OHIO VALLEY HISTORY

A Collaboration of The Filson Historical Society, Cincinnati Museum Center, and the University of Cincinnati.

VOLUME 5 • NUMBER 3 • FALL 2005

Ohio Valley History (ISSN 746-3472) is published in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky, by Cincinnati Museum Center and The Filson Historical Society. Periodical postage paid at Cincinnati, Ohio, with an additional entry at Louisville, Kentucky.

Postmaster send address changes to The Filson Historical Society, 1310 S. Third Street, Louisville, Kentucky, 40208.

Editorial Offices located at the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45221-0373. Contact the editorial offices at phillicr@email.uc.edu or durrilwk@email.uc.edu.

Ohio Valley History is a collaboration of The Filson Historical Society, Cincinnati Museum Center, and the Department of History, University of Cincinnati. Cincinnati Museum Center and The Filson Historical Society are private non-profit organizations supported almost entirely by gifts, grants, sponsorships, admission and membership fees.

Memberships of Cincinnati History Museum at Cincinnati Museum Center or The Filson Historical Society include a subscription to *Ohio Valley History*. Back issues are $8.00.

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OHIO VALLEY HISTORY

Volume 5, Number 3, Fall 2005

A Journal of the History and Culture of the Ohio Valley and the Upper South, published in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky, by Cincinnati Museum Center and The Filson Historical Society.

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Cover: Cumberland Gap, ca. 1862. The Filson Historical Society

"Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around":

Berea College's Participation in the Selma to Montgomery March

Dwayne Mack

Early on a drizzly spring morning in 1965, a Greyhound bus and four cars arrived in Montgomery, Alabama. Fifty-eight students and faculty members from Berea College in Kentucky, black and white, men and women, had traveled all night to participate in the final and most important leg of the Selma to Montgomery march. The historian Todd Gitlin, in his book *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, has described the march as the "high water mark of integrationism."[1] Berea's delegation, the largest of all Kentucky colleges and universities, had responded to the National Council of Churches and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who had issued a call to action to register black voters in Dallas County.[2] Selma's voter registration campaign spurred Berea activists to become involved in the civil rights movement; they wanted to continue the college's historical mission of promoting racial equality. The civil rights movement, especially the upheaval in Selma, had polarized the Berea campus. Although the college's officials and the student government had declined formally to endorse the march, the activists forged ahead.[3]

Berea students boarded the bus on Wednesday, March 24, 1965. Photograph from Berea College Pinnacle, *March 27, 1965*

Berea College, located in east central Kentucky where the Bluegrass meets the Cumberland Mountains, was founded in 1855 by abolitionist John G. Fee. Berea was one of the first fully racially integrated colleges in the entire South, enrolling an essentially equal number of blacks and whites from 1865 to 1892. Racial co-education in a slaveholding state was a monumental experiment. According to sociologist Jacqueline Burnside, Berea was devoted to eradicating "caste prejudice by coeducation of the races."[4] In 1904, the Day Law, aimed specifically at Berea, outlawed integrated education in Kentucky,

thus forcing the institution to turn its focus toward educating impoverished white Appalachian students. Berea officials quickly responded to the policy change by using some of the college's endowment to establish Lincoln Institute in Simpsonville, near Louisville, to educate black students.[5]

Not until the repeal of the Day Law in 1950 did the college recommit itself to educating black and white students together, and officials slowly readmitted African Americans.[6] Approximately ten black students attended Berea from 1950 to 1954. In the latter year, Jessie Reasor Zander graduated from Berea with a degree in elementary education, making her the first African American student to earn a degree after desegregation.[7] Yet as black students trickled back to Berea, they faced Jim Crow segregation in the Berea community. Almost a decade prior to the Greensboro, North Carolina, sit-ins, some local white and African American residents in Berea challenged racism in the community. In the 1950s, Dorothy Tredennick, a professor in Berea's art department, Julia Allen, the college's dean of women, alongside an African American resident of town, conducted a sit-in at an area business that refused to serve black patrons. The demonstration successfully forced the business to abandon its policy of refusing service to African American customers.[8]

