won Cause" described by Glenn Eskew that focuses on great men and King in particular, and a "many movements" approach advocated by Ella Baker and Septima Clark.[105] While the latter is a perspective that has been increasingly exercised in scholarship, it has not always transitioned to memorialization or preservation, at least in part because Dr. King has become a "safe" figure for commemorating civil rights, stripped of his radicalism and unthreatening to white viewers.

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[103] Lewis, *Walking*, 318.
[104] Dwyer, *Civil*, 28.
[105] Ibid., 31-32.

How then, can we find new frameworks for approaching and understanding the Selma campaign, or the civil rights movement as a whole? How can we know that the existing narratives are worth challenging? In the simplest terms, this can be achieved by listening to the people involved and studying the cultural landscape that provided the setting. The landscape is key to this approach, because it grounds the past in the tangible and concrete; it allows the historian to step away from documents and official stories (be they that of NPS or even the records of organizations like SNCC and SCLC) and take a different perspective on the past. In the next chapter, I will describe the community-driven process we used to develop the Multiple Property Submission in Selma, explore an alternative paradigm for interpreting and understanding Selma's history and role in the movement, and discuss why these critical approaches are crucial to connecting the past with the present.

# CHAPTER THREE

# THE SELMA METHODOLOGY AND ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORKS

> Selma was even more of a mass movement than any of the others, very different from, say, Birmingham, where there were lots of generals on the scene, lots of staff and leaders—the Fred Shuttlesworths and the Dr. Kings—carefully planning every move, all of it organized from the top down. Selma was more of a bottom-up campaign, of the people acting with minimal direction from the leaders. We were there to guide and help carry out what the people wanted to do, but it was essentially the people themselves who pointed the way.[1]

When John Lewis described the Selma movement in his memoir, he was careful to point out how it differed from other campaigns in the civil rights movement. The people, the local folks in Selma, were the ones who drove the campaign forward. Though SNCC arrived as "outside agitators," they worked within the existing structure of the Dallas County Voters League to run the Voter Education Project. When they reached out to the youth, SNCC worked to develop local youth leadership and was so successful that even when there were no SNCC people there to lead, the youth leaders managed to organize successful actions on their own, as was described in Chapter Two.

Though Lewis does not use the terminology, what he is really doing is recognizing the agency of local Selmians, which is the ability of individuals to act and make their own choices. The question of agency is often central to how we think about history, but it is also a key consideration for the heritage process. One of major issues in the dominant narrative of the Selma campaign, and indeed much of civil rights movement literature, is the placement of agency within structures of authority, whether they are the

[1] Lewis, *Walking*, 318.

white political authorities or black leadership authorities like SCLC or SNCC. By engaging with communities in ways that respect their agency, focusing on maintaining that agency throughout the process, and then bringing that perspective to bear on the history itself, we can move toward a theoretical framework that places the construction of agency at the heart of the civil rights movement. The movement itself pushed for a radical reconceptualization of citizenship and blackness in the South and the United States, and scholarship ought to find ways to interpret and respect that legacy.

Without attempting to deny the agency of enslaved individuals and people of color under Jim Crow, it is fair to say that the structures of white supremacy were designed to deprive people of color of their agency.[2] One of the reasons the question of agency is especially important in engaging with the civil rights movement is that the movement was about demonstrating the agency for African Americans in the face of white supremacy. Yet much popular interpretation omits this fact by focusing on the achievements of famous individuals and in particular on nonviolent resistance in urban areas to the detriment of Black Power Movements, armed resistance, and resistance in rural areas. The story is further reduced to one of good versus evil, often with nonviolent or integrationist activists categorized as good and nationalist or violent activists as bad. While there are elements of truth to that analysis, its oversimplification implies that the movement was an unqualified success and that it marked the real end of Jim Crow and white supremacy in the South. This idea is not only historically incorrect (as it often

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[2] Current scholarship also works to identify the agency of enslaved people, examples include James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, (New York: New Press, 2006).

ignores "unsuccessful" movements like those in Albany, Georgia or Memphis, Tennessee), it is dangerous because it furthers the myth of a postracial society.

What is needed, then, is a framework for popular interpretation that expands on the idea of a "long civil rights movement"[3] stretching from Emancipation or the early twentieth century that pulls together the many people who worked for civil rights across a breadth of methods and expectations. This approach include the work of post-Reconstruction activists whose methods were very different from the direct action of the mid-twentieth century but whose goal was also equality. This challenge is not unique to the American context of civil rights. The Jim Crow Era was comparable in many ways to South Africa's period of apartheid (1948 to 1994): both had race-based divisions that were coded into law and enforced by legal and extralegal violence; both denied the full rights of citizenship to nonwhites; and both were designed to reinforce the authority of the white minority.[4] At the end of its respective era, each nation was faced with the challenge of carving out a new political, social, and cultural order that made space for the formerly disenfranchised and excluded. In *Political Identity and Social Change: The Remaking of the South African Social Order*, political scientist Jamie Frueh examines the process of ending apartheid in South Africa from resistance movements through efforts to create a new government and social order in the New South Africa.[5]

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[3] Hall, "Long Civil Rights Movement."

[4] While blacks are the minority in the U.S. as a whole, in Dallas County and many parts of the Black Belt, they make up the majority of the population, especially in more rural counties.

[5] Jamie Frueh, *Political Identity and Social Change: The Remaking of the South African Social Order* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

Rather than focusing on specific people and events, Frueh's work breaks down the idea of resistance to elements applicable across historic moments. It includes different layers of resistance that demonstrate the connections between the essential and subtler forms of resistance, which are often dismissed or marginalized as passive resistance and the more overt, recognizable forms of direct action.

Frueh's study offers several useful points of comparison for understanding the civil rights movement. First, he argues that reality is socially constructed based on what people treat as important and that these change; fluidity is the normal states of affairs. There is a tendency among historians to focus on ideas of continuity and change, treating change as an aberration. The Jim Crow South was not stagnant, and ideas about race and segregation were constantly being renegotiated, with the momentum and trajectory firmly (though not entirely) under the control of the white patriarchal authorities. Organizations like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the White Citizens' Councils (WCC) existed as instruments of control meant to perpetuate white supremacy against the countercurrents of black activism and resistance. The KKK and WCC were only necessary because there was resistance to white patriarchal authorities, both from African-American communities and in some cases from whites who did not agree in part or in whole with the social order.

Second, Frueh attaches agency to identity labels rather than to individuals. Agency relates to situational context and how authorities receive labels. Individuals could therefore have agency in one context while deprived of it in another, based on their identity labels and whether authority figures accepted those labels. The most obvious example of this in the South was the practice of addressing all black people by their first

names, denying them the honorific of Mr., Mrs., or Miss to which whites were entitled by the color of their skin, regardless of age. Resistance to these labels sometimes came in the form of black parents naming their children "Miss" or "Mister," or going only by initials.

Third, Frueh takes an expansive view of what constitutes resistance, including any attempt to disrupt or redirect the flow of the social order. The social order, he contends, relies on the consensus over who has authority and who does not. Assent to this consensus may be given voluntarily or extracted through violence or the threat of violence, all of which propped up the white supremacist order during the Jim Crow Era. Frueh breaks resistance down into four stages: noticing, questioning, causing trouble, and working for a specific alternative. Noticing and questioning decrease the momentum of the social order by removing support from the necessary consensus, and these forms of resistance take place on an individual level. The first collective action, "causing trouble," includes encouraging or forcing others to notice and/or question whatever aspect of the social reality the resistor opposes. This is the point at which leaders begin to emerge, and resistance can coalesce against the social order, though it may lack direction. At the final stage, working for a specific alternative, resistors propose alternate paths for the social order, which may include revolutionary change.

At its core, resistance means breaking the rules that govern and maintain the social order. If the rule violations are punished, then the rule is reaffirmed and the social momentum continues undisrupted. However, if the violation goes unpunished or the violator is able to convince others that the rule itself is flawed, a new rule might emerge. The rules that govern the social order are, like the order itself, fluid, and so are

negotiated, though not always explicitly.[6] "Rule" in this case does not necessarily mean a law; it can be a social convention or a pattern of behavior, but for the purposes of discussing Jim Crow, the terminology of a "rule" seems apt.

The research of this dissertation raises questions about political identity. The following discussion uses Frueh's analysis to explore the civil rights movement in Selma. Thus, as Frueh suggests, identity should be seen as a collection of labels that change in level of importance according to the situation and social order. Labels associated with race, for example, are relevant only insofar as society considers race an important factor in social arrangements. The importance of race in the Jim Crow-era South is illustrated by the specificity of labels available to describe it; "important/real things have labels while it takes strings of words to describe those things that are less important."[7] These labels take on political meaning when power and agency are attached to them. The proliferation of slanderous and offensive language to describe the racial identity of African Americans by whites, and the later rejection of even the more supposedly polite terms (like "colored" or "Negro") by blacks, demonstrates the power of these labels. The rejection of offensive labels, much like attempts to avoid being addressed by a first name only, was (and is) a form of resistance to white supremacy.

The process of asserting a label is a negotiation between the resistor and the authority in a particular situation. Even when these negotiations take place between individuals, the fact of their existence is a threat to the momentum of the social order. When taking place on a large scale, they have the power to alter the course of the social

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[6] Ibid., 21.
[7] Ibid., 28.

order, such as the scores of black would-be voters who stood in line at the Dallas County Court House despite the threats and periodic violence of the white authorities. Taken together, Frueh characterizes the three to four most important labels in a given interaction as a persona, which "is political because it advances a vision of reality, rules, and privilege distribution and asserts that the future should conform to that vision."[8] By looking at the persona, we are able to examine the shifts in agency and power during interactions between authorities and resistors. While labels simplify social interactions by establishing predictable patterns of social behavior, the combination of labels and personas reveal the structural power behind social arrangements. The negotiation of personas and labels is part of the larger process by which social reality is constructed, which gives them the power to alter the social order. Lining up to register to vote is a way of claiming the labels of "voter" and "citizen," labels that carry political agency, and rejecting the white supremacist social order that perceives blacks as passive non-citizens who were incapable of political thought and whose well-being hinged on the charity of whites. Black Selmians' success in claiming a label with agency, combined with the failure of white authorities to win that negotiation, illustrates vividly how the civil rights movement across the country was a struggle to claim agency and remake the social order in a way that did not privilege whiteness and assign agency and power based on race.

The constructivist idea of identity, then, is a helpful way of understanding the profound social change that took place during the civil rights movement. This analysis reveals that identity is an amalgamation of labels of varying degrees of significance relative to the context of a given social interaction. These labels can either further the

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[8] Ibid., 31.

momentum of the social order or oppose it. Political and social upheaval are marked by a renegotiation of identity relative to other identities and to the social order as a whole. We can understand the civil rights movement as a long period of renegotiating identities with the goal of changing the social order.

If we reconsider the Selma story within this framework, it allows us to move away from the "official" version of Selma's voting rights campaign that focuses primarily on Martin Luther King, Jr., and the SCLC and instead see it as part of a regional and national movement of individuals and communities who worked together to transform the social order and renegotiate what it means to be black in America. White resistance and the organization of the Citizens' Councils and KKK can be understood as an attempt by whites to reinforce the momentum of the white supremacist social order. This meant reasserting their identities and privileges as white patriarchs and also their ideas about how blacks should behave toward them with a strong emphasis on submission and fear. At the same time that whites were reasserting this identity and attempting to strengthen the social order, blacks were continuing to resist by noticing, questioning, and causing trouble. The early victories of the movement in Selma—the establishment of a black rest room built with New Deal funds downtown, for example—took on new significance in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown*. If the goal of white supremacy was to deny blacks agency in all interactions with whites, then the success of some blacks in not only gaining identity labels that included agency but in adding monuments to that agency to the built environment—directly behind City Hall, no less—became more ominous and threatening from the perspective of whites determined to maintain their supremacy. By the time young black students, who should be perhaps the most

submissive and fearful due both to their color and youth, began sitting down at lunch counters and marching for voting rights, it was apparent that the balance of power had shifted. The denial of public agency to blacks in their interactions with whites and the social order built around that relationship would also have to be renegotiated.

This framework also allows us to reconsider the results of the movement. While the passage of the Voting Rights Act is heralded as the crowning achievement of the Selma campaign, and Selma's public spaces did desegregate, school desegregation did not take place until 1972. As in most places, desegregation was accompanied by white flight (both to the suburbs and to private Christian academies), a very visible indication that a sizable number of whites did not agree with this particular renegotiation of the social order. This is not to suggest that the picture was uniformly bleak; black Selmians voted in large numbers, served on juries, and were elected to public office—something that had not happened since Reconstruction. Because the social order is fluid in the constructivist framework, we can imagine the transformation of Selma's (and the United States') social order as something always in process, a constant negotiation and renegotiation. Interactions may no longer fit the patterns of the Jim Crow era, but neither have they evolved into something that could be called post-racial.

The significance of taking this analytical approach to the Selma campaign is that it allows us to reexamine events with an eye to the ebb and flow of agency on both macro and micro levels. The role that SNCC played early on, working with students, was to teach them how to seize labels that conferred agency and generate conflict in a way that allowed them to coerce those in power to acknowledge their agency. By refusing to back down in the face of threats and violence, they deprived the white authorities of the tools

of oppression. By shifting focus onto the smaller scale, interpersonal interactions, this analysis also allows us to reconsider the pace of change; things did change in Selma, but they changed at different rates for different people, and the process of claiming agency was, and is, ongoing.

In addition to helping draw connections between the historical and present experiences of community members, recognizing the ongoing process of claiming agency allows public historians and heritage professionals to reevaluate their roles as partners and facilitators for communities. As public historians interact with community members, they are also negotiating claims about agency. Sharing authority, then, can mean acknowledging and respecting community members' rights to labels like "partner" that confer agency, rather than regarding community members simply as "resources," which implies a certain level of passivity or even a certain level of exploitation.

* * *

The Center for Historic Preservation (CHP at Middle Tennessee State University has been engaged in a variety of preservation projects related to African American history in the Southeast since 1984. Some of these projects include the Rural African American Churches in Tennessee Multiple Property Submission (1999) to the National Register of History Places, the Glenview Historic District in Memphis (a center of civil rights history in that city) in 2000 and the Birmingham Civil Rights (1933-1979) Multiple Property Submission to the National Register (accepted in 2004). Through this work, the Center has developed a reputation as a resource for communities and has established a

network of contacts across the South.[9] The Civil Rights Movement in Selma, Alabama (1865-1972) Multiple Property Submission to the National Register project emerged from these contacts.

In 2011, Louretta Wimberly, a self-described grassroots preservationist and founding member (and Chair Emerita) of the Black Heritage Council of the Alabama Historic Commission, proposed a historic preservation project for the entire city of Selma, Alabama. The city had a few existing historic districts and a smattering of properties associated with the civil rights movement already listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but Mrs. Wimberly envisioned something much larger that would include Selma's historically black neighborhoods and the many smaller churches that were involved in the movement.

In consultation with Mrs. Wimberly and the Alabama Historical Commission, the CHP began the process of developing a Multiple Property Submission to the National Register of Historic Places for Selma's civil rights story. Multiple Property Submissions are not themselves nominations to the National Register; rather they are designed as cover documents that establish the basis of eligibility (the significance) of related properties. They usually include a thorough narrative of the history of the area covered. In addition to other categories, the National Register primarily accepts properties based on their architectural or historical significance. In the case of Selma, as in the civil rights Multiple Property Submission in Birmingham, eligible properties are thematically linked

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[9] For a detailed description of the CHP's partnership practices, see Mary Anne Myers, Karen Fortuna, Abiola Ogunhivi, and Andrea Solarz, "Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area Evaluation Findings," prepared by Westat for the United States National Park Service, June 2012, available upon request from the author or the CHP.

for their association with the civil rights movement, rather than being judged by their architectural form. Although the Multiple Property Submission does not nominate any particular property to the National Register, individual property or district nominations can refer back to it rather than having to repeat the same information again and again. In this way, it establishes a foundation from which other groups can act without having to marshal the same level of resources.

The CHP, Alabama Historical Commission, and Selma city government worked together to develop the Selma Civil Rights Movement (1865 to 1972) Multiple Property Submission (MPS) to the National Register of Historic Places from 2012 to 2013. The Selma MPS built on the established scholarly narrative of Selma's history and grounded that story in the built environment and remaining material culture of the period. By focusing on the local context, the narrative that emerged from this work moved beyond the "great individuals" approach and credited the local people as being both the catalyst for and the reason for its success.

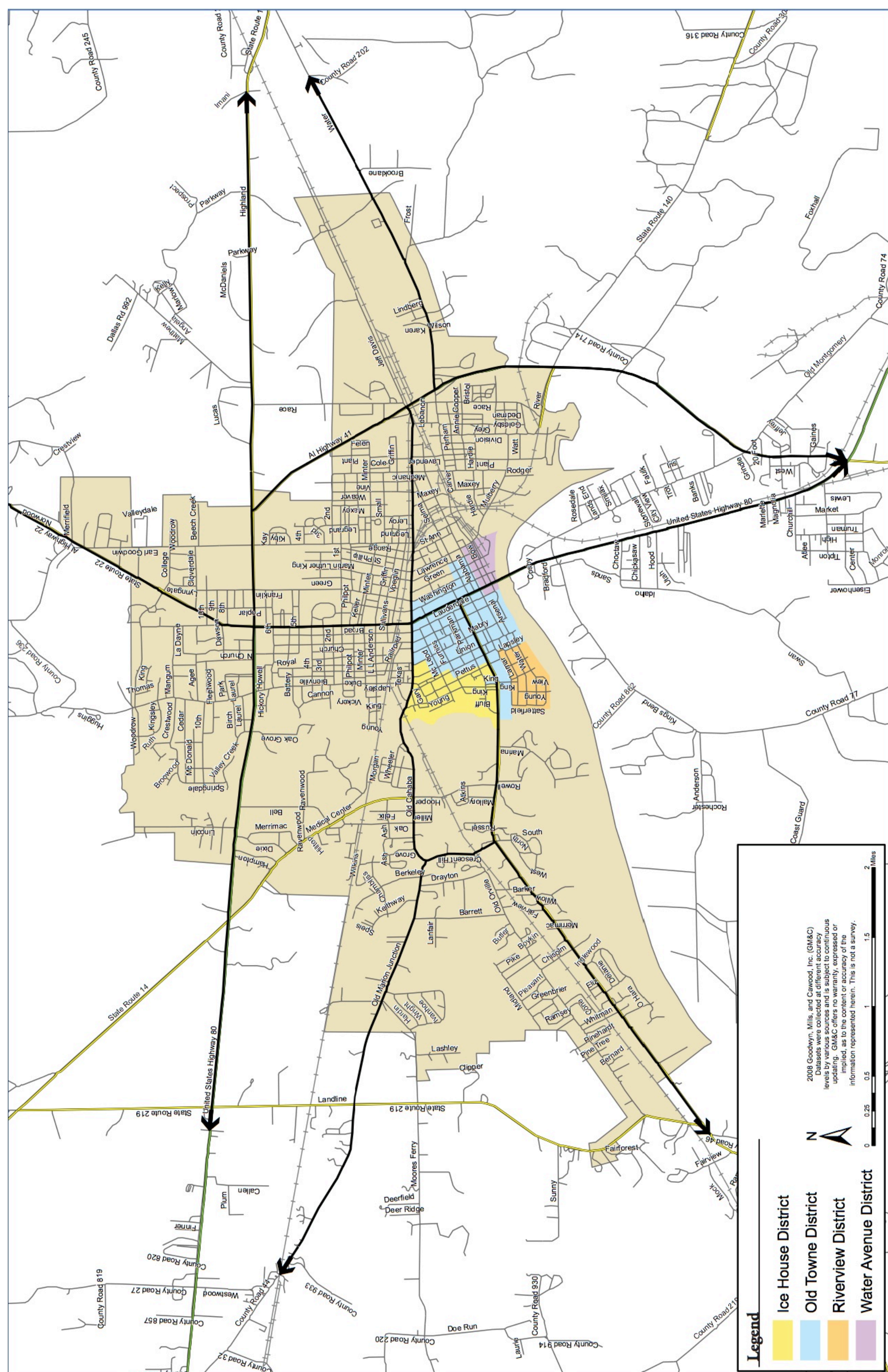


Figure 1 Map of Selma with the existing historic districts overlaid. From the City of Selma Comprehensive Plan, December 2009

Following the acceptance of the MPS by the National Register of Historic Places, the CHP began moving forward on a number of related heritage products, including a driving tour of civil rights sites in Selma (see Appendix B). During the research and writing phase of creating the MPS, to which I contributed along with fellow graduate assistants Amber Clawson and Jessica French, I began an oral history project that I imagined would be useful in documenting stories about the various sites associated with the Selma campaign. Although I approached many community members requesting interviews, there was little interest in the project until I spoke to Henry Allen. Chief Allen[10] graduated from R.B. Hudson High School in 1964, and is an active member of his alumni group. He saw the oral history project as an opportunity to record the stories of his classmates and other Hudson graduates who played a key role in the voting rights movement. After speaking with me, he organized a meeting between me and about ten other Hudson alumni he thought might be interested in doing interviews, which became the starting point for this phase of the project.

During the research process for the MPS, I had found that not only did most of the scholarly work focus on famous individuals or political machinations, it was virtually impossible to find any account that treated the youth as anything other than a bloc. *Walking with the Wind* came closest, but because it is a memoir told from Lewis' point of view, its primary focus is not on crafting a challenging new scholarly narrative. In meeting with a group of alumni from Hudson, it became clear to me at these former youth activists were intensely aware that their story had never made it into the official narrative. They were equally aware, as the fiftieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday and the

[10] Henry Allen was Selma's first black fire chief, and he is known as Chief Allen.

March to Montgomery loomed, that when they passed on, their stories would disappear with them.

At the time the interviews began, I was meant to be working on individual National Register nominations. However, the oral history project soon took precedence, and these narratives challenged me to reimagine the movement from the perspective of the young people who felt that there was a significant generational gap between them and their parents. Many stories demonstrated the tension between a desire to defy white authority (drinking from "white" water fountains, fighting with white youth) and fear of white authority (being interrogated by white police officers, seeing KKK parades). Though different narrators told the stories of their experiences differently, nearly everyone I interviewed saw the movement as a way that they could improve their lot in life. They understood the risks their parents would have faced for taking similar action, though in some cases parents were fired for the actions of their children. Stories of the invincibility of youth were couched in a context in which despite hard work and education, young people saw only very limited opportunities for upward mobility.

The motivations for taking part in the movement varied. Some were drawn by the idea of finding a way to fight back against white supremacy, while others were attracted by simple peer pressure. Levels of commitment to nonviolence also varied; plenty of young people subscribed to the practice while involved in direct action, but not the theory. While many of the official narratives describe the incident in which Jim Clark and his deputies chased a group of student protestors with their vehicles and cattle prods, the point of view of the young people who fled Clark provides a much more human scale for this type of violence, and also includes interesting vignettes about the black country

farmers who hid the students when they finally managed to peel off from the forced march, a detail often elided by academic narratives.[11]

By examining the individual motivations of the young people as well as how they describe their role in the movement within the broader context of their entire lives, a more complicated picture of Selma's history and civil rights history emerges. As Frueh's theoretical architecture suggests, the young people found that while they had claimed agency in one part of their lives, this did not always translate to the large-scale social and cultural change they sought. The process of sharing these narratives is also one of claiming agency, if one considers how the youth are normally portrayed in narratives about Selma as either an anonymous mass of young people who were the front line of a campaign, or as infantry who did what they were told against their own ideas about their actions. In recognizing these community members as partners whose ideas about the past are both valid and important and in acknowledging and respecting their agency in the process, I was able to develop a project that will be of scholarly and local benefit. This project remains ongoing and will soon become a joint effort with Dr. Tara White of George C. Wallace State Community College at Selma.

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[11] Though this would of course be the logical place to expand on these stories by including excerpts from the interviews, at the time of completing this dissertation, the interviews were not at a stage where they could be included. Though they have gone through the initial processing (creation of audio logs), I have not yet received logs back from the majority of the narrators, and thus the final products have yet to be approved. Additionally, many of the narrators expressed concerns that my dissertation would be about the content of the interviews, as a number of researchers have come into Selma, conducted interviews, and left without ever returning material. While the content of the interviews is enlightening, it is not central to the research and so I have elected not to make specific references to particular interviews.

As we interrogate our roles and relationships as public historians, we open the door to the possibility of finding new and better ways of understanding the history we study. In the case of Selma, by listening and looking, we were able to generate and document that in a way that is much more closely matched to the experiences of the people who were there, risking their lives to change their city while still living rich, full lives before and after those experiences. This same process also allowed for a reassessment of what the civil rights movement meant and means and how to evaluate its achievements. By applying a framework that uses the experiences of individuals to make broader extrapolations about the institutions and structures of the social and political order, it is possible to both contextualize the events in Selma within the civil rights movement and broader trends in United States history and better understand how those events connect to current events and contemporary race relations. Such a framework has significant interpretive promise for helping visitors to see the relationship between the death of Jimmie Lee Jackson at the hands of a state trooper in 1965 and the death of Michael Brown at the hands of a police officer in 2014, to see the range of responses to those deaths, and to join the debate over what they mean, and to understand that though much has changed, in terms of the institutions of white power, much remains the same.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## AN OVERVIEW OF APARTHEID

Apartheid was a legal system of segregation put in place by the National Party of South Africa between 1948 and 1994. What follows is a brief discussion of apartheid and the resistance movement, meant only to provide background for the case studies that follow, and by no means a thorough or comprehensive treatment of the subject.[1]

The term derives from an Afrikaans word meaning "apartness." Though apartheid as an official government policy only began in 1948, racial discrimination and segregation existed prior that period, beginning with the arrival of Dutch settlers in 1652, who became known as Afrikaners. These policies were supported and expanded under British rule, which began in the early nineteenth century. The early twentieth century saw the expansion of legal segregation through laws like the General Pass Regulations Act (1905), which restricted the freedom of movement of black South Africans by limiting where they could live and requiring them to carry passes and denied them the right to vote, and the Asiatic Registration Act (1906) which forced Indians to carry passes and register with the government. Over the next four decades, more laws were passed, which had the effect of stripping the rights and political representation of people of color.

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[1] See: Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (Harlow, U.K.: Pearson Longman, 2004); Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994); David Welsh, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009); Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Apartheid, Democracy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2007). Additionally, South African History Online (http://www.sahistory.org.za/) offers an excellent, in-depth, scholarly encyclopedia treatment of South African history with a strong eye toward social history.

South Africa's white minority consisted of two main factions: the Afrikaners (who spoke Afrikaans), and the English-speaking British. Though both white, these groups had differing interests and cultures. The Afrikaners were descended from European settlers who arrived in 1652 and had strong roots as large-scale farmers. Their demand for labor prompted the institution of slavery in the region, using both local labor and slaves imported from other parts of Africa as well as the Dutch East Indies through the Dutch East India Company. The British first arrived in 1795 to prevent the Cape Colony from falling prey to Napoleon's influence, and ceded it back to the Dutch before taking over permanently in 1806. That same year, they outlawed the use of the Dutch language in an effort to force the Dutch settlers to assimilate to the British language and culture. The British further alienated the Boers,[2] who relied on slave labor, through the abolition of the slave trade among their colonies (1807), which included the passage of Amelioration Laws intended to improve the conditions of slavery in the Cape Colony, and their eventual emancipation of slaves (starting in 1834). These cultural and political differences, coupled with population pressure both from their own growth and the arrival of increasing numbers of British colonists, helped to prompt the Great Trek (1835-1846) during which the Afrikaners loaded wagons and traveled north and east out of the British-controlled Cape Colony. This is not the space to explore the fraught and conflict-ridden relationship between the British and Afrikaners, but to illustrate the cultural gap between these factions of the white minority in South Africa.

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[2] "Boer" is an Afrikaans word meaning "farmer" and came to refer to the descendants of Dutch-speaking settlers, particularly those who took part in the Great Trek. The term came to be associated with a conservative, separatist identity, as opposed to the term Afrikaner, which refers more generally to Afrikaans-speaking white people.

In 1886, an Australian prospector discovered gold on the Witwatersrand, which was located in the Transvaal region of the South African Republic, one of the Boer Republics founded after the Great Trek. The region was soon flooded with British nationals who came to take advantage of the discovery, which spurred conflict between the independent South African Republican government and the British imperial authority, which wanted the South African Republican government to grant the foreign nationals voting rights. The bloody Second Anglo-Boer War[3] followed, marked by guerrilla warfare from the Boer resistance and violent retribution from the British, who launched a scorched earth campaign and filled concentration camps with Boer women and children who died of disease and neglect.[4] The South African Republic capitulated, and became the Transvaal Colony. The British imperial government set about restoring the heavily damaged colony and restoring the mining industry. As the productivity of the Witwatersrand mines increased, the Afrikaners found themselves marginalized as poor farmers in an increasingly industrial and powerful nation. The economic shift toward mineral extraction (gold and diamonds) and industrial production coincided with a shift toward more mechanized and commercial forms of agriculture, reducing demand for cheap (African) labor in rural areas at the same time that demand increased in cities, particularly in Johannesburg.

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[3] The First Anglo-Boer War in 1880 ended disastrously for the British, who had forcibly annexed the Transvaal Boer republic in 1877. The end of the war saw the Boers regain their independence and found the South African Republic.

[4] There are a number of quality references on the Second Anglo-Boer War, including Denis Judd and Keith Terrance Surridge, *The Boer War: A History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York: Random House, 1979).

In 1909, the British authorities passed the South Africa Act, which in 1910 established the Union of South Africa from the Cape Colony, Natal Colony, Transvaal Colony, and the Orange River Colony. The consolidated state would be more efficiently run and thus better able to generate wealth, particularly mineral wealth and the agricultural goods to support it. South African mining was (and remains) reliant on the availability of a large pool of cheap labor. A series of laws were passed to solidify white supremacy by making it difficult or impossible for Africans to live independently of white authority. The Native Land Act[5] (1913) restricted black landownership to reserves that totaled approximately seven percent of the total country with the goal of creating a pool of migrant labor for mine work and restricting the rights of African tenant farmers. Under the Native Land Act, the dedicated reserves were communally held and thus could not be used as collateral for a mortgage or any type of loan. The law also severely restricted the terms under which blacks could work as tenant farmers, and this was further expanded by the Native Trust and Land Act (1936), which officially designated rural areas as either black or white. The law was tremendously successful, and working class white miners soon found themselves competing with ever increasing numbers of much cheaper African laborers. The segregation of rural agriculture created two separate systems of farm labor. While white farmers were given subsidies and incentives to mechanize and improve production, black farmers were meant to operate purely on a

[5] The terms “Native” and “Bantu” were used to identify black Africans prior to the end of apartheid. These terms are now considered derogatory, and the terms “African” or “black” replace them in most contemporary contexts. In this discussion, these terms will only be used when they appear in quotations or titles.

subsistence level that would compel them to supplement their income by becoming migrant workers.[6]

The South African government continued to pass these types of laws, restricting both the rights and economic opportunities of people of color. In the eyes of many Afrikaners, however, the laws did not go far enough, or were not sufficiently enforced. They felt economically, politically, and cultural sidelined by a changing economy and labor structure, and threatened by increasing resistance to segregation by people of color. This anxiety and sense of disenfranchisement coalesced into a nationalist movement founded on ideas of "scientific" racism and apartheid, and in 1948, a coalition government of what would become the National Party found traction with the rural voters favored by the voting system. The new government, led by David Malan, immediately set about transforming the existing segregation laws into the more elaborate and strict system of apartheid.

The National Party argued that South Africa was comprised of three distinct racial groups: white, black, Coloured (and later Asian) and cemented these ideas into law with the Population Registration Act of 1950. According to the language of the Act, race was both biologically and socially determined. The Act offered the following definitions of race:

> "white person" means a person who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person.
> "coloured person" means a person who is not a white person or a native.

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[6] South African History Online, "Control: 1910-1948," accessed March 4, 2015, http://www.sahistory.org.za/control-1910-1948.

> "native" means a person who in fact is or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa.

These vague definitions were applied at the whim of bureaucrats. Initial designations were often made based on the photograph attached to a census form, while others were made through workplace and home visits. Deborah Posel describes at great length how arbitrary and subjective racial assessments were.[7] With no clear guidance and very little oversight, individual government agents adopted their own individual criteria for differentiating between the races. These agents were free to use whatever means they wished to make their assessments, which for those who were not "obviously white," might mean enduring the "pencil test" (where a judgment was made based on the ease with which a pencil could be passed through the subject's hair) or an examination of the genitals (the darkness or lightness of the scrotum or pubic mound was supposed by some to designate race).[8] Classifications were also made based on social factors, such as employment, level of education, or what leisure sports one engaged in ("a soccer player is a native, a rugby player is a Coloured").[9] Designations were made on every individual, which led to families, especially Coloured families, being divided and effectively forbidden from seeing each other again.

Despite the consequences of these designations, few were brought before the Racial Classification Board for reassessment.[10] As the apartheid regime grew, racial

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[7] Deborah Posel, "What's in a Name? Racial categorisations under apartheid and their afterlife," *Transformation* 47 (2001): 57-63, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/African%20Journals/pdfs/transformation/tran047/tran047005.pdf>.

[8] Ibid., 59.

[9] Ibid., 61.

[10] Ibid., 58.

classification became the cornerstone of the entire enterprise. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) made it illegal for a white person to marry a person of another racial classification, and in 1950, the Immorality Amendment Act criminalized sexual intercourse between whites and people of other racial classifications. The Group Areas Act (1950) racialized the urban landscape, dividing cities into different zones for different racial groups. This led to some of the first forced removals when areas already occupied by mixed populations were declared white, and residents were forcibly relocated, usually to townships according to their racial classification. The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 completed the job, effectively making it illegal for people of differing racial classifications to live in the same places, and forcing all black people out of cities and into townships.

These forced removals were detrimental to communities, splitting up well-established neighborhoods and even families. The townships to which people were relocated were far from city centers, and lacked infrastructure and resources. The increased travel also facilitated the regime's control over the movement of people of color. A number of Pass Laws were passed, which required Africans, Coloureds, and Asians to carry identification documents that had to be produced for inspection at any time for any white person who requested them. Without a passbook, a person of color was effectively trespassing in white areas and could be jailed and fined.

Pass laws existed in South Africa before the apartheid regime, but they became a particularly effective tool in controlling the internal migration of black male mine workers. A series of laws established "Bantustans" or "homelands" to which all black people were assigned according to a supposed tribal identity. The apartheid regime

recognized these areas as self-governed, and so considered blacks to be citizens of their homeland, rather than of South Africa. Thus the government was able to deny the most basic rights of citizenship to black South Africans. Blacks were not considered citizens and so were disenfranchised, denied property rights outside of the very small homelands, and given only very limited access to a strictly controlled education system designed to produce laborers for the most menial jobs. There was a constant need for mine workers, who would be brought in under exploitative labor contracts to work in the gold and diamond mines in Johannesburg and Kimberly. Male workers were not permitted to bring their families, and served extended, multi-month contracts. They were housed in dormitories in townships, where they lived in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions. Disease was a constant companion, particularly silicosis and tuberculosis, which most miners contracted from constant inhalation of silica dust. These respiratory ailments were rarely treated and often fatal. The miserable conditions in the townships and distance from family also encouraged a growing sex trade in the townships, which would contribute to the spread of HIV and AIDS. As mine workers traveled between the mines, townships, and their homelands, they carried these communicable diseases with them. This further stigmatized blacks in the eyes of the governing white minority, which used it as further justification of the necessity of apartheid to "protect" whites.

The apartheid regime's divide-and-conquer strategy extended beyond intensifying and creating tribal divisions among blacks. Coloured people were treated slightly more favorably by the regime than blacks. They retained representation in the parliament until 1956, when the law was changed to allow them to elect four white representatives. They were disenfranchised altogether in 1969. Coloured people were also forced to live in

separate townships, though the conditions were slightly better than those in black townships. They had slightly better educational opportunities than blacks as well, though by no means on par with those available to whites. This marginally more favorable treatment was designed to promote resentment of Coloured people by blacks and a sense of superiority in Coloured people toward blacks, which was carried into all areas of life. The prison diet is an excellent depiction of these differences. Coloured people were given more meat, more fat, and more sugar, and were given bread and jam or syrup, while blacks were denied bread and jam or syrup, and instead fed more mealie, a starch that apartheid officials deemed part of black's "natural" diet. Black prisoners were also fed puzamandla, a protein supplement that would supposedly sustain them better for intense manual labor they did while imprisoned.

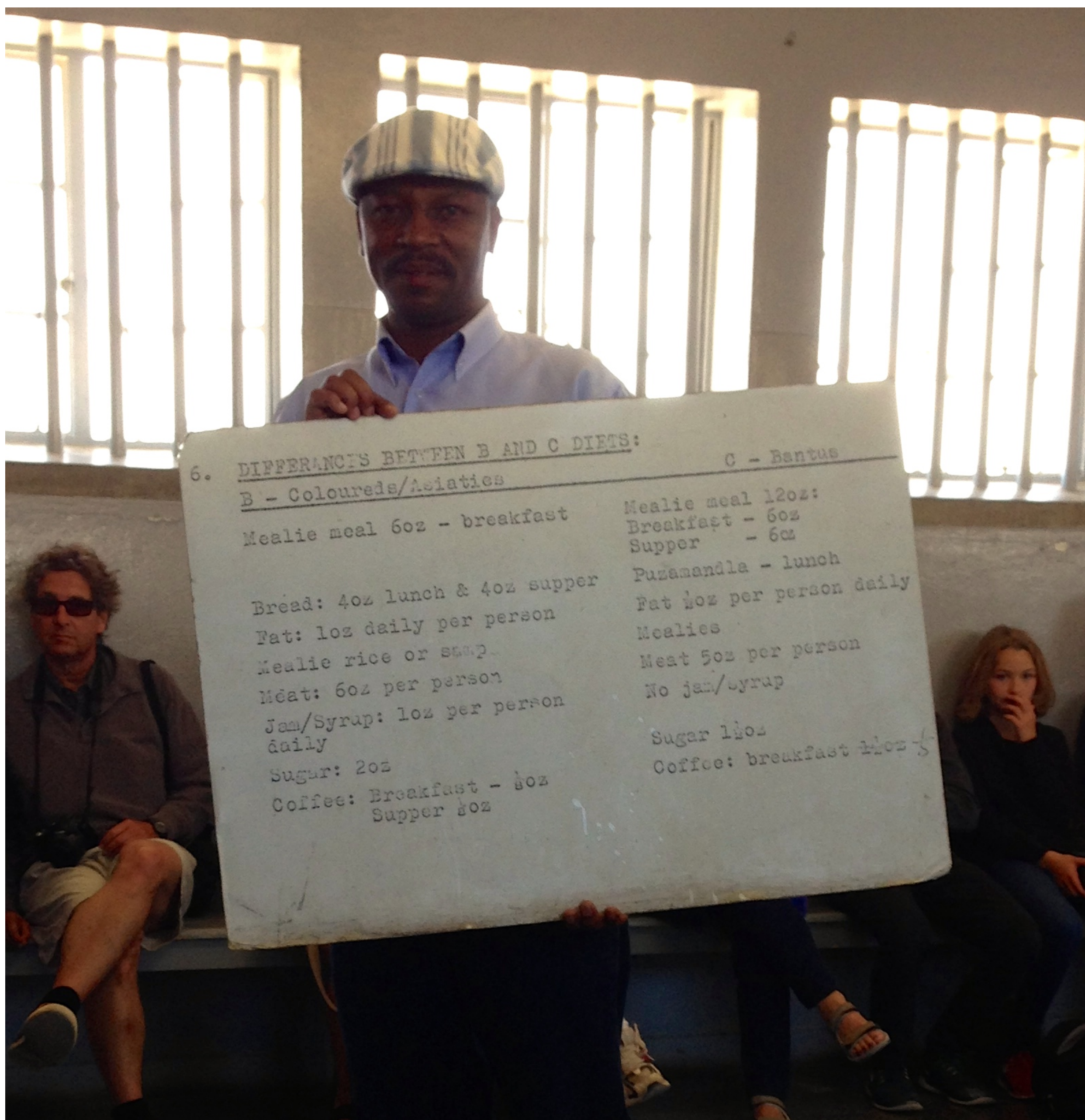


Figure 2 Prison diet placard from Robben Island. The man holding the placard is Derick Basson, a former political prisoner at Robben Island who now works as a tour guide there. Photo by author.

The apartheid regime concerned itself with assigning racial significance to every facet of life. Additional laws established segregation of public facilities and spaces, including hospitals, restaurants, beaches, parks, pools, and even pedestrian bridges.[11] Only whites were permitted to purchase liquor, with blacks only allowed to purchase state-produced beer (which led to the establishment of scores of home-brew operations in the townships). Wages and income for blacks were capped, and it was nearly impossible to accumulate any type of wealth. The regime also heavily censored media and literature, which hindered intellectual and cultural development.

Resistance to apartheid began as soon as the policies started, as there had been resistance to pre-apartheid forms of discrimination (it is worth noting that this is where Gandhi developed his philosophy of nonviolence). The African National Congress led the resistance movement. The ANC began as the South African Native National Congress in 1912 and organized campaigns against the pass laws. After some success in the 1920s, they faded from the scene until the mid-1940s when they were reborn as leaders of a mass movement. In December 1949, the ANC adopted a "Programme of Action" which called for nonviolent resistance including strikes, boycotts, and civil disobedience in response to the newly promulgated apartheid laws. In 1952, they began the Defiance Campaign with the South African Indian Congress and the Coloured People's Congress. It was the first large-scale multi-racial political movement of its kind, and it resulted in

[11] For a vivid depiction and discussion of life under apartheid, see Ernest Cole's seminal photographic work on the topic, *House of Bondage*, (New York: Random House, 1967).

the arrest of more than 8,000 trained volunteers for acts of civil disobedience.[12] The apartheid government responded by declaring a state of emergency and cracking down harshly on protestors, though this did not dissuade the resistance movement.

In 1955, the ANC and its allies held the Congress of the People in Kliptown, Soweto. The goal of the Congress was to create a vision for the future of South Africa, and participants came from all social and racial backgrounds. The delegates present (some 3,000) used demands sent from South Africans to create the Freedom Charter, which would eventually become a foundational document for the new South Africa post-1994.[13] The South Africa envisioned in the Freedom Charter was based on political equality, economic justice, and a non-racialized society, and this vision was key for unifying the disparate groups who opposed apartheid (including liberals, communists, and people of all racial identities). This meant that the struggle was not for the reform of the existing government structures, but rather for a complete revolution. One hundred fifty-six of the delegates present, including Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada, Walter Sisulu, were arrested and charged with treason in 1956. They were held in prison until the conclusion of the Treason Trial in 1961, when all of the defendants were released without conviction.

By 1960, divisions had emerged in the ANC. The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), led by Robert Sobukwe, split away from the ANC over the ANC's racially inclusive policy and formed a separate Black Nationalist organization based on the exclusion of

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[12] South African History Online, "Apartheid and Reactions to It," accessed March 4, 2015, http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/apartheid-and-reactions-it.

[13] The phrase the "new South Africa" and "Rainbow Nation" are both colloquial designations often used to indicate the post-1994 South Africa, under the new constitution and first led by Nelson Mandela.

non-Africans. The ANC had declared 1960 “The Year of the Pass,” and the PAC planned its own mass resistance campaign against the pass laws, scheduled to start on March 21. People were instructed to leave their passes at home and surrender themselves to the police, refusing to pay bail or fines or defend themselves. This was intended to paralyze the justice system and by extension, the regime. On the appointed morning, PAC members began rousing people to go turn themselves in at the Sharpeville Township in the Transvaal. Some 5,000 people gathered at the Sharpeville Police Station to turn themselves in for pass violations. The protestors were cheerful, if loud, until around 1p.m. when a minor scuffle resulted in a policeman being knocked down. As the crowd moved forward to investigate, police claimed that the protestors began throwing stones. A policeman atop an armored car panicked and opened fire, and his fellow officers followed suit. Sixty-nine people were killed and 180 were seriously wounded, a great many in the back as they attempted to flee.

In the aftermath of Sharpeville, the apartheid government banned the ANC and PAC and began banning and detaining movement leaders. Gatherings of more than ten people were made illegal. Anti-apartheid movements went underground, and the ANC and PAC began to organize campaigns of armed resistance. Their respective armed wings, Umkhonto we Sizwe ("Spear of the Nation," or MK) and Poqo ("Pure" or "Alone”), led sabotage efforts against at the government in conjunction with larger plans to overthrow the apartheid regime. In July 1963, the government arrested a number of prominent resistance leaders, including Walter Sisulu and Ahmed Kathrada (Mandela had already been arrested). Ten leaders were tried in what became known as the Rivonia Trial

(for the suburb where the leaders were arrested), and eight were convicted. Mandela spent 27 years and eight months in prison, with 18 years served on Robben Island.

The prosecution of so many leaders set the resistance struggle back badly, but nevertheless continued underground. The apartheid government passed increasingly restrictive laws and sent assassins and bombers to try to kill leaders and break the movement. The government also began to enforce greater segregation among black South Africans, and in 1958 they passed The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, which expanded the reserves created by the 1913 Native Land Act into “Homelands” or “Bantustans.” These areas were supposed to be sovereign and eventually fully independent, though in reality their leaders were handpicked by the apartheid government. The idea was that every “Bantu” would be a citizen of a “Homeland,” and only work in South Africa through a visa scheme. Between 1960 and 1985, about 3.5 million black South Africans were forcibly removed to the “Homelands,” which were in the least desirable regions of the country. The primary residents of the “Homelands” were women and children, as destitution drove men to become migrant workers, often in the gold and diamond mines.

By the mid to late 1960s, the emergence of newly independent neighboring states like Zambia, Botswana, and Angola gave the ANC the opportunity to organize resistance training camps outside of South Africa. The presence of these states also heightened tension for the apartheid government, which became more obsessed with protecting white minority rule as their colonial neighbors withdrew. Oliver Tambo, who had managed to escape South Africa ahead of the Treason Trial, became leader of the ANC abroad, directing the organization from its headquarters in Tanzania. The ANC worked closely

with the South African Communist Party, which had also been banned in South Africa. The alliance with the communists brought more resources and leadership to the ANC efforts, but also further antagonized the apartheid government, which feared Soviet influence (this was, of course, during the Cold War Era).

The efforts of the ANC abroad accompanied work to establish networks within the country. South Africa was also home to a growing Black Consciousness[14] movement that particularly appealed to students and young people who had grown up under apartheid. In 1973, a series of successful wildcat strikes in Durban (Eastern Cape) led to the formation of labor unions for African workers. As progress was made, the resistance struggle intensified. In 1974, the apartheid government passed the Afrikaans Medium Decree, which ordered that instruction in schools for certain subjects would be in Afrikaans. Over the next two years, they began implementing the policy, which was deeply unpopular particularly among African students and teachers, few of whom spoke Afrikaans. On July 16, 1976, several thousand students in Soweto, a township near Johannesburg, organized for a march that would culminate in a rally at Orlando Stadium.