A decade after the reappearance of black students at Berea, the civil rights movement crested. In response to the crusade for equality and Berea's legacy of campaigning for racial equality, several black and white members of the Berea campus community became more active in the civil rights movement. Although the college had only thirty-five African American students (in a total student body of 1,400), a number of its students, faculty, and staff marched on the state capitol in Frankfort on March 4, 1964, along with thousands of others. They listened to the keynote speaker, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and lobbied the state legislature to pass civil rights legislation.[9]

Although the college supported the Frankfort event by canceling classes and providing the demonstrators with transportation to the march, Berea officials later that same year refused to host a Mississippi Freedom Summer training school that the Council of Federated Organizations offered to sponsor. In the school, members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) would train white northern volunteers in the process of registering black voter in Mississippi.[10] The college's president, Francis Hutchins, had to defend the college's decision. Writing to one civil rights supporter in Mississippi, he stressed that the summer program "might not accomplish its desired ends" and, though regretful of his decision, Hutchinson explained that it was "both prudent and necessary for Berea College to withdraw from this program."[11] The decision angered several students. They began to question the college's commitment to racial equality, claiming it failed to continue its history of racial co-education and its mission of eradicating racial discrimination. For

years, Berea College had effectively instilled its heritage and its philosophy in its student body, only to fail to adhere to its own ideals.

A year later, Bereans and the nation watched as civil rights demonstrations spread across the Deep South. The protests in Marion and nearby Selma, Alabama, reflected the growing opposition to the system of racial discrimination that had long gripped the Black Belt. Throughout the South, discrimination existed in public accommodations, housing, and employment. In Alabama, black southerners experienced continued restrictions to voter registration. Approximately seventy percent of otherwise eligible black voters in the Black Belt region remained unregistered. In Selma, a city of twenty-eight thousand, only 335 of its fifteen thousand black residents were registered to vote, as compared to 9,543 of thirteen thousand white residents.[12] A combination of police brutality and corrupt Dallas County registrars, who falsified voter rolls or just refused to allow black county residents to register, contributed to the low number of registered black voters in the city.[13] Jim Clark, the local sheriff, and Al Lingo, colonel of the local Alabama State Police, were notorious for harassing and beating black residents who attempted to register to vote or assert their civil rights. At Berea, black students from Alabama took particular exception to the mistreatment of African Americans in their home state, vigorously opposing voter discrimination in Selma when their own family members had voted elsewhere in the state. For example, Evelyn White Lloyd, a junior at Berea in 1965 from Fairfield, Alabama, near Birmingham, vividly recalled her parents voting; she herself exercised that right in 1965.[14]

As white Alabamians retaliated against black neighbors who tried to gain access to the ballot, the Berea activists became more involved. They monitored events in places like Selma, watching in horror on television as law officials violently dispersed a group of mostly elderly and female protestors, led by John Lewis of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Hosea Williams of the Southern Christian Leadership Councils (SCLC), who had tried to march out of the city over its Edmund Pettus Bridge. The six hundred activists had organized a march from Selma to the state capitol in Montgomery in order to protest the city police's recent killing of Jimmy Lee Jackson, a Marion activist, as well as to demand the right to vote. On March 7, 1965, Sheriff Clark and Colonel Lingo's officers launched a vicious attack, later known as "Bloody Sunday," scattering the marchers and bringing national attention to the brutality and inhumanity of Jim Crow segregation.[15]