The students marched until they encountered police. Police allege that students threw stones, but in any case, police officer Colonel Kleinfeld fired the first shot. The students panicked. The police released their dogs into the crowd, and the students stoned the dogs to death. The police then began to fire on the students. Hector Pieterson, a 13-year-old boy, was among the first killed, and a photo of Mbuyisa Makhubo carrying his body became iconic of the youth struggle against apartheid, and in particular of the

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[14] It is important to note that in this context, "Black Consciousness" included Africans, Coloured people, and Indians.

Soweto Uprising. The violence continued into the night, with property damage mainly focused on sites seen as representative of state authority. Police and the army moved in and the violence eased, but schools were closed until June 26. When they re-opened, Afrikaans was no longer the medium of instruction for any classes.

The Soweto Uprising marked a new period in the struggle against apartheid. More young people became directly involved in the struggle, particularly those exiled by the apartheid regime who found their way to MK training camps in neighboring nations. The influx of young people together with an increase in arms supplied by sympathetic communist states like Cuba and newly independent African nations helped the ANC open a multi-front assault on South Africa. Newly elected government leader P.W. Botha responded by further militarizing the regime and deploying specialized forces to attack MK training camps and halt their attempts to cross into South Africa. This coincided with increased underground ANC organizing within South Africa, and the emergence of church-based opposition to apartheid, which included Bishop Desmond Tutu among its most vocal opponents.

Opposition to apartheid escalated in the 1980s, and international pressure mounted in the form of economic and cultural embargoes. With the Cold War still on, conservative leaders like Ronald Reagan were reluctant to condemn the apartheid regime on the grounds that it was a bulwark against communism, while Sweden openly supported the ANC. The ANC launched a campaign to make the townships ungovernable, encouraging people to go on rent strikes, boycott government services, and attack centers of state authority. Local people set up their own councils and courts. Violence escalated sharply. Those suspected of collaborating with the apartheid regime

were bombed or executed by “necklacing”, which meant putting a burning tire around someone’s neck. The ANC endorsed the violence, and would not back down. This led to conflict with the Inkatha Freedom Party, which formed in 1975 out of the ANC Youth League and initially worked closely with the ANC. The leader of the IFP, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, was also the leader of the KwaZulu Bantustan, and wanted to maintain his authority, which was contingent on the economic support of the apartheid regime. The IFP’s armed wing was funded and supplied by the apartheid regime, which encouraged them to instigate violent conflict with the ANC to foment violence among Africans and undermine the ANC’s position. In 1985, Botha declared a “State of Emergency” that would be extended several times and gave the police sweeping powers to enforce stricter laws.

Against this backdrop of escalating violence, Botha attempted to reform the South African government. A new constitution introduced in 1983 established a tricameral parliament with bodies for white, Coloured, and Indian voters, though the representation was not equal and there was widespread boycotting of the elections by Coloured and Indian voters. His attempts to ease petty apartheid were insufficient to satisfy opponents of apartheid and only served to provoke the majority of white South Africans who supported it. In an attempt to improve international relations, he had Nelson Mandela moved from Robben Island to the more habitable Pollsmoor Prison near Cape Town and expanded his visitation rights. In 1985, he offered to release Mandela if Mandela would condemn armed resistance; Mandela refused any conditional release. In 1989, Botha suffered a stroke and resigned, and F.W. de Klerk succeeded him.

De Klerk's presidency ushered in a new era of change. In 1990, he announced the repeal of many segregation laws, ended the Land Act, and lifted the ban on political opposition parties like the ANC, PAC, South African Communist Party, and United Democratic Front. He reinstated freedom of the press and released Mandela on February 11, 1990. From 1990 to 1994, the National Party and the ANC negotiated the terms of ending apartheid as the violence of the late 1980s continued. In 1993, Mandela and de Klerk were awarded the joint Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to end apartheid and form a new South Africa. Violence persisted up to the day of the election, April 27, 1994.

The elections were peaceful, and the ANC won with 62.65% of the vote (short of the two-thirds majority needed to rewrite the constitution on their own). On May 10, Nelson Mandela was sworn in as president, and the new constitution took effect in 1996. This year also saw the first hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which operated as a restorative justice court to hear the testimony of perpetrators and victims of apartheid-related crimes. Perpetrators who confessed fully to their actions were given the opportunity to seek amnesty. Selected witnesses, especially victims of gross human rights violations, were invited to speak publicly as part of the TRC process. Perpetrators from all sides were called to witness, including members of the ANC. The success of the Commission is debatable; many victims felt that the TRC was too eager to grant amnesty to the perpetuators of violence and were suspicious that confessions were incomplete or that witnesses lied. Despite these challenges, the TRC is generally regarded as an important part of South Africa's transition away from apartheid.

South Africa continues to face many challenges in the aftermath of apartheid, including ongoing economic inequality, a housing crisis, and the need to extend social

services to millions of South Africans who were denied access to them under the previous regime. Though the overt, large-scale violence of the pre-1994 election period has ended, crime remains a serious problem. In recent years the ANC's unity has begun to disintegrate, particularly as more left-wing elements of the party have become disillusioned with the ANC's hesitancy in regard to wealth and land redistribution. Apartheid was more than racial segregation; it was a structural system whose legacy is etched into the land, culture, and people. Creating the New South Africa will be a project measured in generations rather than years.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# THE APARTHEID MUSEUM

Johannesburg is the largest city in South Africa, and one of its three capitals. It is situated in Gauteng Province, which is both the smallest and most populous of South Africa's nine provinces, as of the 2011 census.[1] Gauteng is home to more than 12 million people, with about 7.5 million living in and around Johannesburg (including the Ekurhuleni municipality, which is where the Johannesburg Airport is located).[2] Though inhabited by African tribes for thousands of years, the discovery of gold and diamonds on the Witwatersrand in the late nineteenth century led to a gold rush and huge influx of European colonists. The demand for mine labor and the promise of quick wealth sparked rapid growth, and this is reflected in the city itself, which sprawls in all directions. Roughly 30-40% of the population lives in Soweto, a massive township southwest of the city (which is how it got its name: <u>So</u>uth<u>we</u>stern <u>To</u>wnship). Most people travel by car, and while there is a bus service, most Sowetans commute via minibus taxis packed to overflowing.

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[1] The 2001 census put KwaZulu-Natal slightly larger at about 9.5 million, whereas Gauteng had about 9.4 million. South African Census 2011, "Census in Brief," accessed March 4, 2015, <http://www.statssa.gov.za/Census2011/Products/Census_2011_Census_in_brief.pdf>.

[2] "Gauteng Profile," Wazimap, accessed March 4, 2015, <http://wazimap.co.za/profiles/province-GT/>.

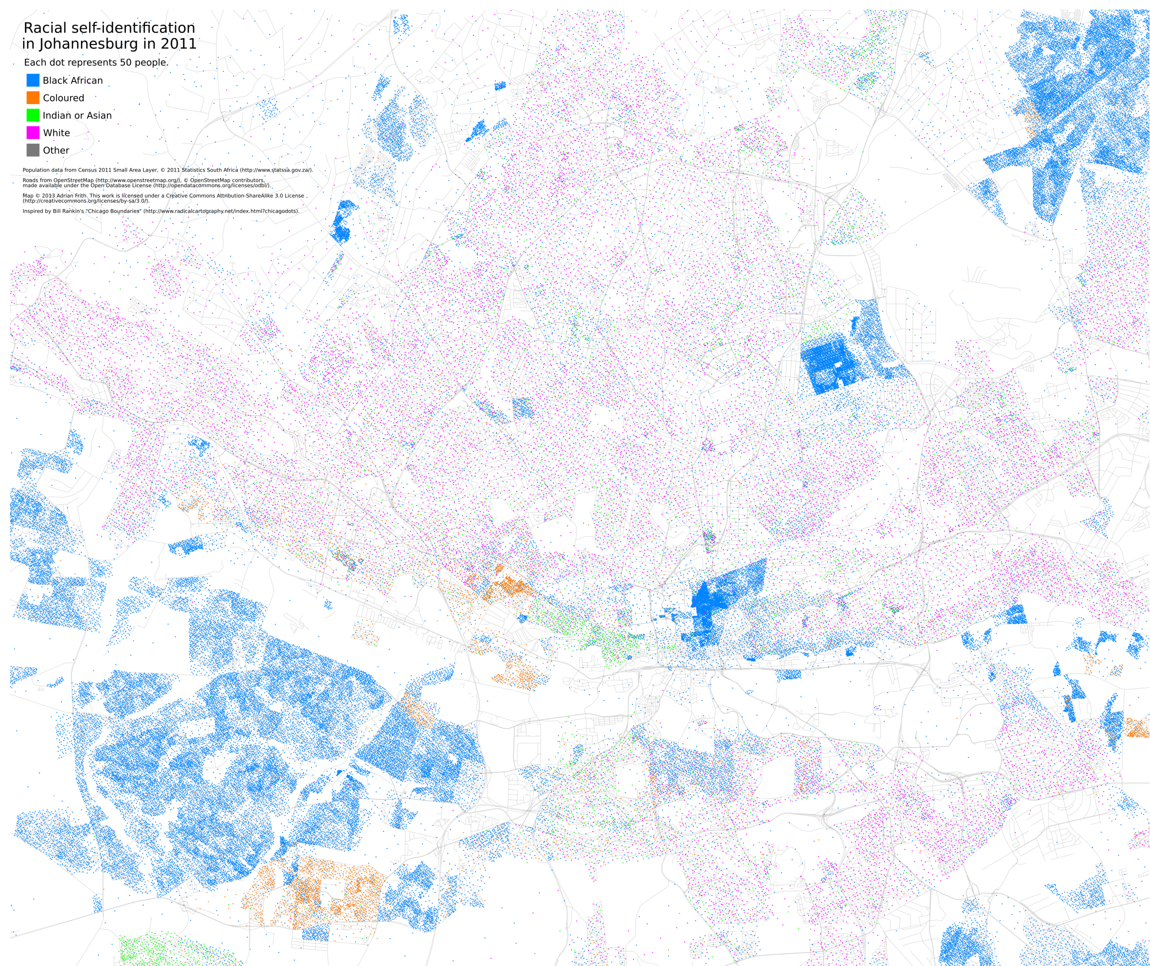


Figure 3 Population distribution map by race of Johannesburg. Adrian Frith, September 8, 2013, http://adrianfrith.com/2013/09/08/dot-maps-of-racial-distribution-in-south-african-cities

Johannesburg is definitely a working city; tourists who visit tend to use the city as a jumping off point for traveling to places like Kruger National Park. I spent two weeks in the city for my fieldwork, and nearly everyone I met was surprised that I would want to spend so much time there, and more surprised still that there was two weeks' worth of tourist activity.[3] Most visitors come, maybe do a township tour, visit a museum, and head off to see wildlife or depart for another city. The city is busy and hectic, but I found most people I interacted with to be friendly.

One of the major challenges, and a culture shock factor for me while in Johannesburg, was the prevalence of high walls and barriers around homes. As Martin Murray puts it, "Johannesburg is a city almost entirely constructed around a forbidding architecture of enclosure."[4] South Africa has a high crime rate, driven in part by the sharp contrast between extreme wealth and poverty, often in close proximity, and Johannesburg is no exception. Nearly every home I saw was surrounded by a ten-foot or higher solid wall with either razor or electric wire at the top. Driveways are gated, windows barred, and doors that open onto the street are tucked behind metal gates. I stayed in Melville, one of the more pedestrian-friendly, middle-class areas, and found walking around to be strange experience, as I could only see walls rather than houses. A trip to the grocery store, for example, meant walking along a sidewalk with a wall on one side and the street on the other nearly the entire way. This made the public space feel more dangerous; I was constantly aware that I was outside of the "safe" zone surrounded by walls, and equally

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[3] These observations are based on my fieldwork in Johannesburg from September 30 to October 15, 2014.

[4] Martin J. Murray, *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 16.

aware that if something happened in the street, no one would see anything. Nothing ever did happen, but it made wandering the neighborhood less appealing both from a safety perspective and for the simple reason that there was nothing to see.[5]

Figure 4 View of a residential street in Melville, Johannesburg. Note the solid, high walls and gates on driveways. Photo by author.

[5] It is worth mentioning here that these types of walls are common throughout the continent, and their presence should not be solely ascribed to apartheid or violence particular to South Africa.

As a fairly new city, Johannesburg was shaped by apartheid and this legacy is sharply evident in the landscape.[6] Most black residents still live in townships, and wealthy whites seclude themselves in gated communities. Housing is often one of the slowest places to transition following periods of racial segregation, but newer and revitalized neighborhoods are often home to mixed populations, indicating a cultural shift.[7] The legacy of apartheid also figures prominently in the heritage tourism landscape. Township tours, where tourists hire a guide to escort them around a township and tell them about the life and history of its residents, are a thriving industry.

In planning my trip to Johannesburg, I saw that a number of the township tours offered a full day trip that included a morning spent visiting a township with the afternoon at the Apartheid Museum. Township visits to Soweto generally included a trip to the Hector Pieterson Museum and Memorial, a visit at Mandela's former residence, now a museum, and travel to different subdivisions in the township, from the upper middle class areas like California to more working class sections like Diepkloof, and usually included a visit to a "squatter camp" (Kliptown, on the two tours I took). Some tours included visits in the homes of local residents, while others included the option of an overnight stay in a bed and breakfast in the township. Many of the tours advertise the company's charitable activities in the township, like funding an after school program for youth or a creche for working parents. This helps to soften the voyeuristic element for tourists who might feel uncomfortable effectively touring poverty. I cannot speak to the

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[6] See: Murray, *Taming*.

[7] See Figure 3. An interactive, clickable, zoomable, version of the map (and all of South Africa), with street names and neighborhoods visible, is available at: http://dotmap.adrianfrith.com/.

experiences of all tourists, but the tours I took mostly avoided that uncomfortable aspect by getting us out of the minibus and walking around, and by teaching us how to respond to the mostly Zulu greetings we might encounter. One of my tour guides told me that Soweto is the third most visited place in South Africa for tourists, and while I cannot verify that statistic, it is certainly true that the township attracts many tourists and is being influenced by the tourist gaze. Unlike many other parts of Johannesburg, beggars do not stand at street corners, and the township seems accustomed to tourists.

Township tourism is a topic that merits its own extensive commentary, but for the purposes of this discussion it is simply worth noting that this is often how tourists encounter the most obvious legacies of apartheid in the landscape, and often how they first encounter the Apartheid Museum.[8]

[8] For more on township tourism, see: Garth Allen and Frank Brennan, *Tourism in the New South Africa: Social Responsibility and the Tourist Experience* (London: Tauris, 2004); Angel David Nieves, "Places of Pain as Tools for Social Justice in the 'New' South Africa: Black Heritage Preservation in the 'Rainbow' Nation's Townships" in *Places of Pain and Shame*, eds. William Logan and Keir Reeves (New York: Routledge, 2009), 198-214; Leslie Witz, Ciraj Rassool, and Gary Minkley, "Repackaging the Past for South African Tourism," *Daedalus* 130, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 174-77, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027688>; Ko Koens, "Competition, Cooperation and Collaboration: Business Relations and Power in Township Tourism," and Shelley Ruth Butler, "Curatorial Interventions in Township Tours: Two Trajectories," in *Slum Tourism: Poverty, Power and Ethics*, ed. Fabian Frenzel, Ko Koens, and Malte Steinbrink (New York: Routledge, 2012), 83-100, 215-31.

Figure 5 Street view of markets and businesses in Diepkloof, Soweto. Photo by author.

The Apartheid Museum is located in Gold Reef City, a casino and theme park complex in Johannesburg. The plan for the museum was included in the casino company's bid to create the Gold Reef City complex. The casino company does not operate the museum, but it leases it to an independent Section 21 company that holds the lease as long as the casino retains its gambling license. (Section 21 companies are "Not for Gain", the rough equivalent of a 501(c)3 in the United States.)[9] Interestingly, the fact that the Apartheid Museum is located next to a bastion of capitalism does not seem to undermine the willingness of the museum to engage with the antiapartheid struggle's close relationship with communism and other philosophies at odds with capitalism. However, this location means that the Apartheid Museum is a destination in itself, rather than a place visitors might stumble across, though Johannesburg is city largely oriented toward automobile transport.

The museum is architecturally striking, with a very planned and deliberate feel both in terms of the physical space and the exhibits. The presentation of the museum is highly professional, and it conveys the museum's authority over its topic to the visitor. The visitor is not a participant in the museum as much as s/he is an audience to the material presented. This tone does not invite debate, which is no doubt in part why it is employed. This tone, as well as the content of the exhibits, indicates that the intended

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[9] For more detail on this process, see Irma Booyens, "Rethinking Township Tourism: Towards Responsible Tourism Development in South African Townships," *Development Southern Africa* 27, no. 2 (June 2010): 273-287, accessed April 9, 2015, DOI: 10.1080/03768351003740795; Christian M. Rogerson, "Urban Tourism in the Developing World: The Case of Johannesburg," *Development Southern Africa* 19, no. 1 (March 2002): 174-177, accessed April 9, 2015, DOI: 10.1080/03768350220123927.

audience is people who did not experience apartheid, mainly school children and (white) tourists.

The museum provides a solid historical examination of the foundations and reality of apartheid South Africa. The exterior features a large sculptural display of the Pillars of the Constitution: democracy, equality, reconciliation, diversity, responsibility, respect and freedom. These words are written on large pillars near the entrance, and they serve as indicators that the new South Africa is not like the old. At the point of ticket purchase, visitors are randomly assigned a racial identity, white or non-white, which designates their point of entry. The material in either side is the same, but the visitors are separated by a metal grid-type fence. They can see, but not touch, each other. This section of the museum includes exhibit panels describing the racial designations of apartheid, with stories about people not fitting into their assigned categories or petitioning to have their designation changed. The arbitrariness of the ticket assignment is meant to reflect the arbitrary and socially constructed definitions of race under apartheid.

Figure 6 Entrance to the Apartheid Museum. Photo by author.

After leaving this exhibit, visitors join one another and walk up a series of ramps with images of South Africans grafted onto mirrored displays. Small interpretive areas off to the side of the ramp describe South Africa's precolonial history, and the origins of humanity with the idea that we are all African. Upon entering the main part of the museum, there is a small changing exhibit area where visitors can wait for an introductory film. The film provides a brief overview of the historical origins of apartheid, describing South Africa's indigenous people and the arrival of different groups of Europeans, primarily the Dutch and British. After this, visitors move through a series of exhibits describing the conception of apartheid and its practice. The exhibits are sectioned off using the same wire grid material, creating a prison-like atmosphere. In the section describing the establishment of apartheid, the exhibit space is designed to weave back and forth, almost maze-like, just as apartheid created a maze of restrictions on the lives of South Africans. The presentation is both thorough and nuanced, describing in particular the complicated position of white liberals under apartheid. The museum is careful not to paint white South Africans as a monolithic group, but still describes how even as white liberals opposed apartheid, they still benefited from white supremacy. This was part of the larger design of apartheid, because it made white resistance more difficult.

The Apartheid Museum does not shy away from the violence inherent in its story, whether the violence is performed by the state or organizations and individuals engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle. There is an armored vehicle used by the state to quell demonstrations and give the visitor a sense of the scale of what resistance fighters faced, as well as a large collection of firearms used by resistance militias. Stories of more famous individuals connected with the struggle are interspersed. Just before the halfway

point of the museum (where there is space to step out of the museum and take a break in the garden), they show a video that includes footage of the student uprisings that began in 1976. These uprisings were sparked by the shooting death of a student, Hector Pieterson, during a peaceful march protesting the implementation of Afrikaans as the language of instruction. The film includes interviews with people involved in the uprising.

After the break area, visitors enter a room where one wall is lined with display cases of guns used during the struggle and the other wall includes a series of large screens showing films of violent clashes between the police and young people from the late 1980s and early 1990s. The films are brutal. In one, a young black man attempts to flee over a razor wire fence, gets stuck, and is dragged back. In another, police open fire on young protestors. The audio tracks play over one another, and the effect is overwhelming. Leaving this area, the visitor enters a room with a series of much smaller television screens, each showing interviews with leaders involved in the negotiations to end apartheid. There are hoods that play the relevant audio to visitors standing in front of each screen. Large openings cut into the walls behind the smaller screens open onto the previous room, where the images and sounds of violence can still be heard. The idea behind this exhibit is to demonstrate the literal backdrop of violence against which the negotiations for peace took place, but the sensory onslaught of violence is both disturbing and distracting to the point where I found it impossible to concentrate on the interviews. The inescapable quality of the noise and violence was no doubt intended by the designers, but I wonder if this is truly an effective method for conveying the reality of life in the final years of apartheid.

This series of rooms and the films made me wonder how people who experienced the violence of apartheid might feel in this space. While horrific violence was certainly one of the defining features of life under apartheid, especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to my mind, the surface violence was only a manifestation of a more insidious reality. Is it possible, or even desirable, for a visitor to experience that? What might he or she walk away thinking? I wonder if playing up this type of violence feeds the idea that apartheid was mainly overt violence and racism, missing its more mundane and banal manifestations which are the foundation of the ongoing challenge of institutionalized racism in South Africa today.

This approach is quite unlike what I found to be the most moving exhibit in the museum, a display of essays and photographs from Ernest Cole's 1967 book *House of Bondage*. Cole went to great lengths to photograph everyday life under apartheid, both in townships and on public streets. He smuggled his images out of the country and published them alongside essays about life in South Africa. The images are both beautiful and personal, and through this lens, it is possible to see the toll of apartheid on a very human and individual scale. The exhibit resonated with me in particular because I visited the museum after going on several township tours. Though much has changed in South Africa since the end of apartheid, I was struck by the similarities in conditions between what I had seen and the photographs from fifty years ago.

These critiques should not be read as a condemnation of the Apartheid Museum, which serves a valuable purpose as a space for telling the "official" story of apartheid, particularly for visitors who might not know the history or context. The challenge facing the museum, and facing most museums, is how to tell a story that is so deeply embedded

in the landscape without immediate access to the places where the story is visible. Earlier I commented that the location of the Apartheid Museum is a challenge because it is not easily accessible. It is worth also mentioning that the Apartheid Museum is often a stop included on tours of Johannesburg and the townships. Nearly every township or city tour I found included at least a two-hour stop at the museum, and many companies offered a full day tour that included half a day in the townships with a visit to the museum in the afternoon. Though this is hardly empirical evidence, I do not think it is unreasonable to assume that many visitors come to the Apartheid Museum in the context of larger explorations of the city and that many will have come from the townships and so experienced the physical legacy of apartheid in the landscape before getting the Apartheid Museum's perspective.

I also commented earlier on the museum's authoritative tone, which underscored its fundamental message that apartheid was a crime against humanity. Though this is certainly true, it is also speaks to the fact the museum on some level represents an official response to apartheid, a physical manifestation of both "never forget" and "never again." I argue that this approach is part of why the museum is intended as a space for explaining apartheid to those who did not experience it, because the truth is more ambiguous for those who did experience it. Apartheid was unquestionably oppressive and violent, and yet this was not the sum total of people's lives during that era. Townships were sites of exile for people of color banished from white suburbs and urban areas, but they were also places where people forged community bonds and identity. There must be space for acknowledging the nostalgic and ambiguous feelings people have toward apartheid, including those who suffered under it. The reality is that while apartheid is gone, South

Africa still faces tremendous social and cultural problems in its aftermath, particularly in terms of crime and lack of housing and resources. These issues can make life difficult for people who had figured out how to get by under the apartheid regime and lost that bit of control, however illusory.

It is easy to understand why the museum might be reluctant to engage with those feelings, as they can be hard to convey to outsiders, but at the same time, dismissing those feelings outright by slating all of those years as terrible paints a picture of the past that is difficult for those who experienced it to relate to. Nostalgia is one of the layers of meaning that can perhaps be better understood or addressed through place. Someone's home can be a site of oppression as they remember police charging in at night for pass checks or to find someone suspected of antiapartheid activity, but it is also the place where they gathered around the table to eat and be together. In this way, the black and white approach taken by the Apartheid Museum does not truly reflect life there. This is part of why I find the overwhelming films of violence difficult to comprehend. They are at once shocking and incomprehensible; the visitor can see them and be appalled by the violence, but not in the same way that the community who experienced this firsthand would be. It also seems to distill the experience of life toward the end of apartheid into one consisting solely of violence and violent encounters. While these were certainly a prominent feature of life, they were not its sole content, and this view oversimplifies the situation, inspiring pity where empathy might be more desirable.

Despite these challenges, I would argue that the most significant aspect of the Apartheid Museum, particularly for American visitors, is its open discussion about the construction of race and the ways it consistently makes whiteness visible throughout its

exhibits. The first exhibit, where visitors are separated, illustrates the extent to which one's racial designation was both arbitrary and incredibly important. This message is one I saw repeated at other sites throughout South Africa, particularly at prison sites like Constitution Hill in Johannesburg and Robben Island in Cape Town. The changing exhibit at the Apartheid Museum during my visit was on Ahmed "Kathy" Kathrada, an antiapartheid activist and close friend and ally of Nelson Mandela who was imprisoned with Mandela on Robben Island. The exhibit underscored how even in among prisoners, the apartheid state enforced racialization by distributing food based on color. Kathrada was designated Coloured/Asian, and so received more food than Mandela; Kathrada also received sugar for his coffee where Mandela did not. These types of petty differentiations illustrate the both the absurdity of apartheid's racial designations and the deadly earnest with which they were enforced.

None of the museum's exhibits treat whiteness as a default or norm; rather, they discuss different experiences according to the apartheid divisions of race, including white. This is critical because the museum interprets apartheid history primarily for those who did not experience it, including significant numbers of white tourists from white-majority cultures. The great power of whiteness in the United States, for example, is how it has rendered itself invisible to white people. If visiting the Apartheid Museum accomplishes nothing else, it should at least raise the question of whiteness as a force in the world.

# CHAPTER SIX

# THE DISTRICT SIX MUSEUM:

# "THE MEMORIES LINGER, BUT THE DAYS WILL NEVER RETURN"

The city of Cape Town, the legislative capital of South Africa, is nestled between the cliffs of Table Mountain and the sea. It is the second most populous city in the country, after Johannesburg, and is home to 3.74 million people. Unlike Johannesburg, which is has a majority Black population and where the two most commonly spoken languages at home are Zulu and English, the majority of Capetonians are Coloured, at 42 percent, followed by Blacks, who make up 39 percent, and the most commonly spoken languages at home are Afrikaans (35 percent) and Xhosa (29 percent), followed by English (28 percent). Cape Town is a major tourist destination, with visitors flocking from around the world to take advantage of its natural beauty and pleasant climate.

When the first Europeans arrived, the Portuguese, in the late fifteenth century, the Khoikhoi people already inhabited the area and traded with the newly arrived travelers. In 1652, Jan van Riebeeck arrived with a crew, charged by the Dutch East India Company with establishing a way station for ships traveling to and from the Dutch East Indies. The Fort of Good Hope was the first permanent European presence, and contact with the indigenous population remained limited to trading, with a few indigenous people doing domestic work for Dutch settlers. The Khoikhoi were unwilling to work as laborers for the Dutch, and the settlers had not been given authority to force them into labor, so the

Dutch began bringing in enslaved people in the 1650s. Slaves from the East Indies brought Islam to the Cape.[1]

Cape Town was the point of entry for European colonizers, and the cultural landscape reflects these layers of history. In addition to bringing grapes in for wine production, the Dutch, French, and British settlers also left their architectural marks on the landscape, with striking historic buildings visible throughout the city. A history of racial exclusion and segregation have also marked the city dramatically in terms of population distribution.[2] While the open fields of District Six are perhaps the most dramatic example, the city remains largely segregated in the post-apartheid era due to a significant wealth gap and ever-increasing housing prices. Suburbs closer to the City Bowl, like Green Point and the more affluent Sea Point, remain predominantly white, while most people of color live further out in the townships. One drastic exception to this is Bo Kaap,[3] a small Cape Malay neighborhood known for its brightly painted homes, though residents are now under pressure to sell due to gentrification, skyrocketing home prices, and the attendant increases to property taxes.[4]

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[1] South African History Online, "Colonial History of Cape Town," accessed March 4, 2015, http://www.sahistory.org.za/cape-town/slavery-and-emancipation-slaves.

[2] Figure 7 is a map showing the racial distribution of the city. An interactive, zoomable, clickable version of this map (and all of South Africa) with street names and neighborhoods shown is available at http://dotmap.adrianfrith.com/.

[3] Bo Kaap was a diverse neighborhood before apartheid, and became the Cape Malay quarter in Cape Town after the implementation of the Group Areas Act.

[4] Ashraf Hendricks, "Ramadan in Bo Kaap: A Dying Tradition?," *The Daily Vox* (South Africa), July 28, 2014, accessed April 9, 2015, http://www.thedailyvox.co.za/ramadan-in-bo-kaap-a-dying-tradition/; Lisa Isaacs, "Bo-Kaap Resident [sic] Fear Loss of Identity," *Weekend Argus* (Cape Town), April 5, 2014, accessed April 9, 2015, http://www.iol.co.za/business/news/bo-kaap-resident-fear-loss-of-identity-1.1671692#.VOSrLXb7eTU; Ra'eesa Pather, "The Gentrification of Bo-

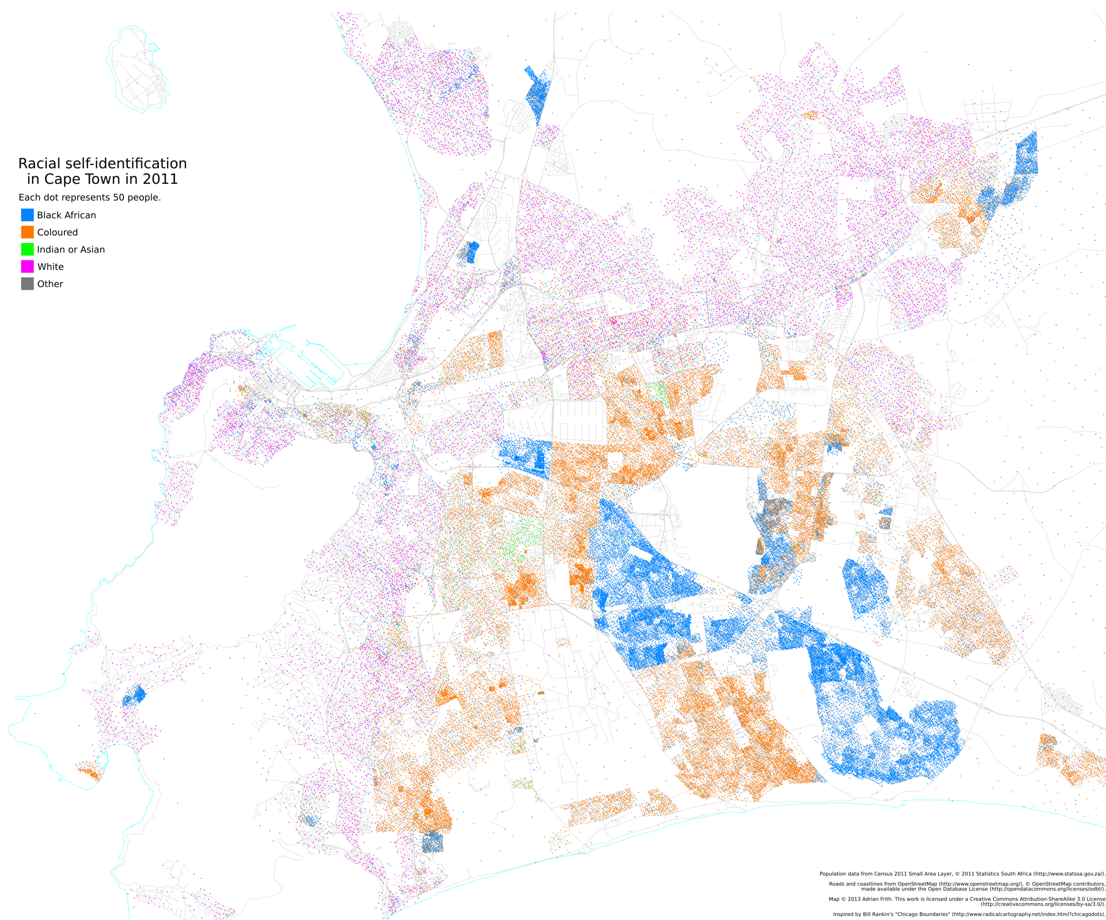


Figure 7 Population distribution map by race of Cape Town. Adrian Frith, September 8, 2013, http://adrianfrith.com/2013/09/08/dot-maps-of-racial-distribution-in-south-african-cities

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Kaap," *The Daily Vox* (South Africa), May 2, 2014, accessed April 9, 2015, http://www.thedailyvox.co.za/the-gentrification-of-the-bo-kaap/.

One of the most noticeable differences for me when I arrived in Cape Town after spending two weeks in Johannesburg was how much safer and more walkable the city felt.[5] The city is much smaller than Johannesburg, and there has been a recent push to develop safe and reliable public transportation. The V&A Waterfront, a large shopping area adjacent to the docks, is linked to Sea Point by a meandering seaside promenade where tourists and locals alike can enjoy beautiful ocean views and breezes. Most areas also include FIND YOUR WAY maps showing walkways, points of interest, taxi ranks, and police stations. There are pedestrians everywhere. Like Johannesburg, homes are walled off, but the walls are not as high and the ones at the front of houses on side streets do not tend to have razor or electric wire. My host in Cape Town explained to me that in Johannesburg, people have walls for security, while in Cape Town, they have walls for privacy. In general, the city, or to be totally clear, the parts of it I visited, on the whole felt safer than Johannesburg, although Cape Town actually has a higher murder rate and more crime than Johannesburg.[6]

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[5] These observations are based on fieldwork from October 15, 2014 to November 7, 2014.

[6] Benjamin Fogel, Jacobin Radio South Africa, Episode 4: "Racism and Crime in Post-apartheid South Africa," October 6, 2014, accessed April 9, 2015, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/10/jacobin-radio-south-africa-ep-4/>.

Figure 8 “FIND YOUR WAY” map in tourist-friendly Cape Town. Photo by author.

I mentioned already that Cape Town has a much stronger tourist industry than Johannesburg. The city and its environs are popular with domestic and international tourists from all over the world. The beaches attract leisure tourists and surfers. Wildlife enthusiasts and head to Boulder's Beach to see African penguins, travel down to Gansbaai to see Great White Sharks, or go whale watching. There is a substantial winemaking region, and many wineries offer tours and tastings. There are also a number of popular heritage tourism destinations, most notably Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners were kept in appalling conditions. Tourists can also visit the Cape Castle, which began as the Fort of Good Hope (the first permanent European structure in the Cape), or the District Six Museum, which is the focus of this chapter.

Cape Town does have a fairly strong township tourism business, but the number of townships mean the brunt of tourism tends to be spread more widely. Whereas the primary township tour destination in Johannesburg is Soweto, Cape Town has more townships spread more widely, so there is less uniformity. I arranged a field trip to Langa, the oldest township in Cape Town, predating apartheid. Though the people and culture were different from Soweto and Alexandra, the tour overall was similar; we visited a museum (the small and excellent Langa Heritage or Dompas Museum, which tells the history of Langa and the pass system), walked around different parts of the township, visited the Guga'sthebe Cultural Centre, and met some local residents. The tourism landscape is simply much more varied in Cape Town than it is in Johannesburg;

whereas Johannesburg tends to be a departure point for tourists, Cape Town is a destination in itself.

Prior to apartheid, Cape Town was divided into municipal districts. District Six was a racially, culturally, and ethnically mixed working class and poor neighborhood close to the Central Business District (CBD) dating back to the nineteenth century. Though overcrowded and lacking infrastructure, it was home to a vibrant community. Its proximity to the CBD and position between Table Mountain and the waterfront meant that it was prime real estate, and on February 11, 1966, the apartheid government declared District Six a whites-only area under the Group Areas Act of 1950. Between 1966 and 1982, more than 60,000 residents were forcibly relocated to townships in the Cape Flats, according to their designated racial identity. The government razed the land, bulldozing buildings (except for religious structures) and tearing out roads for redevelopment as a white area. Residents and sympathizers organized the Hands Off District Six campaign, which successfully fought redevelopment of most of the area during apartheid.

The District Six Museum Foundation was established in 1989, and the museum opened in 1994. Since its inception, the museum has served the dual purpose of a community gathering space for former residents of District Six and displaced people from South Africa and the world, as well as a space for interpreting this history for tourists and visitors. The District Six Museum also advocates for social justice and actively seeks voices and perspectives that challenge established narratives of Capetonian and South African history. According to its own mission statement:

> As an independent space where the forgotten understandings of the past are resuscitated, where different interpretations of that past are facilitated through its collections, exhibitions and education programmes, the Museum is committed to telling stories of forced removals and assisting in the reconstitution of the community of District Six and Cape Town by drawing on a heritage of non-racialism, non-sexism, anti-class discrimination, and the encouragement of debate.[7]

The District Six Museum maintains a uniquely effective commitment to transparency and reflective practice. In addition to the usual souvenirs and topical books and memoirs, the gift shop also sells a number of relatively affordable books on the museum's practices, including conference papers and collections of critical essays, the type of resources that are typically only available through academic libraries.[8] These texts include essays examining the evolving relationship of the museum to former residents with close analysis of the changing role of the museum in post-apartheid politics, society, and culture, as well as thorough investigation of the museum's work on memory and the needs fulfilled by memory work.[9] Making these types of resources available to visitors and community members is an important element in partnership and shared authority, demonstrating the museum's commitment to keeping the conversation about practice and theory open to anyone who wishes to participate. This is not to suggest that the museum

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[7] District Six Museum Research Ethics Statement, accessed April 9, 2015, http://www.districtsix.co.za/Content/Education/Documentation/Access/index.php#research

[8] Examples include Bonita Bennett, Chrischené Julius, and Crain Soudien, eds., *City, Site, Museum: Reviewing Memory Practices at the District Six Museum* (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2008); and Bonita Bennett, *Reflections on the Conference Hands on District Six: Landscapes of Post-Colonial Memorialisation : Cape Town, 25 - 28 May 2005*, (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2007).

[9] See Mandy Sanger, "Education Work in the District Six Museum: Layering in New Voices and Interpretation," in *City, Site, Museum*, ed. Bennett, Julius, and Soudien 96-109.

and its practices are without criticism,[10] however, many of the articles I read in books available at the museum raised similar issues to critiques published in academic journals. It is heartening to see such a successful example of reflective practice and shared authority.

The District Six Museum is housed in an adaptively reused, two-story stone church near the Cape Town City Center. The basilica-stye interior has been cleared of pews, and a large canvas floor map of District Six, painted with stories, addresses, and poems, occupies the sanctuary. The upper and lower galleries serve as exhibit space for historical materials and art. The space in front of the altar is dominated by a sculptural tower made up of street signs salvaged from the demolition of the district, and other signs are tucked into the risers of the stairs to the second level galleries. One section of the first floor gallery has been walled off to form a room recreating an apartment to show the type of space where many families lived.

[10] Christiaan Beyers, "The Cultural Politics of 'Community' and Citizenship in the District Six Museum, Cape Town," *Anthropologica* 50, no. 2 (2008): 359-73.

Figure 9 Interior of the District Six Museum. Photo by author.

Upon entering, docents direct visitors to a series of six panels that provide background information on apartheid and satellite images of the transformation of District Six as it was emptied and demolished. There is no fixed pattern for taking in the various exhibits, and visitors wander freely through the space. Dozens of exhibits focus on a variety of aspects of life in the District. Several focus on daily life in District Six, and feature family photographs accompanied by captions describing the context from their donors or pictures of public events or street photography with quotes from oral history interviews elaborating on the content. Some of the quoted material is joyful, such a description of the annual Coon Carnival,[11] a parade held to ring in the new year and commemorate Emancipation Day, while others describe harsher realities, like the violence of street gangs or the intense crowding. More formal exhibits round out these vignettes, describing other aspects of District Six's social history, like the establishment of a public laundry facility and the challenge of convincing women to use it after fees were imposed, or the type of work available to residents (generally in factories or at the docks), or the role of the local hospital and the relationship of the doctors and nursing staff to local residents.

There are also a number of more instructive exhibits on the legal and practical aspects of forced removal, including a detailed panel on the series of legal maneuvers that worked together to evict the residents, particularly slum clearance. The museum does not

[11] See John Edwin Mason, "Cape Town New Year's Carnival Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)," *John Edwin Mason: Documentary, Motorsports, Photo History*, accessed March 5, 2014, http://johnedwinmason.typepad.com/john_edwin_mason_photogra/cape-town-new-years-carnival-frequently-asked-questions-faq.html; John Edwin Mason, *One Love, Ghoema Beat: Inside the Cape Town Carnival* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

shy away from the fact that District Six was a slum; it was overcrowded and had poor sanitation. Absentee landlords did little, if any, maintenance on properties, and happily rented out any available space, including hallways and staircase landings.[12] That reality, however, does not excuse or detract from the horrors of forced removal, or in anyway undermine the sense of community that existed among residents as they were relocated to townships far from their former homes, a theme that runs throughout the commentary of former residents in a number of exhibits.

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[12] District Six Museum Panel, "Slum Clearance." Photos available upon request.

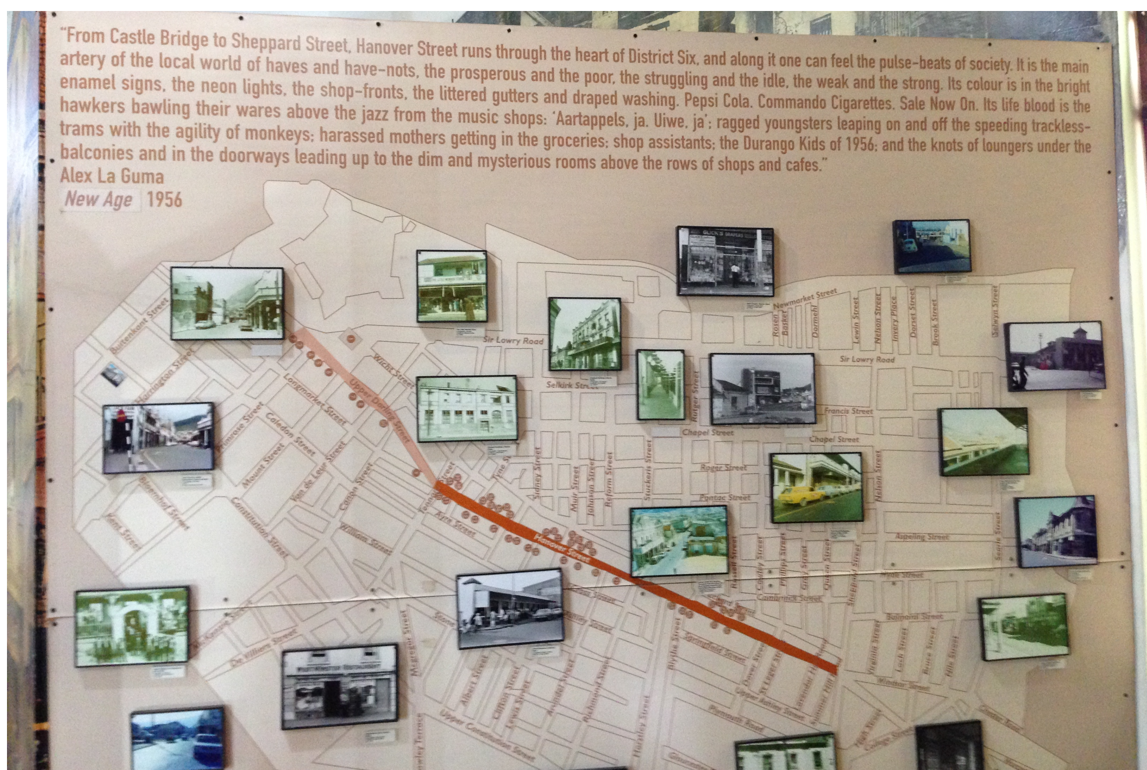


Figure 10 Panel from the District Six Museum, linking the physical landscape to the personal memories of former residents with text and images. Photo by author.

Figure 11 Panel on work in District Six. The case in the foreground contains artifacts associated with the hospital's obstetrics department. Photo by author.

The museum encourages visitors to connect the very personal and individual version of District Six with the much larger-scale story told through maps and images. The floor map at the center of the museum, for example, contains a map of the district, but also includes stories and poetry former residents associate with their experiences. The visual story of District Six, as an open, empty place amid a bustling city, is important for conveying the scale of destruction, but the real story of loss is told in anecdotes that encourage empathy. This combination encourages visitors to see the loss as irreplaceable; it is definitely possible to build houses and businesses in the space, but this cannot recreate the community that was split apart by relocation. An exhibit using aerial photography to illustrate the destruction of the district opens with the following statement:

> Maps are not objective renditions of spaces and locations. They are specific creations of their time, made for specific purposes, and seek to create certain forms of knowledge. The same can be said about aerial photographs. As official landscapes, they survey social and cultural space from the air, the most visible vantage point, on a macro-scale, charting distance, places, the built environment, street grids, physical relationships, urban design and infrastructure. They fix the physical environment to the landscape, showing and confirming relationships between places, and they indicate land-use patterns.

This type of explicit analytical language is used throughout the exhibits, teaching visitors not only what is in the museum, but how to analyze what they see to develop their own interpretation, a skill visitors can take with them after they leave. The notion that a map is not objective may be challenging for many visitors, who may not have considered the motivation behind a tool they use regularly.

In addition to these exhibits, the museum also houses a variety of art created by former residents of District Six. This includes a large mural painted on the second floor

wall across from the altar, as well as carvings, paintings, and poetry. One of the more unique exhibits is the Namecloth, a length of calico fabric on which former residents record their names, old addresses, and occasionally brief statements or memories. Originally written on in marker, different groups have embroidered over the messages to preserve them. At present the work is carried on by convicted women waiting to be sentenced at Pollsmoor Prison.[13]

The museum also engages with the history of forced removal as a phenomenon in other parts of South Africa and the world. In South Africa, apartheid functioned in large part by racializing public space, which meant moving people of color out of the lives and sight of whites whenever possible. Forced removals have also taken place as part of efforts to "improve" urban areas; as previously stated, part of the justification for clearing District Six was that it was a slum and crime-ridden. The District Six Museum also includes an exhibit on Lugnet, a working-class neighborhood in the Swedish city of Malmö that was eliminated as part of a larger slum clearance effort to provide better housing and green space.[14] Lest stories about Sweden or South Africa seem far away, American visitors might be reminded of the urban renewal projects from the 1950s to 1970s that destroyed so-called blighted neighborhoods to make way for interstates or infrastructure improvements.[15] As part of the Lugnet exhibit, some visitors from other countries also added their own stories to the space at the bottom of the exhibit, and the

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[13] Museum workers bring the cloth to the prison, and the women are taught embroidery so that they can contribute to the project and learn a new skill. District Six Museum, Namecloth panel, photo available upon request.

[14] District Six Museum, Lugnet panel, photos available upon request.