Media coverage of law enforcement's brutal clubbing and gassing of African Americans propelled Selma's civil rights movement into the national spotlight. Bereans, especially the college's African American students, sympathized with the failed voter registration efforts because they, too, had known about, experienced, or battled racial discrimination. As a child, Sara Wade Brown

had seen civil rights protests in her hometown of Birmingham turn violent as police officers unleashed dogs upon her classmates, firemen turned hoses against demonstrators and police officials arrested students, detaining them in the fairgrounds because they "had no room for them in the jails." She had endured the death of a friend, Carroll Robinson, who perished along with three other teenagers in the Ku Klux Klan's notorious bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church on September 15, 1963.[16]

Howard Johnson, too, had participated in the movement several years prior to his activism at Berea. While attending a small bible college in Nashville, he marched and participated in sit-ins at downtown lunch counters in 1961 and 1962 alongside John Lewis and other well-known activists.[17] Another civil rights veteran, John Fleming, had joined a sit-in at the local Woolworth's department store while attending Olive Hill High School in his hometown of Morganton, North Carolina.[18]

During the 1960s, as the Deep South's civil rights movement developed along with the nationwide movement, several members of Berea's college community became committed to King's brand of direct nonviolent action. Moreover, the confrontations in the South led by young SNCC activists appealed to some Berea students. Fleming affirmed as a student leader that college students were "the vanguard of the civil rights movement," but believed that the youth had become "somewhat impatient with the pace of change that had occurred in the nation." In sum, students were not afraid to challenge Jim Crow segregation because they had "very little to lose."[19]

On Monday, March 8, 1965, King arrived in Selma from Atlanta, where he had preached the day before. King and the National Council of Churches publicly urged clergy and Christians from across the United States to support the efforts of Selma's black population to "exercise their constitutional rights of assembly and petition."[20] King then organized a second march from Selma to Montgomery, scheduled for Tuesday, March 9, a week after the first such attempt, to dramatize the plight of disenfranchised black Alabamians. District Court Judge Frank Johnson, however, wanted the march postponed, pending a hearing for Gov. George Wallace's request for an injunction to prevent the march. The president, Lyndon Johnson, too, asked King to stop the march. But SNCC militants were eager to march on Tuesday, even if Judge Johnson prohibited it. King, now caught in a dilemma, spent the night debating strategy with his colleagues.[21]

Despite the temporary injunction, activists across the nation began preparing to travel to Selma. Galvanized by the memory of Bloody Sunday, and moved by the appeals of King and other church leaders, a group of Berea activists swung into action. Scrambling to send a delegation to Selma, white students George Giffin, Frank Corbett, Raymond Howard, and a black student, Henry Thompson, decided to travel to Selma with Gibbs Kinderman, a staff member

of the Berea branch of the Appalachian Volunteers.[22] They squeezed into his Volkswagen Beetle on March 8 and, after an overnight drive, the group arrived in Selma early on the morning of Tuesday, March 9. Thompson, a veteran activist from Birmingham, had arranged for the group to stay with an African American family, a common practice for outside activists. The father, a schoolteacher, had been refused by state voter officials had refused to register to vote.[23] Like others who had suffered such injustice, he was especially supportive of the march.

After breakfast, the Berea contingent walked over to Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, headquarters of SCLC's voting rights campaign, where they and 1,500 other out-of-town activists spent the remainder of the morning studying nonviolent techniques. As the Bereans received instructions alongside some of the heavily bandaged activists who had sustained injuries while participating in "Bloody Sunday," they grasped, as George Giffin recalled, the "seriousness," of the situation. The activists listened carefully as their trainers warned them of the danger of the impending march. They gave the Bereans the option of returning home before they departed for the bridge. After hearing the march instructions, the Kentucky activists experienced an "extraordinary power and solidarity" inside Brown Chapel, joining hands, swaying "right and left," and singing their "hearts out." The church, according to Giffin, "reverberated with peaceful power."[24] Around 2:25 p.m., King, along with other ministers, led the group from the church on a march toward the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the scene of the previous Sunday's bloodshed.[25]

On March 25, 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King addressed over 25,000 marchers on the Alabama state capitol plaza. Photograph by Michael S. Clark