[15] For example, see: Randall Mason, *The Once and Future New York: Historic Preservation and the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

museum actively encourages visitors to make connections between the stories from District Six and their own lives.

In addition to simply viewing the museum, visitors may take tours of both the museum and District Six led by former residents who work as tour guides. Tours include discussion of the history of apartheid and life in District Six, as well as the guide's personal life. The tour I took included a visit with a former District Six resident living in the new housing being constructed in the district. District Six is currently being redeveloped, and former residents who can prove their status as such are given free housing as restitution, a project not without its own controversies and challenges.[16]

Though the museum itself tells a very personal story, the tour brings home the reality of District Six's destruction. Amid the bustle of Cape Town, most of the district remains undeveloped, fields dotted with occasional small parking lots. The streets are gone, and all that remains of the architecture are a few houses that were successfully sold to white families and religious buildings, which the apartheid government declined to raze. One of these, St. Mark's (Anglican), has been hemmed in on all sides by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, while another, a Moravian chapel, stands sentry at the eastern edge of the campus. The other religious buildings are islands in the open area where thousands of people once lived, tucked between Table Mountain and the sea.

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[16] "D6WC Plans to Head to Court over Restitution Process," *Voice of the Cape News* (South Africa), March 4, 2015, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.vocfm.co.za/d6wc-plans-to-head-to-court-over-restitution-process/>.

Figure 12 View of Table Mountain from District Six. Photo by author.

Visiting District Six itself provides visitors with a sense of scale, both of the destruction and the life that people once had in that space. Many visitors will have come into Cape Town from the international airport, which means they would have some sense of the physical distance between District Six and the Cape Flats on the other side of Table Mountain. Visiting the district makes the loss palpable, even for those who may never have heard of District Six before their trip. Within the walls of the District Six Museum, surrounded by photographs, artwork, and even the voices of residents, one gets a sense of the place, people, and community. In District Six itself, the space is largely stripped of place, without the buildings, roads, and people who made it home.

The District Six Museum tells the story of apartheid through the lens of the events in District Six. Apartheid ceases to be an abstract, distant concept and becomes a concrete, imaginable reality. The museum's success in telling this story is due in large part to the human scale of its narrative. The people of District Six are not national or international figures, they are ordinary people like the majority of visitors, which makes their loss both more comprehensible and relatable. Though it is hardly and empirical study, I did see more people visibly moved by the exhibits at the District Six Museum than I did at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg.

There are limitations to this approach. By focusing on District Six and other sites of forced removal, the museum does not engage as extensively with the full story of apartheid in South Africa and as an international phenomenon, which is surprising given the significant tourist industry that provides so many international visitors, nor does the museum engage extensively with the anti-apartheid struggle, since that is not a dominant

thread in the District Six narrative. Perhaps most surprisingly, despite the museum's commitment to transparent discussion, there are no exhibits (at least that I saw over two long visits) dedicated to the story of the Hands Off District Six campaign. The curators of the District Six Museum perhaps proceed on the assumption that most visitors are already familiar with the history and significance of apartheid, or will have visited other sites that engage with other aspects of that story, like Robben Island. Further, and perhaps most significantly, by not focusing on the end of apartheid, the museum demonstrates how despite the end of apartheid, the struggle against its legacy continues.

This final point is one that ought to be considered by sites interpreting histories that lack clean end dates. The American Civil Rights Movement, for example, is often ended with the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, though in reality the struggle continued beyond the 1960s and continues today. This approach encourages visitors to look for the ongoing institutional and structural legacies of apartheid and forced removal in South Africa, and to contemplate the efficacy of different solutions. While this has included redeveloping District Six and providing free housing to former residents, it would be impossible to humanely move everyone who was forcibly removed back into the space. There is also the question of who ought to be able to claim residency. Though most of the relocation effort has focused on the majority Coloured population evicted under the Group Areas Act, Black South Africans were forced out much earlier. Additionally, in order to be eligible to return to District Six, former residents must be able to prove their status through utility receipts and the like. While this measure is designed to reduce fraud, the burden of producing papers after at least one move from forty-odd years ago is extremely heavy. The District Six Museum works with former

residents to help them find documentation in archival records, but it is not easily done. Finally, even moving people back to the physical space of District Six does not recreate the place. The district provided the setting for a vibrant and lively community; without that community, the apartments are simply beautiful homes on prime real estate. As one family wrote on the Namecloth, “The memories linger, but the days will never return.”[17]

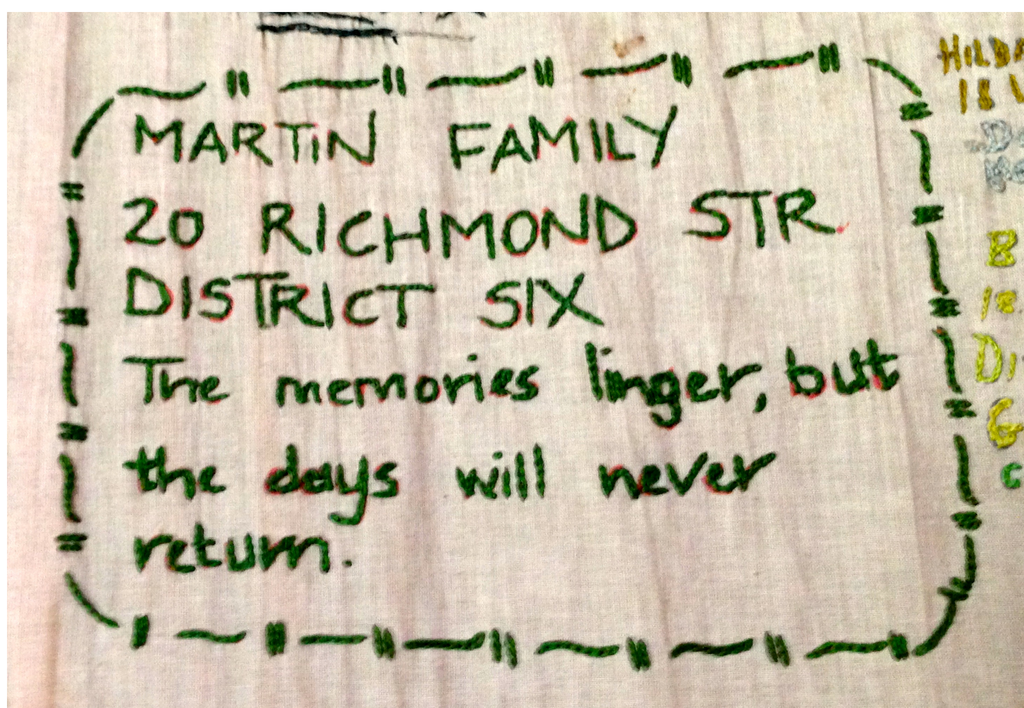


Figure 13 Quote from the Martin Family on the Namecloth. Photo by author.

[17] Quote by the Martin Family on the Namecloth.

The District Six Museum provides space for these complicated stories and feelings. Because the museum serves the dual purpose of interpretation for visitors and communal gathering space for former residents and displaced people, it does not shy away from the complicated emotional aspects of its story; these are in fact central to the museum's mission. The museum embraces nostalgia because it is a key part of making memories bearable and allowing people to see the ongoing value of their story. This allows visitors to also engage emotionally with the story; even if one has not experienced forced removal, one can certainly relate his or her personal experiences of loss to what community members experienced.

The District Six Museum is also fundamentally political, and it embraces this mission, as can be seen in the quote from the museum's website at the beginning of this chapter. Destroying District Six was a political act, and the campaign to protect it from redevelopment by the apartheid government was also political. Former residents' comments on township life are also political, because they reflect the ongoing unhappiness of many, if not most, South Africans with the post-apartheid government's efforts to redress the inequalities that were deepened and entrenched by the apartheid era. The decision to continue telling this story echoes these sentiments.

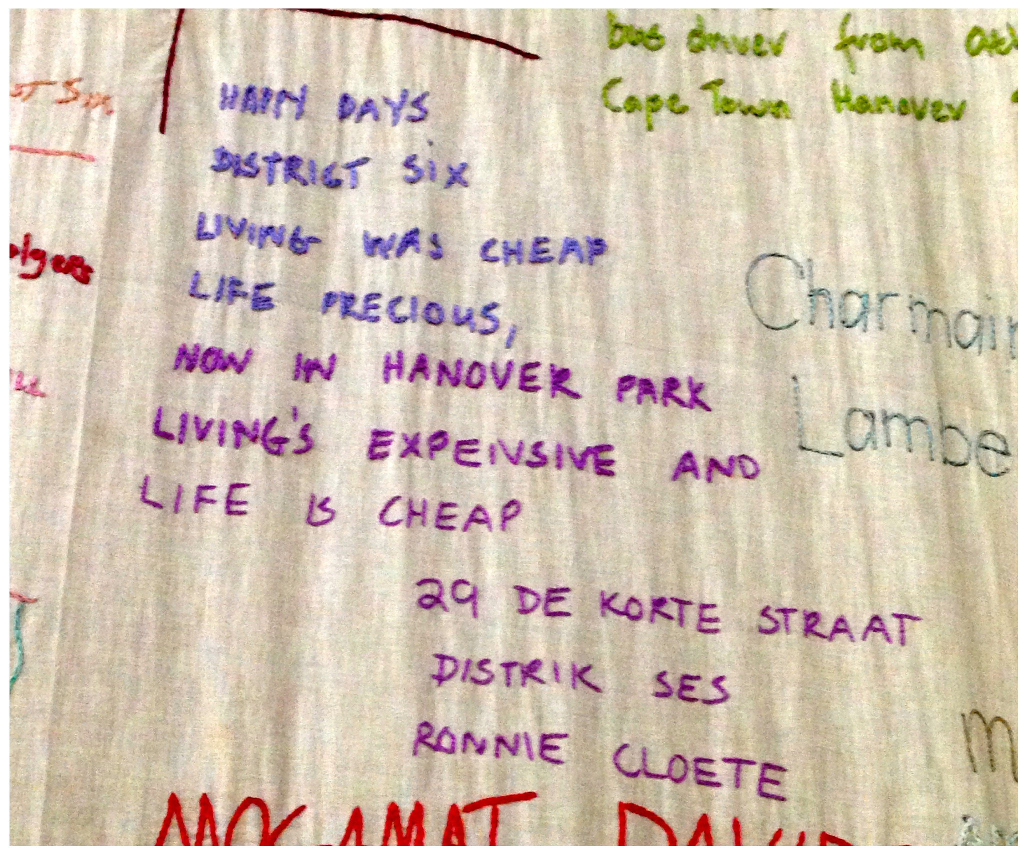


Figure 14 Section of the Namecloth. Photo by author.

# CHAPTER SEVEN:

# CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored a range of topics connected to the inherently political nature of heritage, including how authority works in partnering with communities, the importance of the process rather than the product, and how these issues relate to complicated histories and communities' needs in that process. I have advocated for a slower and more democratic approach to heritage work, and argued that this approach will lead to better long-term outcomes.

Historians and heritage practitioners have, in the last sixty-odd years, become increasingly interested in silences in our narratives about the past. Much of earlier history and heritage focused on the lives and accomplishments of a minority of propertied white men, dismissing the contributions and experiences of poor and enslaved people, women, and people of color.[1] Yet most of us have far more in common with the silent majority than we do with George Washington or Thomas Edison, and the lives of the silent majority have done more to influence the nation than the handful of great men commemorated in high school textbooks and marble sculptures. While academic historians have largely moved on from hagiography, historic sites have struggled to do so. Academic historians largely produce scholarship for other historians, whereas most public historians, and certainly nearly all historic sites, face a much broader range of

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[1] This is not to dismiss or diminish the work of historians of color on people of color, however, due to explicit and implicit racial bias, this work existed largely outside of the dominant narratives of white historians and heritage practitioners (who of course would not have thought of themselves as such.

audiences and a greater number of hurdles, including different funding structures and different bureaucratic barriers.

While not all those who work under the umbrella of public history present their work to the public, it would be fair to say that the vast majority create products that are intended for audiences outside of an academic setting. Perhaps the most obvious example is the public historian doing exhibit development work for a museum, but other public history professionals also create work that influences how the public perceives history. Historic Structures Reports and National Register nominations are not generally popular reading, but these documents often inform how a historic site sets its preservation goals and frames its interpretation for the public. Thus when public historians work to be more inclusive in both their practice and their products, it has a ripple effect on other parts of the field.

The wider audience can also generate more pushback when the facts get in the way of popular ideas about the past. American culture in particular is given to black and white thinking, wanting to sort our historical figures into heroes and villains and use supposed facts about the past to lend credence to ideas about the present. Often when public historians try to shine a light on the messy and often ugly facts of the past, it can seem to undermine the present. This is often an emotional, rather than a rational reaction, but it is something public historians have to consider or risk being accused of the egregious sin of revisionism and having their work dismissed as liberal hogwash. Yet surely the story of a dynamic, evolving nation is more powerful than a patriotic fairytale based on imaginary cherry trees and wooden teeth. Just as the nation produced the

violence and racism of the Jim Crow Era, it also produced powerful civil rights and black power movements.

Again, there are a flood of public historians who are eager to do this work, yet are hamstrung by both a hypothetical audience and a funding and administrative structure that is deeply risk averse. When asked why they do not engage with riskier topics, many historic sites will point to concerns about alienating or offending either their board of directors or their donors. These structures of authority, and fear of what will happen if they are provoked into withdrawing their support, exacerbate and reify the silences in dominant narratives. The financial support for these organizations tends to come from wealthier echelons of society, which generally (but certainly not universally) means wealthy white men; the same men whose privilege is upheld by the dominant narratives inclusive heritage challenges. The directors and staff at historic sites are beholden to these men for their livelihood, placing them in a delicate situation, assuming they are even inclined to challenge the established narrative in the first place. Sites work to avoid "getting political" without considering that choosing to uphold established narratives and the values implicit in them it itself political and no less damaging.

For American historians, the most challenging silence of all is that of whiteness. As Grace Elizabeth Hale says in the introduction to *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*, "The denial of white as a racial identity, the denial that whiteness has a history, allows the quiet, the blankness, to stand as the norm. This erasure enables any to fuse their absence of racial being with the nation, making

whiteness their unspoken but deepest sense of what it means to be an American."[2] Historic sites often unintentionally reify this silence when they try to engage with the perspectives of people of color by talking about the "black experience." While they mean well, this type of language and the thought behind it reinforces the idea that white is the norm and black (or any other ethnic background) is other. The South African sites surveyed in this dissertation offer an alternative approach. Because apartheid required all races to be defined, these sites describe events and laws as they affected each different racial designation. American sites could build on this model by explicitly stating that they are discussing the white experience. In the Selma fieldwork, for example, whiteness emerged as a theme, but primarily because it was something the community members drew out, rather than something that I was explicitly seeking. Going forward, reframing the discussion of race to explicitly include whiteness from the outset will likely provide even better products and more insightful analysis.

The simplicity of this suggestion should not undermine its significance. In Chapter 3, I described Jamie Frueh's four levels of resistance: noticing, questioning, causing trouble, and working for an alternative solution. The power of white supremacy lies in its ability to go unnoticed and uncommented upon. If we are to resist white supremacy, then we must first notice it and question whether it is a value we wish to uphold. If it is not, we can cause trouble by drawing the attention of others to it and not allowing it to go unchallenged. Finally, we can work for a specific alternative: in this case, an interpretive framework that makes whiteness, and therefore the constructed

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[2] Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1999), xi.

nature of race, visible. Making whiteness visible in a society built on white supremacy is a revolutionary act.

Why does public history need a revolution? Because whiteness is a silencing force in history, and the same forces that silence past narratives also work to silence the importance of those stories in the present. Talking about Jim Crow and the civil rights era without talking about whiteness is like discussing Christianity and not mentioning Jesus. Whiteness is at the center of the American historical narrative, whether we acknowledge it or not. By discussing it in the past, we establish a framework for understanding its impact on the present.

The civil rights movement was and is a decades-long effort to push back against white supremacy and establish racial equality. In many cases, white Americans will interpret the civil rights movement as a movement against racism and racist policies. When most whites picture racism, they imagine hooded Klansmen or people shouting epithets at black people trying to integrate schools and lunch counters. These are certainly examples of racism, but racism goes much deeper and was and is perpetrated in much smaller, more everyday, though no less damaging ways. This idea of racism feeds the heroes and villains approach to history, when the reality was far more complicated. We need to engage with the reality that it was ordinary, church-going, God-fearing white people who also took part in lynch mobs, filled the jury boxes that sentenced black men to death for the pettiest crimes, looked the other way when blacks were intimidated away from the polls, and refused to address black people with titles of respect. That the modern day legacy of whiteness is a nation where young black men are shot in the street by police who rarely lose their jobs or face a trial, where there are more black men in prison

today than were enslaved in 1850, where people of color face harsher jail sentences for the same crimes as their white counterparts.[3]

The problem is not that the facts and alternative, more inclusive narratives are unavailable, it is that white people exist in a bubble of privilege in which they do not have to hear or know these things unless they seek them out. Because of white supremacy, black history is relegated to a sidebar, an aside rather than an essential aspect of the historical narrative. Because of patriarchy, women's history is a colorful anecdote, a handy bit of trivia, rather than a crucial side of the story. It is white privilege that allows antebellum mansions to serve as architectural backdrops to weddings and formal events without considering that these are also sites of oppression and human suffering. It is this same privilege that allows us to discuss Thomas Jefferson and omit Sally Hemings. It lets us transform Martin Luther King, Jr. from a revolutionary figure who challenged unfettered capitalism into a feel-good hero who envisioned white and black children playing together as the central goal of the civil rights movement. Rather than telling the story of the past, history that omits whiteness become a mythical origin tale that reassures white people of their superiority and worthiness.

Part of why so much history is whitewashed is that the people writing history and preserving and interpreting heritage are predominantly white. We exist within a larger culture that reinforces whiteness, and so we face the same challenges in seeing that the

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[3] Katie Sanders, "Fact-checking John Legend's 2015 Oscar Speech," *Politifact*, February 23, 2015, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.politifact.com/punditfact/article/2015/feb/23/fact-checking-john-legends-2015-oscar-speech/>; Mark Hansen, "Black Prisoners Are Given Longer Sentences than Whites, Study Says," *ABA Journal*, February 15, 2013, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/black_prisoners_tend_to_serve_longer_sentences_than_whites>.

general public does. In the Introduction and Selma chapters, I discuss how heritage professionals and public historians bring their own personal cultural biases and experiences with them into the work. With this in mind, we must be open to the experiences, opinions, and expertise of our counterparts with different cultural experiences. Through the course of my own research in and on Selma, in reading about the importance of intersectional feminism and race theory, and paying attention to the work of pop culture figures like Roxane Gay, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and Jay Smooth, I came to appreciate that the burden is not on people of color to educate white people about what it means to be a person of color.[4] The burden is on white people to educate themselves and each other. The burden of exposing whiteness and understanding how whiteness affects the way we interpret sites and historic events is therefore on us as white public historians in particular.

There are profound consequences of perpetuating these silences in historical dialogue. First and foremost, by overlooking or other-ing the experiences of people of color, we deny them their historicity. Second, we selectively deny the connection between past and present. To argue that Andrew Jackson's presidency fundamentally changed American politics in a way that still lingers today and then turn around and argue that the Trail of Tears or slavery have no lasting legacy is both illogical and hypocritical. As public historians, we need to be cognizant of the fact that while we may

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[4] Roxane Gay is a professor of English known for her popular writing on intersectional feminism and popular culture. Ta-Nehisi Coates is a writer and journalist, known for his cultural commentary on race. Jay Smooth is the deejay name of John Randolph. He founded WBAI's Underground Railroad, a long-running hip hop radio show in New York City, and he regularly publishes video commentary on intersections of race, pop culture, politics, and social justice in his series Ill Doctrine.

not believe that, that message still pervades our culture. It's the message behind the accusation that "they" need to just "get over it," whether "it" is slavery, rape culture, genocide, or whatever incident in the past a white individual wishes to dismiss. If we want to respect our history, we need to respect that it has been traumatic for large swaths of the population, and find ways to respectfully acknowledge that trauma. Acknowledging the existence of whiteness and the pervasiveness of white supremacy is part of that.

I have argued for a slower, more thoughtful, community-driven approach to heritage. Because silencing is at the core of the damage that dominant culture has inflicted on people of color, we can begin to undo that by seeking guidance from communities, listening to their concerns and objections, and whenever possible going along with their suggestions. By including communities in the process, rather than simply telling their stories for them, we take meaningful steps toward a truly inclusive approach and narrative of history.

The structural challenges facing this type of work are deeply embedded in our economy, political, and cultural systems. The reality of good heritage work is that it is slow and process-oriented. It resists quantitative evaluation and responds poorly to fixed deadlines. It takes time and resources, both financial and human. This means the work of heritage is expensive and time-consuming, which is bad news for many heritage sites. Grants, which fund a lot of heritage work, operate on fixed timelines and require demonstrable, measured results. I have already discussed some of the challenges facing sites that rely on wealthy donors, and state-run sites, particularly in the current economy, routinely fall prey to austerity measures and exist at the pleasure of increasingly partisan

government bodies who are increasingly eager to challenge the value of historical narratives that do not fit their own narrow ideas of American history.

This problem, the funding problem, is one of international concern in the aftermath of the economic crisis of 2008. The wealth gap is steadily increasing as global wealth is further concentrated into the hands of fewer and fewer people, mostly men. The concentration of wealth has come from decades and centuries of capitalist exploitation, through which the rich and powerful have taken advantage of those less fortunate and used their wealth and position to further cement their authority. These voices have crafted a narrative of history that reinforces their inherent supremacy and merit, silencing the same women and people of color on whose exploitation their success rests. Thus the primary obstacle facing inclusive, community-driven heritage is global corporate capitalism, which undermines the inherent human value of heritage because good heritage defies monetization.

* * *

Over the course of my time working on this project, I met many public historians and heritage professionals who talked about the challenges they faced in creating inclusive heritage that would benefit and prioritize the needs of the communities with whom they worked. Many of these folks were engaged with social justice issues, and wanted to find ways to incorporate those values into their practice. I myself began my public history career with the idea that I would find ways that I could use history to help people. With a lot of listening, thought, and research, I developed this analysis and proposal for rethinking the way preservationists approach the question of public history.

While some of it will be old news, I believe that there is food for thought for every public historian and heritage professional.

Heritage is political. What we save and how it is preserved and interpreted are reflections of our cultural and political values. Good heritage should be based in close community work and grounded in the physical landscape whenever possible. Heritage professionals are authority figures, and we must wear our authority consciously and respectfully. Developing true partnerships based on mutual respect and understanding takes time, but this process is essential to positive heritage outcomes. Respect includes respecting a community's right to nostalgia or to remember differently, and when challenging those ideas, we should ask ourselves what purpose it serves—does it advance historical understanding, or does it simply stroke the professional's ego?

Heritage may not have the power to change the world, but it does have the power to change the conversation and open dialogue about our cultural and political values.

* * *

## Epilogue

Completion of this dissertation coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday and the March to Montgomery, events that inspired Ava DuVernay's film *Selma*. The film, a biopic of Dr. King, tells the story of his involvement with the Selma campaign and the Voting Rights Movement. Responses to the film were initially very positive; David Oyelowo's interpretation of King is outstanding.[5] He manages to embody King without offering a caricature of the man, to echo King's rhetorical style without

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[5] As of February 26, 2015, the film had a 98% "fresh" rating on rottentomatoes.com, a website that aggregates critical reviews.

aping it. The film moves quickly, manipulating the timeline of events to compress the story into something that will fit into a single film. Personally, I thought the film did an admirable job of generating a story arc while also giving the viewer the sense that he or she had simply dropped into a moment in time that began before the film and would go on long after.

Critical voices soon emerged, many of them centered around the portrayal of Lyndon Johnson. One of the most vocal opponents, one of Johnson's domestic aide Joseph Califano, published an opinion piece in the *Washington Post* alleging that the film's depiction of Johnson was spurious, because Johnson supported King and the push for voting rights, even going so far as to claim that the Selma campaign was Johnson's idea.[6] Califano is not alone in his objection to the film's interpretation of Johnson, and a number of reviewers and historians have responded to the critique.[7] The reality, of course, is somewhere in between; the filmmakers certainly did not invent the idea that Johnson wanted to King to wait and hold off on pushing for more legislation in the wake of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.[8] My view is that Johnson's portrayal suffers some from

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[6] Joseph Califano, "The Movie 'Selma' Has a Glaring Flaw," *Washington Post*, December 26, 2014, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-movie-selma-has-a-glaring-historical-inaccuracy/2014/12/26/70ad3ea2-8aa4-11e4-a085-34e9b9f09a58_story.html>.

[7] David Edelstein, "MLK Drama Selma Shows the Grunt Work that Went into Making History," Vulture, January 9, 2015, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.vulture.com/2014/12/movie-review-selma.html>; Jada Yun, "Selma Director Ava DuVernay: Don't Reduce This Movie to a Single Talking Point," Vulture, January 6, 2015, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.vulture.com/2015/01/selma-director-ava-duvernay-controversy-lyndon-johnson.html>.

[8] Louis Menand, "The Color of Law: Voting Rights and the Southern Way of Life," *New Yorker*, July 8, 2013, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/07/08/the-color-of-law>. Menand's article

the condensed timeline of the film, but that critics are primarily upset that Johnson is not the hero of the film. Julius Zelizer, a Johnson historian, argues that the filmmakers wanted to "create a villain," which is, to me, a skewed viewing of the film.[9] Johnson does not appear as a great hero, but nor is he King's enemy. I thought that it was clear that Johnson believed in voting rights, and that the central dispute was the timeline, which Johnson believed endangered his other goals. Johnson does, after all, have his iconic moment telling Congress that, "We shall overcome."

*Selma* generated a considerable amount of Oscar buzz, and while it was nominated for Best Picture, neither DuVernay's directing nor Oyelowo's portrayal of King were nominated.[10] The Academy came under criticism for snubbing *Selma*, and many critics noted that had DuVernay would have been the Academy's first ever African American woman nominee for Best Director. Though it is of course impossible to know exactly why the Academy nominated and voted the way it did, the *Hollywood Reporter* has an annual feature in which they interview anonymous members of the Academy. Many of these voters commented directly on *Selma*. Though no one interviewed voted for *Selma*, of the eight voters interviewed, a minority had positive comments on the film prior to explaining why they voted for another nominee. The negative remarks on *Selma*, however, were revealing.

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offers a good synthesis of Johnson's position (and the Voting Rights Movement) based on the work of Gary May, Taylor Branch, and Mary Dudziak.

[9] Jennifer Schuessler, "Depiction of Lyndon B. Johnson in 'Selma' Raises Hackles," *New York Times*, December 31, 2014, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/01/movies/depiction-of-lyndon-b-johnson-in-selma-raises-hackles.html>. Schuessler's article pulls together many of the criticisms of the film and includes the perspective of historians who take a kinder view of the film.

[10] *Selma* was also nominated for, and won, the Academy Award for Best Original Song for "Glory" by Common and John Legend.

One of the voters said that he had lived through the 1960s and called it, “a left-wing, modern, black rap version — there's no white people who have any speaking parts who are favorably depicted, when, in fact, there were white people on the scene, beyond a few ministers, who risked their lives and who died supporting the civil rights efforts.”[11] Apparently, this voter believes that there have not been any films on the civil rights movement that focus on the contributions of whites. Other voters remarked on the accusations that the Academy was racist, while taking care to point out how their voting decision was not made based on race. Arguing that *Selma* came out too late, another voter claimed that, “Based on the way that we [the Academy] have been able to embrace *12 Years a Slave* and various black actors and actresses through the years, I don't believe for one minute that race had anything to do with the director or actor from Selma not getting nominated.”[12] A different voter, who liked *Selma* and lamented Oyelowo’s snub, argued that it was not the result of race because, “The Academy being racist is so far from the truth it's unbelievable — yes, it's 6,000 65-year-old white guys, but they couldn't be any more patriotic or democratic.” This same voter explained her vote for Best Foreign-Language Film saying, “I gave it to *Ida* because I'm Jewish and I feel like you can never tell these sorts of [Holocaust-related] stories enough — I'm literally obsessed with stories about the Nazis and World War II. Show me a movie about a Jew and a Nazi, and I'm

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[11] Scott Feinburg, “Brutally Honest Oscar Ballot No. 9: 'Selma' "Incredibly Misleading," 'Inherent Vice' "Trash””, *Hollywood Reporter*, February 22, 2015, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/race/brutally-honest-oscar-ballot-no-776207>.

[12] Scott Feinburg, “Brutally Honest Oscar Ballot No. 5: I "Love" 'Sniper,' "Just Can't Do It Again" With Streep,” *Hollywood Reporter*, February 20, 2015, accessed April 9, 2015,
<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/race/brutally-honest-oscar-ballot-no-773905>.

there."[13] The second comment on *Ida* is particularly revealing, particularly the complete lack of irony surrounding the idea that the voter feels a personal connection to a story about oppression that "can never be told enough" while not seeing that other might believe that another story about oppression (*Selma*) may deserve the same consideration; and indeed dismissing out of hand the idea that racism might play a role.

Still other voters defended the Academy by arguing that, "I didn't think Selma was a particularly good film, apart from the main actor [David Oyelowo], and I think the outcry about the Academy being racists for not nominating it for more awards is offensive — we have a two-term president who is a black woman [Cheryl Boone Isaacs] and we give out awards to black people when they deserve them, just like any other group."[14] In a similar vein, another voter commented:

> And as far as the accusations about the Academy being racist? Yes, most members are white males, but they are not the cast of *Deliverance* — they had to get into the Academy to begin with, so they're not cretinous, snaggletoothed hillbillies. When a movie about black people is good, members vote for it. But if the movie isn't that good, am I supposed to vote for it just because it has black people in it? I've got to tell you, having the cast show up in T-shirts saying "I can't breathe" [at their New York premiere] — I thought that stuff was offensive. Did they want to be known for making the best movie of the year or for stirring up shit?[15]

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[13] Scott Feinburg, "Brutally Honest Oscar Ballot No. 8: 'Grand Budapest' "Most Underrated," "Gender Discrimination" Hurt Ava DuVernay," *Hollywood Reporter*, February 22, 2015, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/race/brutally-honest-oscar-ballot-no-776164>.

[14] Scott Feinburg, "Brutally Honest Oscar Ballot No. 2: Voter Finds 'Whiplash' "Offensive," Doesn't "Get" 'Birdman'," *Hollywood Reporter*, February 19, 2015, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/race/brutally-honest-oscar-ballot-no-773848>.

[15] Scott Feinburg, "Oscar Voter Reveals Brutally Honest Ballot: "There's No Art to 'Selma,'" 'Boyhood' "Uneven"," *Hollywood Reporter*, February 18, 2015, accessed April 9, 2015,

Although these comments are specific to *Selma*, they reflect the general responses of white Americans to accusations of racism: the defensive tone, the idea that racism is the provenance of poor, uneducated whites, and complete dismissal of the existence of institutionalized racism. Moreover, the voters clearly consider the accusation of racism to be so egregious that they are unwilling to contemplate its merits or consider that while they might not individually be racist, the net effect of so much white privilege clouds the outcome of the competition. The comment that they "give out awards to black people when they deserve them" is particularly jarring, because the voter is clearly suggesting that since 1928, amid the 2,947 Oscars awarded, only 34 black people have ever deserved Academy Awards.[16]

More significantly for the purposes of this discussion, the final comment overlooks the connection between the activism depicted in *Selma* and present-day activism against more institutionalized forms of racism. The struggle has evolved, and key figures in the Voting Rights Movement in Selma, notably John Lewis, are still involved in the struggle for equal rights today. This is something heritage sites associated with the freedom struggle on all levels can work to convey in their interpretation and messaging. I am not suggesting that heritage sites and public history are somehow capable of ending institutionalized racism, rather that the work of these professions has

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<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/race/brutally-honest-oscar-ballot-2015-773902>.

[16] "List of black Academy Award winners and nominees," *Wikipedia*, last modified March 14, 2015, accessed April 9, 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_black_Academy_Award_winners_and_nominees>. I used this list to compile a list of winners so as not to count anyone twice who had won twice (i.e., I counted Lupita Nyong'o and Denzel Washington the same number of times, though Nyong'o has only won once and Washington has won twice).

the capacity to do considerable good in drawing attention to these issues and helping visitors develop a language and framework for understanding them.

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# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A:

# NPS SELMA TO MONTGOMERY TRAIL BROCHURE

## Selma to Montgomery

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Historic Trail
Alabama

The 54-mile march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capitol in Montgomery in 1965 culminated a journey of a hundred years by African Americans to gain one of the most fundamental of American freedoms:

**the right to vote.**

The peaceful march was possible because in the preceding days courageous citizens, local leaders, and civil rights groups had, at the cost of harassment, bloodshed, and innocent lives, come together to demand that right. The final march was a celebration of their achievement, a processional for fallen comrades, and the climactic event of the modern civil rights movement.

On the first attempt to march, John Lewis (*right*) and Hosea Williams lead the marchers as they approach waiting state troopers.

1900–1964

*I am 65 years old, I own 100 acres of land that is paid for, I am a tax payer and I have six children. All of them is teachin', workin' . . . . If what I done ain't enough to be a registered voter . . . then Lord have mercy on America.*

—African American man in Alabama on being told he could not register to vote

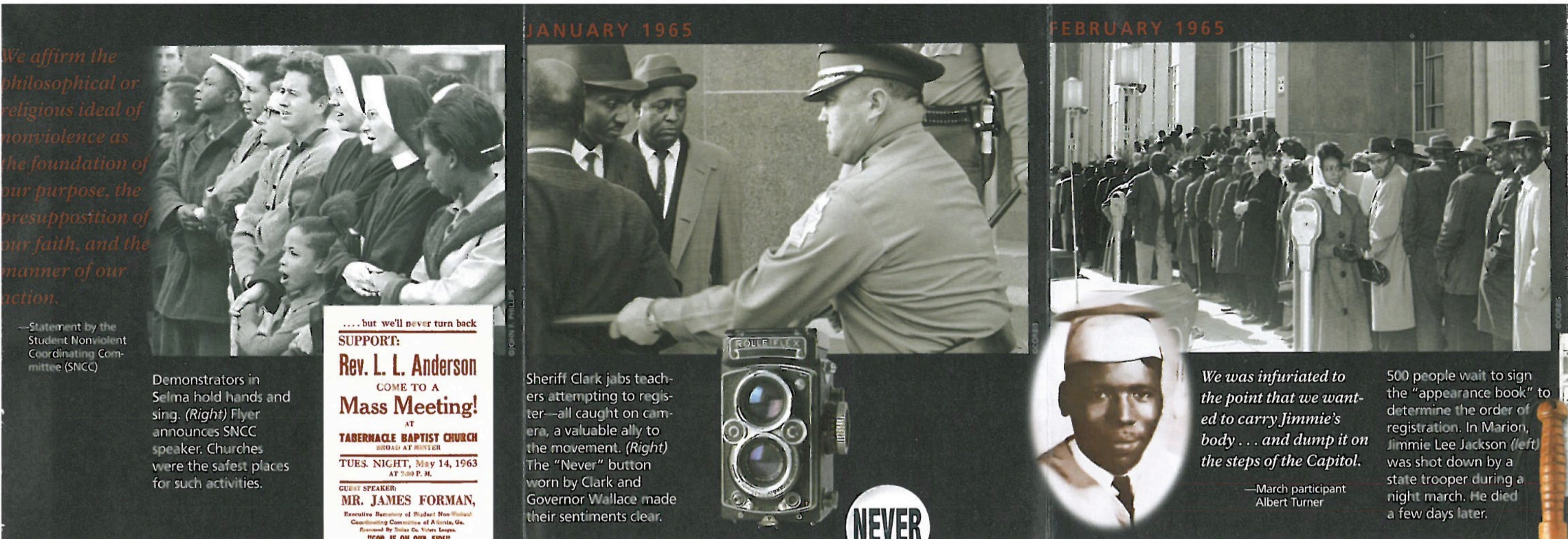
African American farmers who worked the fields of Alabama's "black belt," named for its dark, productive soil, were denied the vote—thwarted by unfair laws and harassed by the Ku Klux Klan.



### WHY SELMA?

How did the old cotton port city of Selma, Ala., the seat of Dallas County, become the national focus of the voting rights movement? At mid-20th century African Americans made up roughly half of the county's voting age population, but since 1901 the county and state had systematically denied them the vote through literacy tests, poll taxes, and intimidation. In 1961 only 156 of the county's 15,000 voting age African Americans were registered to vote.

The county's dismal record led the Justice Department to request records from county registrars, but it was thwarted by an unsympathetic judge. The Dallas County Voters League (DCVL) added a few voters to the rolls in the early 1960s through voter registration classes. In 1963 the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), an advocate of grassroots efforts like those of DCVL, sent representatives to Selma to help with the voting clinics. When African Americans assembled at the county courthouse to register, county sheriff Jim Clark and his deputies harassed people waiting in line and attacked SNCC workers. In December 1964 DCVL asked the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), headed by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., to help. SCLC knew that Clark's violent ways would help draw national attention to the voting rights drive.




*We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the presupposition of our faith, and the manner of our action.*

—Statement by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

Demonstrators in Selma hold hands and sing. *(Right)* Flyer announces SNCC speaker. Churches were the safest places for such activities.

Sheriff Clark jabs teachers attempting to register—all caught on camera, a valuable ally to the movement. *(Right)* The "Never" button worn by Clark and Governor Wallace made their sentiments clear.

*We was infuriated to the point that we wanted to carry Jimmie's body . . . and dump it on the steps of the Capitol.*

—March participant Albert Turner

500 people wait to sign the "appearance book" to determine the order of registration. In Marion, Jimmie Lee Jackson *(left)* was shot down by a state trooper during a night march. He died a few days later.

ALL IMAGES NPS UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The voting rights movement drew on the wellsprings of religion, nonviolence, and music for guidance and for the moral and physical courage the struggle demanded. Many southern communities, fearing organization by African Americans, forbade them to gather in large groups—except in their churches. African American leaders were vulnerable to economic reprisal—except preachers, who were beholden only to their congregations. Because clergymen enjoyed moral authority in their communities and could speak persuasively before large groups, they emerged as the movement's natural leaders. The most famous of these preachers, Dr. King, believed deeply in the principle of "nonviolent direct action" as the most effective and morally justified strategy for social change.

Inspired by earlier nonviolent reform movements, especially the one for Indian independence led by Mohandas Gandhi, SCLC and SNCC helped organize sit-ins, rallies, and marches to protest racial discrimination. Since jail and often physical harm were the result, nonviolent protest required profound bravery by participants. They took to song for solidarity, to endure long vigils, and to build courage for impending confrontation. Sam Cooke's soaring, gospel-tinged *A Change is Gonna Come*, a hit in early 1965, was background music to the struggle in Selma.

## A GATHERING OF FORCES

The push for voter registration in Selma picked up momentum as SCLC joined forces with SNCC and DCVL. On January 2, in defiance of an injunction against large gatherings, King addressed a mass rally at Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. On the 18th some 400 people joined the first voter registration march from Brown Chapel to the county courthouse. Sheriff Clark directed the marchers to an alley, then allowed no one to register. The next day, when the marchers refused to stand in the alley and DCVL's Amelia Boynton responded too slowly to Clark's order to move, he grabbed her by the collar and shoved her roughly towards a patrol car, then arrested 67 other marchers. With the appearance in major newspapers of the photo of Boynton's treatment, the media turned its eye on Selma.

When 105 teachers led by DCVL president Rev. Frederick D. Reese marched to the courthouse, Clark and his deputies twice pushed them from the steps, jabbing with nightsticks. This courageous act by people vulnerable to reprisal inspired their students and others who had been fearful of getting involved. As more marches and more arrests ensued, Sheriff Clark's intemperate responses upset Selma's mayor and public safety director, who were concerned about the city's image as it attempted to attract industries to the area.

## THE CONFLICT TURNS DEADLY

In a tactical move by SCLC and SNCC to force the arrest of Dr. King and dramatize the campaign, King and 250 marchers violated a parade ordinance as they marched to the courthouse on February 1. When 500 students marched later that day, Clark and his men arrested them with liberal use of nightsticks and at times cattle prods. By the 5th more than 3,000 marchers had been arrested, many held in prison camps outside town.

The mass arrests and harsh conditions under which the marchers were held caused growing concern in Washington. On the day of Dr. King's release on the 5th, his "Letter from a Selma Jail" depicting the obstacles to voting appeared in the *New York Times.* King, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Congress pressed President Lyndon Johnson and the Justice Department to finish drafting promised voting rights legislation. Then on the 18th participants in a dangerous nighttime march in Marion, Ala., seat of Perry County, were attacked by state troopers. A young demonstrator, Jimmie Lee Jackson, was fatally shot while trying to defend his grandfather. A call to carry Jackson's body to Montgomery evolved into a memorial march from Selma to Montgomery—a march Gov. George Wallace vowed to stop.

MARCH 7, 1965

State troopers beat the leaders of the march with nightsticks, then donned gas masks and released tear gas to further terrorize the marchers. It was all recorded by major news media.

MARCH 9, 1965

Marchers pray at Edmund Pettus Bridge before returning to Selma. Unitarian minister James Reeb *(left)*, in Selma for the march, was attacked that night and died two days later. His assailants were acquitted.

MARCH 21–25, 1965

*Allow men and women to register and vote whatever the color of their skin. Their cause must be our cause . . .*

—President Johnson, March 15

4,000 people left Selma to begin the march, this time with no state troopers to block the way. A marcher carried an American flag *(right)* to Montgomery, where the Confederate flag flew over the capitol.

## BLOODY SUNDAY

On a bright Sunday afternoon 600 marchers, in ranks of two, moved slowly up the Edmund Pettus Bridge rising over the Alabama River. Leading were John Lewis and SCLC's Hosea Williams. The marchers had left Brown Chapel singing *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round*; now they walked quietly. They could see only the calm river and the bare trees on the far bank.

Reaching the apex of the bridge, they saw below what Lewis described as a "sea of blue"—a phalanx of Alabama state troopers blocking U.S. 80. Behind the troopers Sheriff Clark's posse waited on horses. They stopped a few yards short of the troopers, asking to speak to their leader. In response they were given two minutes to return to their "homes or church." When the marchers did not move, the troopers advanced, hitting marchers with their nightsticks, kicking those that went down. The posse rode directly into the panicking marchers. Donning gas masks, the troopers released clouds of suffocating tear gas; newsfilm captured the troopers flailing at the blinded and gagging marchers. They began running back towards the bridge, stumbling over each other and trying to ward off the blows. The troopers and posse continued to use nightsticks, whips, and rubber tubes as they drove the marchers through the streets of Selma.

## TURNAROUND TUESDAY

As state troopers continued to beat marchers after they reached the Brown Chapel area, enraged onlookers called for retaliation. It was a pivotal moment in the voting rights campaign: the principle of nonviolence was being tested in the heat of attack. The leaders were able to convince those ready to fight that this could only undermine the movement. They had to keep the sympathy they had earned, and with the image of troopers beating unresisting marchers televised nationally, the spotlight was on Selma. Dr. King called on the nation's clergy to come to Selma for another attempt to march. But Federal District Court judge Frank Johnson issued an injunction against another march until a hearing could take place. King, reluctant to defy the court, agreed to march no further than the other side of the bridge.

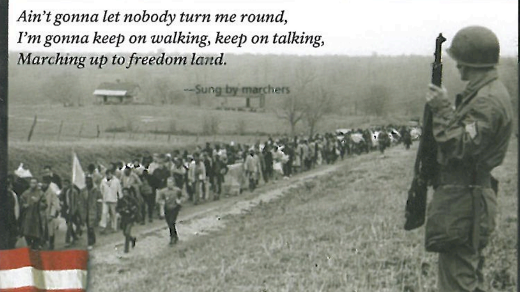
On Tuesday March 9, as the first of some 2,000 marchers approached the state troopers at the site of Sunday's violence, the leaders kneeled to pray, then turned around. It was an unpopular decision with the marchers, but one noted that otherwise they would have been "beaten up with the court's approval." That night a clergyman who had marched, Rev. James Reeb, was attacked on a Selma street and later died. In his eulogy Dr. King said, "Again we must ask the question: Why must good men die for doing good?"

## WITNESSES FOR FREEDOM

A week later the long-sought goal finally appeared on the horizon. On the 15th President Johnson called on Congress to pass a voting rights bill; on the next day Judge Johnson lifted the injunction against the march. Jubilation replaced fear, but local resistance remained fierce. That same day marchers in Montgomery were brutally beaten, causing Dr. King to respond angrily, "the cup of endurance has run over."

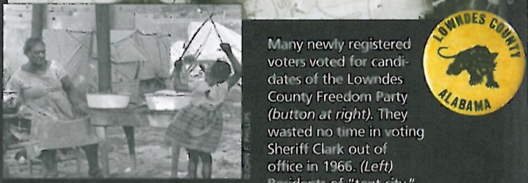
Governor Wallace refused President Johnson's request for state protection of the marchers, so Johnson nationalized 1,900 Alabama national guardsmen and dispatched 2,000 soldiers and dozens of FBI agents and federal marshals. On March 21 some 4,000 marchers set out from Selma; where U.S. 80 (ironically also called Jefferson Davis Highway) became two lanes the number was restricted to 300. Most of this core group marched all 54 miles, stopping at four overnight campsites. In Montgomery their numbers swelled again to an exultant throng of 25,000 as they approached the Alabama State Capitol. The hard-won fight and the march honoring it had given meaning to the promise made a century earlier in the 15th Amendment: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

1965–1966



*Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round,*
*I'm gonna keep on walking, keep on talking,*
*Marching up to freedom land.*

—Sung by marchers




Many newly registered voters voted for candidates of the Lowndes County Freedom Party *(button at right)*. They wasted no time in voting Sheriff Clark out of office in 1966. *(Left)* Residents of "tent city."

# Let us march

***on ballot boxes until brotherhood becomes more than a meaningless word in an opening prayer, but the order of the day on every legislative agenda. Let us march on ballot boxes until all over Alabama God's children will be able to walk the earth in decency and honor.***

—From the speech by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., on March 25 at the Alabama State Capitol

Marchers endured racial slurs and threats from onlookers, and some of the federalized Alabama national guardsmen barely concealed their hostility. But nothing could hide the joy on the faces of those who watched from fields and front porches as the marchers passed—25,000 strong when they reached the Alabama State Capitol.