As King's column approached the foot of the bridge on Broad Street at three o'clock, it paused to listen to U.S. Marshal H. Stanley Fountain read Judge Johnson's injunction. When King indicated his intention to cross the bridge, the marshal moved aside. When the marchers reached the other side of the bridge, they faced hundreds of state troopers. Instead of continuing, King stopped the marchers fifty feet from the law enforcement officials. Giffin and

the Bereans, assumed that they were going to defy the troopers, but he expected them to back down because of the reporters and camera crews present. As Giffin waited for King's next move, he looked into the face of one of the state troopers. He recalled, "[The trooper] looked at me, as though to say . . . take these network cameras out of here, and I'll break your head open." Giffin had to brush past the trooper, and at that moment, the Dearborn, Michigan, native said that never again would he be afraid to die.[26]

While Giffin and the other activists waited nervously, King requested permission from law officials for the marchers to sing and pray. Following the singing of "We Shall Overcome" and praying, King signaled the marchers to march back across the bridge to Brown. Without warning, the troopers moved out of the way, apparently leaving a clear path to the state capitol.[27] The authorities' move, reportedly ordered by Wallace, was obviously designed to humiliate King.[28]


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The Berea delegation raised $750 to pay for the trip to Montgomery. *Berea College Archives and Special Collections*

Some of the more militant marchers, who contemptuously referred to King as "de Lawd,"[29] desperately wanted to complete the march to the Alabama capitol. However, King directed the marchers back to Brown, aborting the march and possibly avoiding another bloody clash. As Giffin and the others returned, Andrew Young, King's assistant in the SCLC, defused the minor tension by leading them in the freedom song, "We Love Everybody." Despite King's decision to discontinue the march, the demonstrators, including the Bereans, displayed solidarity and allegiance to him by singing "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around."[30]

King's decision to abort the march arose from his refusal to violate a court order and endanger the lives of the marchers. He wrote later in his autobiography that he only "wanted to march at least to the point where the troopers had brutalized the people, even if it meant a recurrence of violence, arrest, or even death." The marchers stood down because they had made their point, revealing the "continued presence of violence."[31] Regardless of King's intentions, however, his decision to discontinue the march weakened the already fragile alliance between the SCLC and SNCC.[32] As tension mounted between King and SNCC, the Berea activists continued to support their embattled leader. On what became known as "Turnaround Tuesday," King's call for direct action had the intended effect. King's successful mobilization of activists inspired Giffin, Kinderman, Thompson, Corbett, and Howard to "to rouse up the complacent Berea campus to reclaim its historic

mission." [33]

Fortunately, the Bereans departed Selma without incident. A group of white priests and ministers from Boston who had joined Tuesday's march was less fortunate; a mob of local whites attacked and clubbed them. James Reeb, a Unitarian minister, died a few days later.[34] His death brought home the perils that awaited Berea activists and those who challenged racism in Alabama. In response to Reeb's death, labor unions, and Protestant, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Jewish congregations, and national associations sent telegrams to the White House deploring the minister's murder. Thousands of supporters came from every state to attend Reeb's memorial service.[35]

Lyndon Johnson responded to the public outcry on Monday, March 15 in a televised speech before the House of Representatives. He denounced the violence in Selma and requested a new and stronger voting rights bill. Like King, the president attempted to appeal to the nation's moral conscience: "Their cause must be our cause, too. Because it is not just Negroes, but really all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice." He concluded his speech with the inspirational slogan of the civil rights movement, "And we shall overcome."[36] In conjunction with Johnson's emotional speech, Judge Johnson lifted the injunction on the march, allowing King to invite activists to a four-day march scheduled to begin on March 21 in Selma.