## IN THE WAKE OF THE MARCH

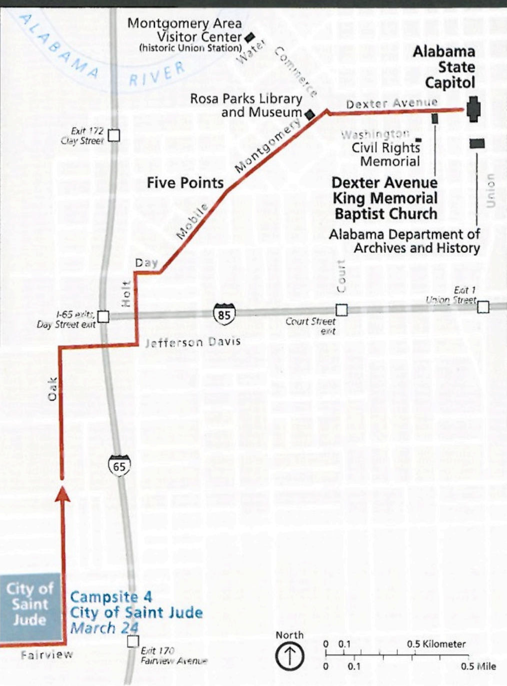
The triumphal march provoked another death that night. Viola Liuzzo had come from Detroit to help. After she had carried marchers back to Selma, Klansmen sped alongside her car and shot her. *(See map on other side.)* Resistance to change would die hard.

SNCC continued to work with African Americans in Lowndes County, organizing the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. This evolved into a political party, the first to adopt the black panther symbol. On August 6th President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, which suspended literacy tests, called for the appointment of federal election monitors, and directed the U.S. Attorney General to challenge the use of poll taxes by states.

But laws cannot end bigotry. That month Jonathan Daniels, an Episcopal seminarian helping desegregation efforts in Hayneville, Ala., was shot and killed. Lowndes County landowners evicted tenants who registered. In December SNCC and Lowndes County leaders helped several dispossessed families set up a "tent city" off U.S. 80, then helped them find jobs, permanent housing, and new lives. In the end the hard work bore fruit: By 1966 the number of registered African Americans in Alabama was four times greater than in 1960.

BACKGROUND PHOTO©JAMES KARALES

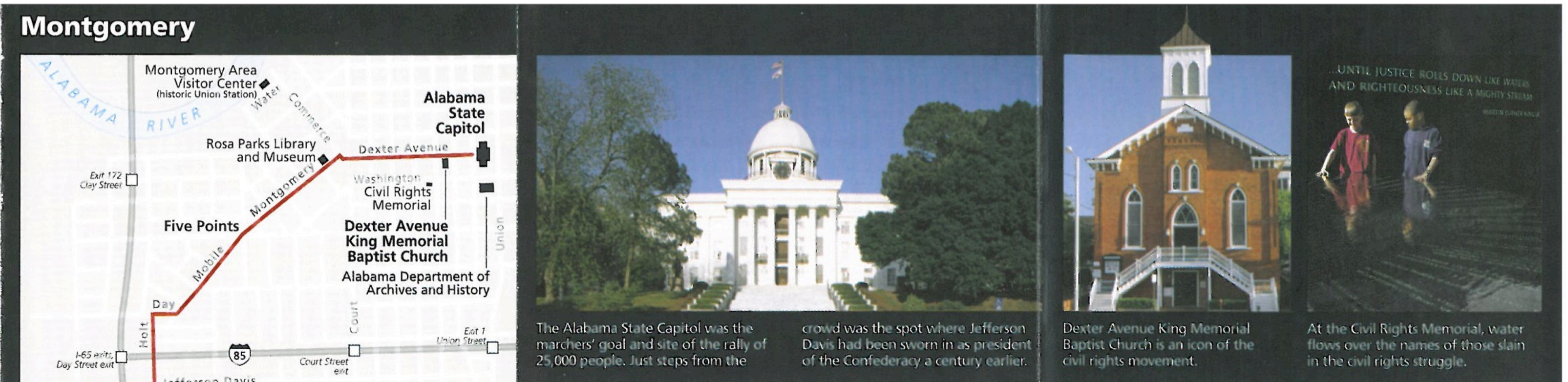
## Montgomery




March 21–25, 1965
Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March

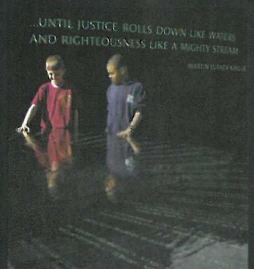
**The last leg of the march, from City of Saint Jude to the Alabama State Capitol, is almost five miles long on busy city streets. If you wish to follow the marchers' route in Montgomery, we recommend that you drive it.**

U.S. 80 has been designated a National Scenic Byway, Alabama State Scenic Highway, and All-American Road. The Alabama Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration donated funds for this brochure and the Lowndes Interpretive Center. The Center, built on the site of Tent City, is open from 9 am to 4:30 pm daily.



The Alabama State Capitol was the marchers' goal and site of the rally of 25,000 people. Just steps from the crowd was the spot where Jefferson Davis had been sworn in as president of the Confederacy a century earlier.

Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church is an icon of the civil rights movement.




At the Civil Rights Memorial, water flows over the names of those slain in the civil rights struggle.

### Montgomery: Resistance and Change

**Alabama State Capitol** In the emotional aftermath of the shooting death of Jimmie Lee Jackson by an Alabama state trooper, some suggested protesting to Gov. George Wallace by carrying Jackson's body to the steps of the capitol building. Organizers decided instead to stage a memorial march from Selma to Montgomery. When the marchers reached the capitol, state troopers barred them from the steps, so SCLC's Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., SNCC's John Lewis, and other speakers stood on a flatbed truck in front of the capitol to address the crowd. Governor Wallace refused to receive a voting rights petition from a delegation led by Dr. King.

**City of Saint Jude** In the 1930s the Catholic Church established in Montgomery a nondiscriminatory religious, health, and educational complex that was far ahead of its time in the segregated South. It offered 36 acres for the last encampment of the march. The "Stars for Freedom" rally, organized by Harry Belafonte, included Sammy Davis, Jr.; Sidney Poitier; Joan Baez; Mahalia Jackson; Peter, Paul, and Mary; and many others.

**Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church** This church, known then as Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, was a block from the Alabama State Capitol and the staging area for the rally in Montgomery at the end of the march from Selma. It was already a civil rights landmark: In 1955, when Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the new pastor of the church, local activists formed the Montgomery Improvement Association in response to the arrest of Rosa Parks for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man. They asked Dr. King to head the group, and his church became the headquarters for the successful 1955–56 boycott of the Montgomery bus system.

#### Related Sites

**Alabama Department of Archives and History** A photographic exhibit of the march from Selma to Montgomery is given a prominent place among the artifacts and documents of Alabama history.

**Civil Rights Memorial** (at the Southern Poverty Law Center) is a moving tribute in water and stone to those slain in the civil rights movement from 1955 to 1968.

**Rosa Parks Library and Museum** The courageous act of civil disobedience by Rosa Parks that led to the 1955–56 Montgomery Bus Boycott is powerfully documented.

**H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College** The library's collections include documents, images, and oral histories of the march and the voting rights movement.

#### About Your Visit

To retrace the marchers' steps, start at Brown Chapel in Selma and follow signs to U.S. 80. Take U.S. 80 to Montgomery; follow signs to the Alabama State Capitol.

#### For Your Safety

Wear comfortable walking shoes. Watch for snakes, poison ivy, and fire ants. During hot weather drink plenty of water.

#### More Information

Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail
7002 U.S. 80 West
Hayneville, AL 36040
334-877-1984
www.nps.gov/semo

In 1996 Congress established Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. For more information on the National Park Service, visit www.nps.gov.

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The Viola Liuzzo Memorial is near the place where she was shot.

Viola Liuzzo
COURTESY PENNY LIUZZO HERRINGTON

©CHARLES MOORE/BLACK STAR

Feeding marchers after a long day on the road.

©CORBIS

The "Stars for Freedom" rally at City of Saint Jude, March 24.

*At the* ***Lowndes County Line*** *U.S. 80 narrowed from four lanes to two. The court order allowing the march stipulated that only 300 marchers could walk this part of the road, both to keep one lane open for traffic and because the narrow, rural road through the county would be the most dangerous part of the march. Three hundred people would be much easier to guard than 4,000.*

***Tent City*** *White landowners in Lowndes County, retaliating against tenant farmers who registered, voted, or engaged in any voting rights activities, threw them off their land. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Lowndes County leaders worked to help families stay together and remain in the county. They bought tents, cots, heaters, food, and water and helped several families build a temporary "tent city." Despite harassment—including shots regularly fired into the encampment—residents persevered for nearly two years as organizers helped them find new jobs and look for permanent housing.*

***City of Saint Jude,*** *a Catholic institution with a hospital, school, and church, was the last campsite for the marchers and the site of a musical rally the night before the final leg of the march into Montgomery.*

*On the road to Montgomery after carrying marchers back to Selma,* ***Viola Liuzzo*** *was shot and killed by Klansmen. Her memorial, near the place where she was shot, overlooks the route of the march.*

***Hayneville*** *In August 1965 seminarian* ***Jonathan Daniels*** *was jailed for joining boycotts of segregated facilities. Soon after his release he was shot and killed in a confrontation with a storeowner.*

Montgomery Historic Trail

ndes County line

Mount Gilliard Missionary Baptist Church

White Hall

Lowndes Interpretive Center
Site of Tent City

Campsite 2
Rosie Steele Farm
March 22

Viola Liuzzo Memorial

Wright Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church

Campsite 3
Robert Gardner Farm
March 23

Hayneville

Old Lowndes County Jail

Lowndes County Courthouse
Jonathan Daniels Memorial

Campsite 4
City of Saint Jude
March 24

H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College Archives

Montgomery
See detail map at right

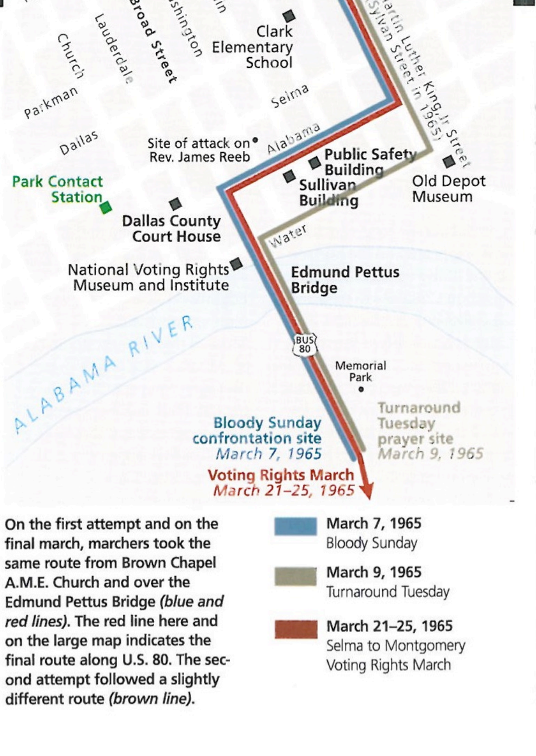
LOWNDES

MONTGOMERY

North

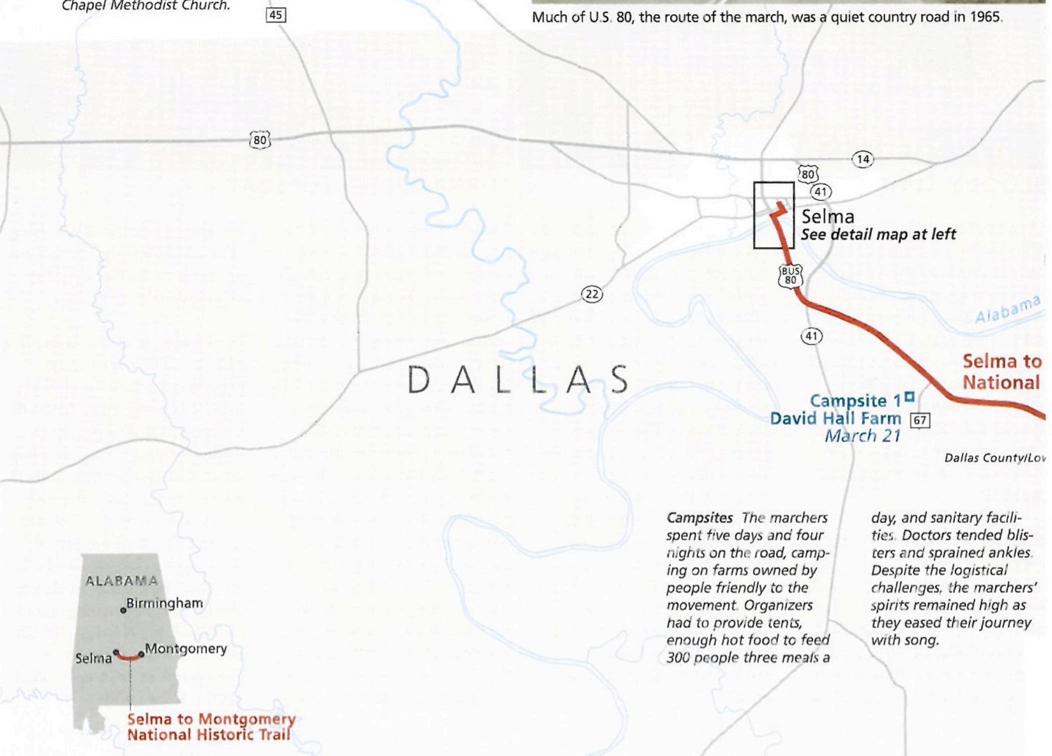
0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers
0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles

## Selma




**On the first attempt and on the final march, marchers took the same route from Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church and over the Edmund Pettus Bridge *(blue and red lines)*. The red line here and on the large map indicates the final route along U.S. 80. The second attempt followed a slightly different route *(brown line)*.**

## Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail

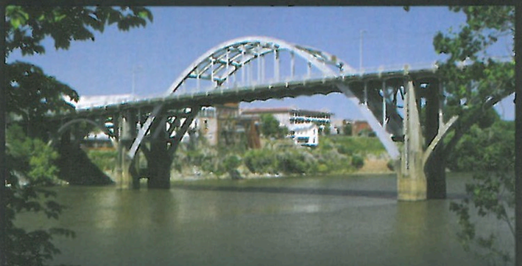



*Marion* In February 1965 state troopers attacked marchers as they left the courthouse at night. When Jimmie Lee Jackson and his family fled to a restaurant, troopers followed them and struck his grandfather. As Jackson moved to defend him, a trooper shot Jackson at close range. He died a few days later. Jackson's memorial is at Zion's Chapel Methodist Church.

Much of U.S. 80, the route of the march, was a quiet country road in 1965.

*Campsites* The marchers spent five days and four nights on the road, camping on farms owned by people friendly to the movement. Organizers had to provide tents, enough hot food to feed 300 people three meals a day, and sanitary facilities. Doctors tended blisters and sprained ankles. Despite the logistical challenges, the marchers' spirits remained high as they eased their journey with song.

## Following the Trail


Edmund Pettus Bridge

Dramatic confrontations during the voting rights campaign took place at the Dallas County Court House.

The First Baptist Church supported the Selma voting rights campaign before it became national news.

Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church became the command post and spiritual heart of the local voting rights movement.

A mural *(detail above)* near where Rev. James Reeb was attacked portrays a people's trials and hopes for the future.

**Courage, hate, triumph, fear, hope—**
**powerful emotions are evoked by the sites related to the 1965 voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery. For those who had a role in the events, memories haunt these places. For others the experience is indirect but also deeply felt.**

**Because photographs and film of the events played so crucial a role in the struggle, these images and today's historic sites enrich each other: The streets and buildings, many virtually unchanged, help us engage more deeply with recorded scenes from four decades ago. At the same time the old images make the sites resonate with the passions of a stormy era. Standing before them is like watching an old newsreel, our imagination calling up the cries and confusion from that terrible, noble time.**

**Some of the sites inspire, as they summon again the idealism and purpose that drove the voting rights movement. Others make us uncomfortable—commemorating the death of an innocent, marking a place where people suffered bigotry and brutality—but this is why they are so important. These places will not let us forget.**

### Selma: Echoes of the Struggle

Selma remains a small, quiet town. In a day you can walk to the major sites connected with the voting rights drive. We suggest you start with the **Park Contact Station** at 816 Selma Ave. Park interpreters can answer questions and provide historical context for the story. You'll also find more literature there.

**"Bloody Sunday" Confrontation Site** Here Alabama state troopers and the county sheriff's posse halted, then attacked, marchers on March 7, 1965.

**Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church** This was the site of early mass meetings in the 1960s voting rights campaign. It was also the staging point for registration marches to the county courthouse and for the final march to Montgomery.

**Cecil C. Jackson Public Safety Building** This building served as the Selma City Hall and as the jail for both Selma and Dallas County in 1965. When Martin Luther King, Jr., and a number of marchers were arrested in February, many were incarcerated here.

**Dallas County Court House** This was the destination for most voting rights marches in Selma. Those trying to register here were confronted with bureaucratic obstacles or roughly removed from the premises.

**Edmund Pettus Bridge** This bridge over the Alabama River became symbolic of the first attempts to march from Selma to Montgomery. On March 7—"Bloody Sunday"—marchers crossed the bridge as they left Selma; on the other side they were beaten back by state troopers blocking U.S. 80.

**First Baptist Church** This church took the early lead in the voting rights struggle in Selma and Dallas County. Members allowed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to use the church as its first organizational base and rallying point when it arrived in Selma in 1963.

**George Washington Carver Homes** Many participants in the Selma marches lived in this large housing complex. Marchers and civil rights workers from out of town were lodged here.

**Sullivan Building** The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference directed their local voting rights activities from this building.

**To make the most of your time:** *If you have half a day:* Take the Martin Luther King, Jr. Street Historic Walking Tour (Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church, First Baptist Church, Carver Homes) and see the Dallas County Court House and the Bloody Sunday confrontation site.

*If you have two hours:* Take the Martin Luther King, Jr. Street Historic Walking Tour and see the Bloody Sunday confrontation site.

**Related Sites**

**Clark Elementary School** Teachers from this school marched to the county courthouse and attempted to register, inspiring others who had been reluctant to join the campaign.

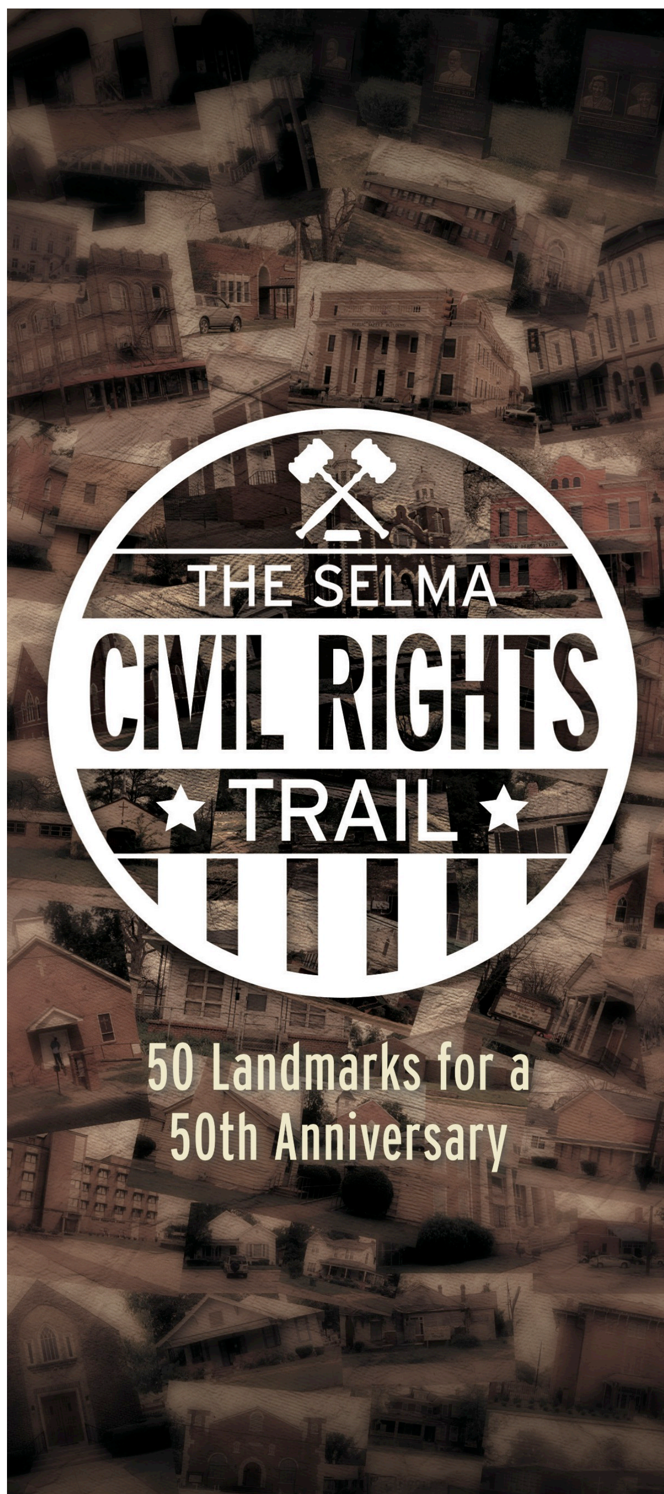
**National Voting Rights Museum and Institute** Documents, artifacts, and videos trace the voting rights struggle and commemorate those who took part.

**Site of Good Samaritan Hospital** The primary hospital for African Americans during segregation and where most injured marchers were taken.

**Tabernacle Baptist Church** Site of the first mass meeting on voting rights in Selma, 1964.

APPENDIX B:

SELMA DRIVING TOUR CREATED BY CHP



# The Selma Civil Rights Trail

## 50 LANDMARKS FOR A 50TH ANNIVERSARY

In the summer of 1965, Congress passed and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, one of the most momentous civil rights laws in American history. Events that had happened in Selma earlier that year pushed Congress to create this landmark law. African American citizens took courageous actions that not only changed their lives and communities but that also reshaped the United States, giving all citizens a new taste of freedom and equality.

This driving tour of landmarks associated with Selma's Civil Rights Movement includes 50 properties—some well recognized from the events of 50 years ago but many others that speak to the deeper story of the struggle for civil rights. All of these places help tell the whole story of what the Civil Rights Movement meant to Selma, to Alabama, and to the nation.

Many places welcome visitors but others remain private. Visitors should respect property rights and only view those buildings from the city sidewalks.

### 1. National Voting Rights Museum and Institute

**6 U.S. Highway 80**

*www.nvrmi.com*

*Open daily from Monday to Thursday and on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday by appointment. Admission charged.*

This museum focuses on the stories, people, and events of the 1960s and the conflicts such as Bloody Sunday on the adjacent Edmund Pettus Bridge and the resulting Selma-to-Montgomery March.

### 2. Selma-to-Montgomery March Memorials

**5 U.S. Highway 80**

On the north side of the highway across from the National Voting Rights Museum are interpretive markers and commemorative sculptures about the Selma-to-Montgomery March and leaders such as John Lewis, Hosea Williams, Amelia Boynton Robinson, and Marie Foster. A pedestrian walkway also leads to views of the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

### 3. Edmund Pettus Bridge

**U.S. Highway 80**

This National Historic Landmark was the location of the Turn Around Tuesday and Bloody Sunday conflicts of March

*(continued)*

1965 between Alabama officers and peaceful civil rights demonstrators. The charge of officers and other armed men against the demonstrators was broadcast across the world, and the horrific images turned public opinion in favor of African American voting rights. The Selma-to-Montgomery March took thousands across the bridge for the trek to the State Capitol.

### 4. Selma Interpretive Center

**2 Broad Street**

*www.nps.com/semo*
*Open Monday–Saturday; closed on Sunday. No admission charge.*

The National Park Service operates this museum, which focuses on the Selma-to-Montgomery National Historic Trail. From the center, you can follow the actual route of the Selma-to-Montgomery March to where it started a few blocks away on Martin Luther King Jr. Street at Brown's Chapel A.M.E. Church, First Baptist Church, and the George Washington Carver Homes.