The Berea activists, too, responded to "Turnaround Tuesday," the president's speech, the judge's decision, and King's invitation. At the Student Union, Kinderman, Thompson, Corbett, Giffin, Howard and other Berean activists had an "intense debate about equal rights and the proper roles of the College and College students in the fight for equality." There they planned to join other activists in Montgomery on Thursday, March 24, for the last stretch of the march, because Judge Johnson, concerned with safety on the two-lane portions of Highway 80, limited the march along the Alabama highway to three hundred participants.[37]

With the court's sanctioning of the Selma to Montgomery march, the Berea committee requested permission to use the college's bus. The small Berea delegation wanted to lead the college in a moral charge against racism. Although the administration had endorsed and paid the expenses for Berea's attendance at the Frankfort march, they now opposed student and employee involvement, fearing liability in the event that violence broke out at the Selma to Montgomery march.[38]

Kenneth Thompson, associate dean of the college, distributed a campus-wide letter that explained the administration's decision. He explained, somewhat illogically, that the college refused to approve the trip because the insurance policy on the bus covered "property and lives on approved trips only." He made it clear that those attending the march were responsible for their own well-being, and that "no liability will be assumed by the college."

The administration further impeded students' and faculty's ability to attend the march, requiring underage students to obtain written permission from their parents and forbidding faculty members from canceling their classes; instructors who wished to march had to find someone to replace them in the classroom. Instead of traveling to Montgomery, the college suggested that the marchers write various letters to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Alabama Governor George Wallace, President Johnson, or other politicians, arguing that such communication was "less expensive" and "less disruptive to the educational process."[39] The college's action mirrored the decision it made the previous year to cancel the Freedom Summer training school. Both decisions made Berea officials appear unsympathetic to marchers, whether from Berea or elsewhere.

Instead of abandoning its planned trip, the committee forged ahead, remaining true to its moral and social convictions. The committee chartered a Greyhound bus, but had to raise the $640 required to rent it. The march committee had already raised three hundred dollars in faculty contributions, but needed to cover the balance.[40] Although the administration refused to support the trip, the delegation had yet another opportunity to appeal for moral support and to shore up funds. On the evening of March 12, the Student Association (SA) listened to arguments for and against the march. Danny Daniel, who presided over the meeting, explained to the SA members the purpose of the Montgomery trip. Thomas Fern, a professor in the art department, told the SA of President Hutchins's refusal to fund the trip or grant permission to use the college's bus. He then requested that the SA fund the trip and give a "vote of support in the name of historical precedent and continuing Christian commitment."[41]

In support of Fern, Brad Crain moved "that the SA endorse the proposed march in Alabama."[42] His request, however, sparked heated debate among SA members. Another student added that the college "had been an active participant, in fact a leader, in this area in the past and should continue this role. In order to support the college's motto: 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men,' and its goal of equality and opportunity, it is necessary to promote the cause of civil rights in action as well as with words."[43] As expected, a third SA member cited the real risks of going to Montgomery. The SA's endorsement meant that the delegation would travel "as representatives of the college rather than as individuals, and the majority of the Berea students and faculty are not in sympathy with this particular demonstration even if they do support the civil rights movement in general."[44]

George Giffin, speaking for the march committee, insisted that "King is not going to lead something that is going to hurt the cause of the civil rights movement (and) we would not send students if Dr. King and the National Council of Churches decided it was not wise."[45] SA Communications Officer Iverson

Warinner responded to Giffin: "I am not a racist, but Alabama is dangerous. The heart of segregation is burning more furiously than ever before." He referred to the death of Reeb, arguing "this could happen to us. It would be like sending someone to their grave to send them to Selma." The audience applauded loudly after he declared: "We should clean up our own problems here. The March on Frankfort had to do with a local situation." [46] Another student, Morris Gay, supported Warinner, arguing: "People may get hurt. The people of Alabama demonstrated they are not rational. . . . [T]hey only know the knife, the rope, the gun. . . . I believe the College's refusing of the bus should make us stop and think."[47]

The students had legitimate concerns over the march becoming violent. The Alabama legislature had recently passed a resolution, referring to the civil rights activists as "outsiders" and "agitators." The resolution, signed by the governor, George Wallace, urged all Alabama citizens to remain at home or at their place of employment during the march, "until the risk of regrettable incidents which might occur in an atmosphere charged with tension has ceased. Let every one of our citizens act with the utmost restraint."[48]

On Sunday, March 14, 1965, students, faculty and staff protested the official position of Berea College at the home of president, Francis S. Hutchins. Photograph from Berea College Pinnacle, March 20, 1965

The SA then voted. In lockstep with Berea's president and administration, the organization voted 43-14 against sanctioning the march. Because such a large majority defeated the motion for endorsement, the motion for appropriation funds was not presented.[49] The paternalistic tone of Thompson's letter and the SA's position against the march angered several students. Opponents of the administration's position formed a six-person committee, co-chaired by SA President Danny Daniel, *Pinnacle* (the student newspaper) editor Roy Birchard, Michael Clark, the paper's sports editor, Nigel Allan, Ron Mattson, and John Fleming, the committee's only African American. During their initial meeting, they planned a prayer service and demonstration in front of the home of Berea's president, Francis S. Hutchins, to challenge the decisions of the college and the SA. The committee officially adopted the motto of the institution: "God hath made of one blood all nations of men," because the scripture "demands of us that we actively pursue the search for equal rights for all citizens."[50]

As planned, on a drizzly, chilly Sunday, March 14, more than one hundred students, faculty, and staff members assembled in the college's Danforth Cha-

pel to hear students Roy Birchard and Danny Daniel discuss the trip. Rev. Donald Welch of the Berea Methodist Church led a prayer before the marchers proceeded to the president's house. Piano major Ann Beard Grundy led the audience in singing freedom songs, the college's anthem, "Berea Beloved," and "America the Beautiful." Grundy, according to classmate and marcher Nigel Allan, "was a catalyst for us when we got a little weary."[51] According to the historian Clayborne Carson, "spirituals were an integral part of black cultural expression,"[52] and indeed at Berea, music symbolized the civil rights struggle. Activists recognized the ability of songs to convey the ideas of the southern civil rights movement and to boost or sustain morale. Years later, Grundy explained: "We did what Black people were doing all over the country: we took the sacred music of our people, spirituals, and changed the lyrics to make them current." The spirituals the Bereans sang "carried great emotional force and were more often rooted in the Afro-American cultural heritage."[53] Immediately following the service, the activists gathered outside the chapel. Shortly thereafter, they marched across the campus, carrying banners advocating civil rights. One of the lead signs was a seven-foot long banner displaying the college motto. Smaller signs displayed the school's other motto, "Vincit Qui Patitur," Latin for "victory through suffering." While en route to the president's house, the marchers encountered hostility from student spectators but, as the march organizers instructed them at the Chapel, they refrained from responding. Fleming recalled a group of white male students wearing Ku Klux Klan-type white sheets. "As it turned out," Fleming recalled, "some of my African-American friends were extremely disillusioned because some of their friends—the people that they had played intramurals sports with—were the ones in the sheets." For some black students, the incident changed racial attitudes on campus because, as Fleming pointed out, "the white students involved were not their friends."[54]

On March 24, 1965, President Francis S. Hutchins led students, faculty and staff in departure prayer for Montgomery. Photograph from Berea College Pinnacle, March 27, 1965

When the group arrived at the president's house, its members again burst into freedom songs, followed by prayers led by William Poole, pastor of the town's St. Clare Catholic Church. A representative of the march committee then presented the president with a copy of its program and a letter explaining its reason for marching to his home. The delegation informed Hutchins: "This action (the march) will not be directed toward you

as an individual (or toward any individual), however, in your official capacity as President of Berea College we do wish to express our common purpose."[55] Because of the inclement weather, the group of marchers peacefully dispersed, but members of the committee, along with some faculty, briefly met with Hutchins inside his home.[56] The meeting with the president remained cordial, as he told the committee: "There can be no question about Berea College's continuing commitment to the cause of human rights and human dignity. Some may differ as to the methods or tactics, but the common goal remains." After the president reminded the committee members of the college founders' commitment to interracial education, he offered the activists the use of his own vehicle for the trip to Montgomery.[57]