### 5. Sullivan Building

**Corner of Alabama and Franklin Streets**

*Private. Exterior view from public sidewalk.*

This imposing brick office and commercial building was the location of the insurance business of civil rights activists Sam Boynton and Amelia Boynton Robinson, who also used their offices for meetings of the Dallas County Voters League and other civil rights groups in the 1950s and 1960s. Here was one of the South's most important strategy centers for the Civil Rights Movement.

### 6. Clark Elementary School

**323 Lawrence Street**

*Public. Visits may be arranged at the offices of the city school board.*

At the turn of the 20th century, educator and early civil rights leader Dr. Richard B. Hudson led the development of public schools for African Americans in Selma. He moved Clark Elementary to this location in 1894 and managed to improve and expand it over the decades. In January 1965, local teachers gathered here before marching to the Dallas County Courthouse to register to vote. The "teachers' march" was a courageous stand by vulnerable public employees. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The protest of Dallas County teachers carried us miles down the road in the protest of injustices."

### 7. Cecil B. Jackson Public Safety Building

**1300 Alabama Street**

*Public. Open by appointment with City of Selma.*

The former Selma City Hall and Jail was a center for official white resistance to the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rev. Ralph Abernathy of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference were the most prominent of many civil rights activists who were jailed here during the 1960s demonstrations.

### 8. George Wilson Community Building

**16 Franklin Street**

*Public. Open by appointment with City of Selma.*

African American extension agent and civil rights activist Sam Boynton pushed local officials and the state government to use New Deal support for an African American community center in downtown Selma. Completed in 1937, the building, funded by the Works Progress Administration, had restrooms, an auditorium, and office space for agricultural extension workers. On the second floor of the building, artist Felix Gaines painted murals that were later moved to the nearby Old Depot Museum. The auditorium hosted many events and concerts, with music presented by Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole, and Fats Domino, among others.

### 9. Old Depot Museum

**4 Martin Luther King Jr. Street**

*www.olddepotmuseum.com*
*Open daily Monday through Saturday. Admission charged.*

This former passenger station interprets the full range of Selma's history from prehistoric settlement to the modern era. It includes exhibits about the town's momentous civil rights history and features Felix Gaines's 1930s murals that were once in the George Wilson Community Building.

### 10. Shiloh Baptist Church

**1416 Selma Avenue**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

This historic congregation shaped East Selma for over 100 years before moving into its current Colonial Revival–style building on Selma Avenue. From 1954 to 1963 Rev. J. E. Noble was an important civil rights leader. The church next called Rev. R. L. Flowers to be pastor, and he encouraged the congregation's activism during the difficult months before 1965. Annie L. Cooper, an important activist, joined the church in 1962.

### 11. Brown's Chapel A.M.E. Church

**410 Martin Luther King Jr. Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

This National Historic Landmark was a strategy center and mass meeting location of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee as they worked with Rev. W. T. Minefee and members to fight for voting rights in 1965. The twin towers of this Gothic-style church became beacons for blacks and whites who came to Selma to join the Civil Rights Movement. Such prominent national leaders as Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, and Malcolm X spoke in the sanctuary. The church was one of the starting points for the Selma-to-Montgomery March.

### 12. George Washington Carver Homes

**500–600 blocks, Martin Luther King Jr. Street**

*Private. Exterior view from public sidewalk.*

Between Brown's Chapel A.M.E. Church and First Baptist Church is this large public housing project, which dates to 1952 and is administered by the Selma Housing Authority. Many civil rights activists stayed with families who lived in the homes before Bloody Sunday and the Selma-to-Montgomery March. Activists also organized demonstrators in the playground and open courtyard of the homes before the march to Montgomery began.

### 13. First Baptist Church

**709 Martin Luther King Jr. Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

The oldest African American Baptist congregation in Selma and the third oldest in Alabama, First Baptist Church is a striking red brick 1894 building designed by church member David West and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. A sometime meeting place for the Dallas County Voters League, the church also was a pivotal strategy center for mass meetings in 1963 and 1965 and the site of addresses by national leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Marchers injured in the Bloody Sunday attack of March 1965 received treatment in the church basement. Two weeks later, physicians used the basement to check the medical condition of hundreds who participated in the Selma-to-Montgomery March. The church was another starting point for the march.

### 14. Clinton Chapel AME Zion Church

**615 Green Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

This mid-1970s interpretation of Colonial Revival style is home to one of Selma's oldest African American congregations. A member of the Dallas County Voters League and NAACP activist, the church's Rev. C. C. Hunter was one of the Courageous Eight. The church was the first in Selma to host voter education workshops, according to Amelia Boynton Robinson.

### 15. Green Street Baptist Church

**1220 Green Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

This mammoth Victorian-style church, together with its more utilitarian education wing built in the 1950s, served as a mass meeting location. In July 1964, Rev. Ralph Abernathy spoke to a huge gathering here in support of the Civil Rights Act; as the crowd left the church they were attacked by members of a deputized posse under the direction of Sheriff Jim Clark. In March 1965, church members provided lodging and meals for activists who came to Selma to join the Selma-to-Montgomery March, feeding the marchers in the education wing.

### 16. Second Baptist Church

**2809 Hardie Avenue**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

Established in 1869, Second Baptist Church has been a leader in East Selma for almost 150 years. Rev. D. G. Garrett became pastor in 1957 and led the church during the push for voting rights.

### 17. Mt. Ararat Missionary Baptist Church

**120 S. Division Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

This East Selma institution had many unsung civil rights activists, such as Marie Jemison Kemp, a voting rights leader, among its members. Now led by Rev. L. L. Ruffin, the church continues to host community meetings, such as a 2014 gathering to discuss how all sections of the city could better work together.

### 18. St. Timothy Lutheran Church

**3000 Magazine Avenue**

*Private and closed. Exterior view from public sidewalk.*

This little gold brick sanctuary dates to 1954. It served African American Lutherans and quietly hosted integrated services and meetings among black and white ministers to discuss possible solutions to integration in the 1950s and 1960s.

### 19. Annie Lee Cooper Huff House

**3115 Annie Cooper Avenue**

*Private. Exterior view from public sidewalk.*

Annie Cooper Huff was a native of Selma who moved to Pennsylvania before returning to town in 1962. In January 1965, she received national media coverage when she struck back at Sheriff Jim Clark after he poked her with a cattle prod while she stood in line to register to vote at the Dallas County Courthouse. She also owned the Torch Motel, which served African Americans who were denied service at segregated motels.

### 20. Elmwood Cemetery

**Race Street**

*Public.*

This historic African American cemetery on the eastern boundary of the historic city dates to the mid-19th century. It is the final resting place for many notable civil rights leaders in Selma, from Dr. David V. Jemison to Annie Lee Cooper Huff. Immediately adjacent on Race Street are the town's historic Jewish and Catholic cemeteries, also originally established in the 19th century.

### 21. Lannie's BBQ Spot

**2115 Minter Avenue**

*Private. Open during normal business hours.*

This classic East Selma restaurant served both black and white patrons during the civil rights activities of the 1960s, becoming a neutral ground when so much of Selma was in turmoil.

## 22. Ebenezer Baptist Church

**1548 Dr. F. D. Reese Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

This Colonial Revival–style brick sanctuary dates to 1974 and represents the new face of Selma's African American churches in the early 1970s. Nearby Philpot Avenue was the earlier location of the church. Ebenezer's pastor, Dr. Frederick D. Reese, had a long career as an important local educator, community leader, and civil rights activist as president of the Dallas County Voters League. Dr. Reese followed Rev. A. B. White, who opened up the earlier church building for mass meetings in the 1960s.

## 23. Little Canaan Primitive Baptist Church

**1326 Eugene Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

This c. 1933 frame building, which received a brick remodeling in 1985, is typical of the small congregations that strongly supported the Civil Rights Movement in Selma. Rev. S. B. Acuff led the congregation in the 1960s.

## 24. Louretta Johnson Carter House

**1423 Eugene Street**

A member of First Baptist Church, Louretta Johnson Carter was one of many behind-the-scenes workers for voting rights in Selma. A domestic worker for a local judge, she took her daughter Louretta to the courthouse in 1957 and successfully registered her to vote. Louretta Carter Wimberly continued as a voice for civil rights into the 21st century. In 1964–65, Carter cooked for and lodged demonstrators. She also joined the 1965 March to Montgomery, walking as far as Craig Air Field.

## 25. Temple Gate Seventh Day Adventist Church

**1601 Franklin Street,**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

The congregation built its Franklin Street church in 1959, and it also supported civil rights activism in the 1960s under the leadership of Elder F. O. Jones.

## 26. Northern Heights Presbyterian Church

**1575 Marie Foster Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

This mid–20th century church was a center for civil rights activism led by Rev. Ernest M. Bradford, who arrived in 1962 and served until 1970. Bradford and his congregation participated in the 1965 March to Montgomery, hosted a citizenship school, and provided leadership in the local war on poverty in Selma.

## 27. Good Samaritan Hospital

**1107 Voeglin Avenue**

*Closed. Exterior view from public sidewalk.*

Opened in December 1964 by the Edmundite Brothers and Sisters of St. Joseph, this modernist-styled and fully equipped four-story hospital served whites and blacks hurt on Bloody Sunday. Of those weeks in early 1965 historian Amy L. Koehlinger said: "The sisters who staffed the hospital emergency room saw the worst of Selma's racial violence." After his shooting in nearby Perry County, activist Jimmie Lee Jackson was brought to the hospital for treatment but died there on February 26, 1965.

### 28. Concordia College

**1712 Broad Street**

*Private. Open by appointment with the college.*

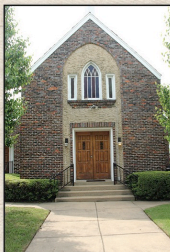
Opened as the segregated Alabama Lutheran Academy (and later junior college) in 1922, the college was renamed in 1981. It trained and employed African American leaders in Selma including James Gildersleeve and Ulysses Blackmon of the Courageous Eight. Rev. Walter H. Ellwanger led this Lutheran institution for most of the civil rights era, resigning in 1964 when Varnes J. Stringer became president. As part of its community outreach, the school supported the St. Timothy Lutheran Church and School on Magazine Street.

### 29. Tabernacle Baptist Church

**1431 Broad Street**

*Private. Open by appointment with the church.*

This National Register–listed church, built in 1922, is a landmark Classical Revival–style building, significant for its education, religious, and civil rights history. Civil rights leader Dr. David V. Jemison was active with the church from 1902 to 1954. Rev. L. L. Anderson led the congregation during the Civil Rights Movement and hosted the city's first mass meeting in 1963, after which the church continued to work closely with civil rights organizer Dr. Bernard LaFayette in pushing the agendas for civil rights and voting rights for all. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke here numerous times, the last coming in February 1968 a few weeks before his assassination.



### 30. St. Edmund's Memorial Chapel (St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church is its historic name)

**1417 Broad Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

Fathers Francis Casey and John Paro of the Fathers of St. Edmund, a Catholic order, arrived in 1937 to establish the Edmundite Southern Missions, where they worked with the African American community long before other white churches. Edwin Moss, the mission's production manager, became a key civil rights leader and negotiator. Father Maurice Quellet, pastor of St. Elizabeth's from 1961 to 1965, encouraged communication between activists and moderate whites in Selma and supported the Selma-to-Montgomery March.

### 31. R. B. Hudson Middle School

**1701 Summerfield Road**

*Public. Open by appointment at the school office.*

The school opened in 1949 as Selma's first modern public high school for African Americans, part of the city's and state's belated efforts to comply with the separate-but-equal doctrine in public education. Administrators, faculty, and especially students participated in the mass demonstrations of the 1960s. SNCC activists such as James Bevel recruited heavily among the students, and educator Dr. Frederick D. Reese emerged as a key statewide education and civil rights leader.

### 32. Pollard-Brown House

**1609 Lapsley Avenue**

*Private. Exterior view from public sidewalk.*

Dr. Robert Thomas Pollard was president of Selma University from 1916 to 1929, and his wife, Eliza Pollard, led the Baptist Women's State Convention. Both were respected early 20th- century leaders in education and religion among the African American middle class.

### 33. Richard B. Hudson House

**1420 Lapsley Avenue**

*Private. Exterior view from public sidewalk.*

This two-story Arts and Crafts- style house belonged to Dr. Richard B. Hudson (1866–1931), the city's most important civil rights leader in the first third of the 20th century. Dr. Hudson was a former president of the Alabama State Teachers Association and served as Clark Elementary School principal for decades.

### 34. Sullivan Jackson House

**1416 Lapsley Avenue**

*Private. Exterior view from public sidewalk.*

This National Register–listed bungalow was initially built by Richard B. Hudson and later became home to Sullivan Jackson, an African American dentist. Sullivan moved to Selma in the 1950s, became active in the local civil rights movement, and allowed the house to be used as a strategy center for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, for which it gained national significance. SCLC leaders Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. Ralph Abernathy, and Rev. Andrew Young regularly stayed at the house. Here they negotiated with the U.S. Justice Department about the events surrounding Bloody Sunday and the 1965 March to Montgomery. Dr. Jackson's wife, Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson, wrote about these years in her memoir, *The House by the Side of the Road* (2011).

### 35. Selma University

**1501 Lapsley Avenue**

*Private. Open by appointment with the university.*

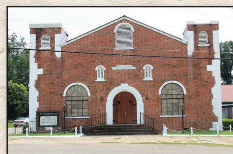
The center of African American Baptist life in Alabama, Selma University began in 1878. By encouraging black pride, identity, and achievement, it has produced generations of religious leaders who became active in the Civil Rights Movement from the late 19th century to today. Prominent ministers and graduates associated with the university include C. O. Boothe, David V. Jemison, Charles S. Dinkins, William H. Dinkins, Robert T. Pollard, M. C. Cleveland, Fred Shuttlesworth, Nelson H. Smith, L. L. Anderson, and Frederick D. Reese.

### 36. Boynton House

**1315 Lapsley Avenue**

*Private. Exterior view from public sidewalk.*

Sam Boynton and Amelia Boynton (later Robinson) were the most significant individuals in the fight for civil rights in Selma. The Boyntons both worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture: he was the county extension agent for blacks, she served as the home demonstration agent for local African American women. They facilitated the construction of a black community center (the Wilson Building) during the New Deal, were leaders of the Dallas County Voters League, and helped launch the court case for their son, Bruce Carver Boynton, that led the U.S. Supreme Court to rule in *Boynton v. Virginia* (1960) that segregation in interstate transportation facilities was unconstitutional. Their house long served as a strategy center for the Civil Rights Movement, and when Sam died in 1963, a memorial service at Tabernacle Baptist Church became the city's first civil rights mass meeting. In 1964, Amelia became the first African American woman to run for the U.S. Congress in Alabama. On Bloody Sunday in March 1965, she was one of the demonstrators clubbed and injured on Edmund Pettus Bridge. This landmark awaits restoration.



### 37. West Trinity Baptist Church

**310 L. L. Anderson Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

Located a block behind the Boynton House, West Trinity Baptist Church was a very active congregation throughout the Civil Rights Movement, especially after the congregation called Rev. I. Clifton Ravizee to be its pastor in 1947. Ravizee led the congregation in building the present church in 1952. By the end of the decade, he was leading another stalwart institution for civil rights: the 22nd Avenue Baptist Church in Birmingham.

### 38. Burwell-Dinkins-Anderson House

**700 L. L. Anderson Avenue**

*Private. Exterior view from public sidewalk.*

This two-story Craftsman-style residence is associated with accomplished middle-class leaders L. L. Burwell and William H. Dinkins in Selma's fight for civil rights throughout the first half of the 20th century. Burwell was a pharmacist; Dr. Dinkins was an educator and president of Selma University. Dinkins's daughter, Pauline, married Rev. L. L. Anderson, the pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church and a key civil rights leader in the 1960s.

### 39. Mt. Zion Primitive Baptist Church

**1306 Union Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

This beautiful Gothic-style building dates to the turn of the century. In 1950 Rev. B. F. McDole became pastor, and he led the congregation in civil rights activities until 1964, with mass meetings taking place here.

### 40. St. Paul CME Church

**808 Minter Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

St. Paul CME Church has been a place for civil rights meetings since 1963. A new minister in 1964, Rev. T. R. Harris, brought renewed energy to the struggle. Even though he left for another church late in 1965, the congregation continued to host meetings, including one by SCLC in March 1966.

### 41. Ward Chapel AME Church

**811 Philpot Street**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

Ward Chapel was the leading AME church of West Selma and developed with support of the earlier Payne Institute, a Methodist college for African Americans. Rev. M. S. Hasty supported the movement and allowed the church to be used for mass meetings, a role that it also played some 20 years later. The *New York Times* reported that a mass meeting about local elections and the lack of elected African American officials was held here in 1984.

### 42. St. Elizabeth's School

**1211 Church Street**

*Private. Exterior view from public sidewalk.*

Here the Edmundite Brothers established an elementary school for African American children in 1940, and added a grade a year until 1948. In 1952 they built the present building, which is now used for Head Start programs. Rachel Nelson, active in the events of 1965 as a child, attended St. Elizabeth's. She was a co-author of the famous account *Selma, Lord, Selma*.

### 43. Reformed Presbyterian Church and Knox Academy

**627 J. L. Chesnutt Avenue**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

In 1874, the Reformed Presbyterian Church created Knox Academy, and by 1881 students attended a large brick Victorian-style building (not extant), which continued to serve black students into the 1930s. The church supported the school as a mission but also as an educational outreach since its leadership was appalled at the official indifference to African American education. Rev. Claude C. Brown, who became the church's minister in 1942, worked with the community to establish the Ralph Bunche Club, which met in the church basement and later became the African American section of the local YMCA. The church was frequently used for mass meetings.

### 44. Morning Star Baptist Church

**409 Buckeye**

*Private. Open for tours by appointment with the church.*

At this large, impressive red brick sanctuary, Rev. I. C. Acuff's fiery sermons led his congregation to support the movement for civil rights and voting rights in the 1960s and beyond. SNCC organizers recognized the congregation for its support of the voting rights movement.

### 45. Old Live Oak Cemetery

**110 West Dallas Avenue**

*Public.*

This historic cemetery is the final resting place for several prominent 19th-century civil rights leaders, including Benjamin S. Turner, a freedman who became the town's first elected member of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1870.

### 46. Lincoln Cemetery

**500 Oak Street**

*Private. Open to the public during daytime hours.*

Bordering Medical Center Parkway, this historic African American cemetery dates to 1925. It is the final resting place of such important community leaders as J. L. Chesnut, Louretta Johnson Carter, and Pauline Dinkins Anderson.

### 47. Memorial Stadium

**108 W. Dallas Avenue**

*Public.*

Built in 1949, the stadium was the location of several mass meetings of the White Citizens Council, which resisted integration in the late 1950s and 1960s.

### 48. Federal Building

**908 Alabama Avenue**

*Public.*

This downtown landmark was headquarters for the many federal officials involved in the city's civil rights issues. It was also the scene of demonstrations and protests about the federal government's unwillingness to intervene in voting rights disputes.

### 49. Dallas County Courthouse

**105 Lauderdale Street**

*Public.*

Ground zero for the voting rights demonstrations of 1963–1965, this modernist-style courthouse was where African Americans lined up in an often-futile attempt to register to vote. Many demonstrations took place on the sidewalks and street along the eastern side of the courthouse.

### 50. Selma and Dallas County Centre for Commerce

**912 Selma Avenue**

*Open to the public during business hours.*

In 1963 SNCC's Bernard Lafayette directed students here in an attempt to desegregate the town's historic Carnegie library; library staff bravely allowed the students to use the facility. After Selma's mayor pressured the library board to remove tables and chairs so blacks and whites could not mingle, librarian Patricia S. Blalock convinced her board to let her issue library cards to African American patrons.

### Other sites of interest

**Slavery and Civil War Museum**
**1410 Water Avenue**
Open Tuesday–Saturday.

**Sturdivant Hall**
**713 Mabry Street**
Open Tuesday–Saturday.

**Vaughan-Smitherman Museum**
**109 Union Street**
Open Tuesday–Saturday.

This guide was prepared by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University in partnership with the City of Selma, the Alabama Black Heritage Council, and the Alabama Historical Commission. All photographs, unless otherwise noted, are courtesy of the Center for Historic Preservation. Special thanks goes to Louretta Wimberly for her guidance and assistance throughout this project.

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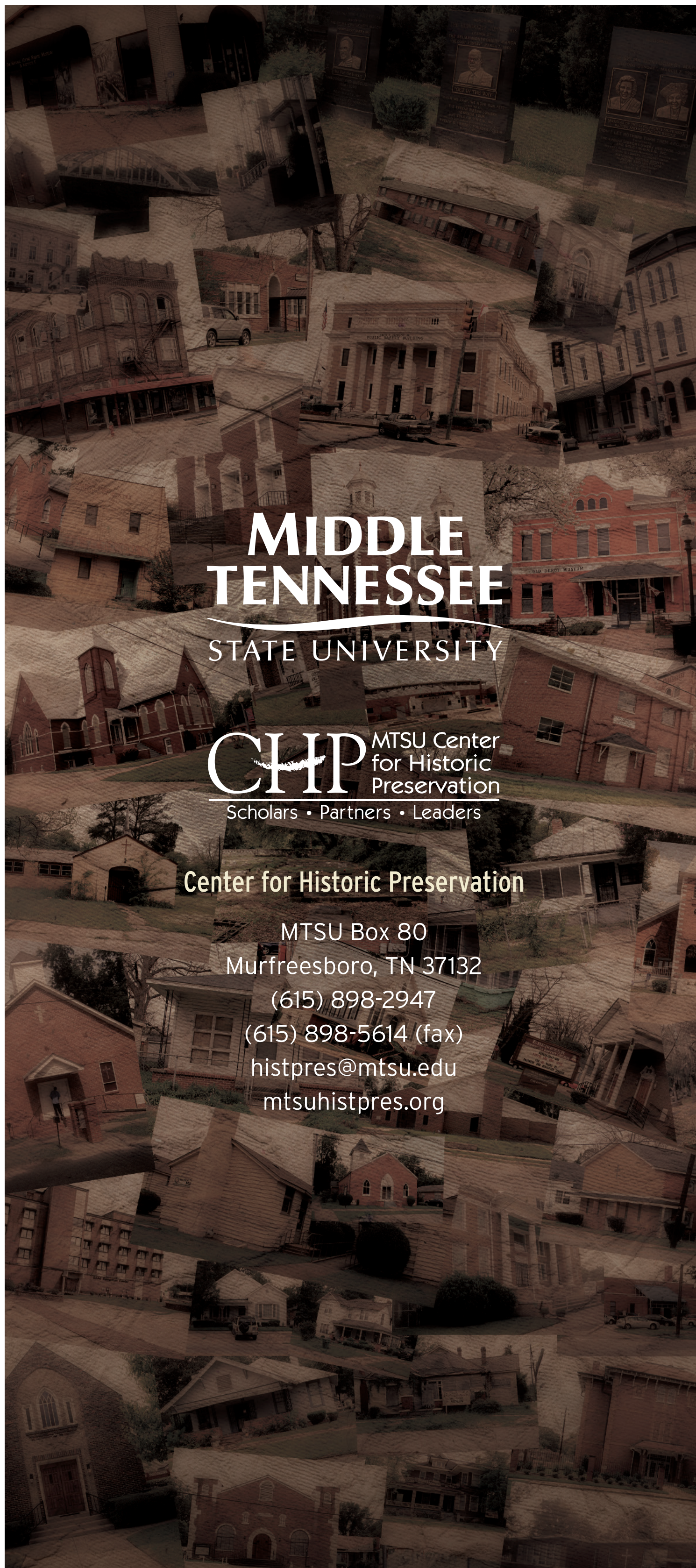
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