After the meeting, Roy Birchard tried to prepare the marchers for what they could expect in Montgomery. In a *Pinnacle* editorial, he referred to the recent murder of Rev. Reeb and mentioned a rumor that Alabama racists were stockpiling explosives and ammunition. "Any of us who takes part in that march," he wrote, "simply has to accept the fact that he could very well be on the receiving end of that dynamite or that ammunition. This is no strut in the sun."[58] Birchard urged the marchers to press on. "If Martin Luther King needed support by our physical presence," he wrote, "then we feel we have no right to stay away. We do not feel we have a right to turn our backs on the situation by saying merely that it's Alabama's problem."[59]

Birchard and other Bereans had grounds for concern. Unknown to the Berea delegation, racists from across the nation had flooded the SCLC headquarters with hate mail. As one letter read, "You are certainly encouraging disrespect for law and order. Wise up and Stop formenting [*sic*] all this racial trouble. Mr. King, so you're tired of police brutality. Well, we're damn tired of nigger brutality."[60] Another letter told King that he would gain "legal rights, so stop this foolishness of sprawling in the streets." The writer, however, thought law officials were justified in breaking up demonstrations. "Keep it up," the letter warned, "and I'm afraid you will have more trouble than you anticipate."[61]

Although some Bereans prepared to attend the march, some civil rights supporters remained behind. Dorothy Tredennick donated one $100 to the cause, a generous sum that came from the publication of a photograph that she had submitted to the *Saturday Review of Literature*. She wanted to make the Montgomery trip, but "personal obligations" prevented her from going. But she wanted her "money where I wish my body were." A humble Tredennick preferred that public knowledge of her donation "not go beyond the committee," because she sought "no personal acclaim; the challenge of the opportunity is my reward. I'll travel the miles with you in gratitude."[62] In all, the Berea delegation raised $750 for the trip, more than enough to cover the cost of the bus and other expenses.[63] About a half-dozen male members

of the faculty and three Berea clergy members planned to make the trip with the students.[64]

On the evening of Wednesday, March 25, the Berea delegation and supporters held a departure ceremony at nearby Union Church over which the church's pastor, T. B. "Scotty" Cowan, presided. President Hutchins led the marchers along with some one hundred family members and well-wishers in prayer. The marchers then boarded the bus for the five hundred-mile trip. As a security measure, the bus was escorted by four "buddy cars": two station wagons (one of which belonged to Hutchins), a Volkswagen, and a Rambler.[65] At the wheel of each was a white male. Faculty members and local ministers took turns driving. The mood on the bus was jubilant. Some of the riders chatted, played cards, and ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Others slept. Danny Daniel passed the time in thought, reflecting on the deaths of Rev. Reeb, Medgar Evers, Jimmie Lee Jackson and other civil rights martyrs.[66] The Bereans often broke out into freedom songs, giving the singers and listeners the courage to make the dangerous trip. Ann Grundy led a round of "If you Miss me at the Back of the Bus," the lyrics of which celebrated the victories of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Freedom Rides:

If you miss me at the back of the bus,
You can't find me nowhere.
Just come on up to the front of the bus,
I'll be riding up there.[67]

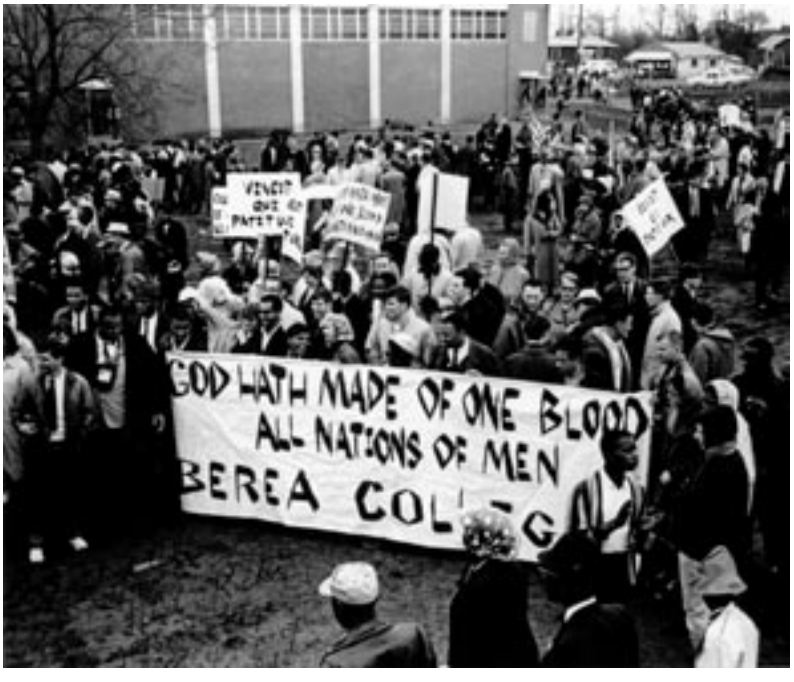
Along the route the caravan stopped at carefully selected bus stations in Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Birmingham. One early restroom stop occurred on Highway 11 in eastern Tennessee at the home of Dorothy Stuart, a mother of a white Berea student. After a rendezvous at Stuart's house, the caravan stopped at Chattanooga's Greyhound bus station to change bus drivers. The bus riders departed singing, "Let Us Break Bread Together."[68]

The final rest, fuel stop, and driver exchange before Montgomery occurred in downtown Birmingham, where in 1961, racist mobs had attacked an interracial group of Freedom Riders.[69] While in the Birmingham bus terminal, the students heard racist comments from local residents. Jerry Harris, a bus rider, wondered if the slurs and epithets hurled in his direction were just the beginning. He feared the Klan was trailing the bus.[70] Another rider reported overhearing the new bus driver tell the dispatcher at least four times that he didn't want to go near Montgomery.[71] Despite such concerns, the Berea delegation departed Birmingham without incident.

The motorcade arrived at the city limits of Montgomery before sunrise. The caravan, however, took a wrong turn on the way to the assembly point, the City of St. Jude, a Catholic hospital and school complex. William Poole stopped at a gas station to ask a group of white youth for directions. The locals, sensing that the Catholic priest was in company with civil rights activists,

attempted to throw rocks at the cars and they sped off.[72] When the motorcade finally reached its destination, the riders found themselves in the company of thousands of other activists who were still sleeping on the wet and muddy ground. The night before, they had enjoyed performances by musicians Harry Belafonte; Tony Bennett; Bob Dylan; Sammy Davis, Jr.; Peter, Paul, and Mary; the Chad Mitchell Trio; and comedian Dick Gregory.[73]

For some Bereans, their arrival at St. Jude was an emotional experience. "This was a remarkable thing [that] blacks and whites and other groups came together," Cobbs explained.[74] Nigel Allan described his euphoria upon his arrival at St. Jude; even though the activists "hadn't reached the promised land," their determination to complete the trip gave them "a degree of satisfaction."[75] Jane Matney Powell, a recent graduate of Berea, had traveled to Montgomery with the group where she was "amazed at the large gathering of activists." For her, their mobilization illustrated to the "racist world" that they stood together.[76] The Berea delegation exchanged pleasantries with college trustee Dr. Raymond Gibson of Providence, Rhode Island, who had come as part of a delegation of clergymen from New England.[77]

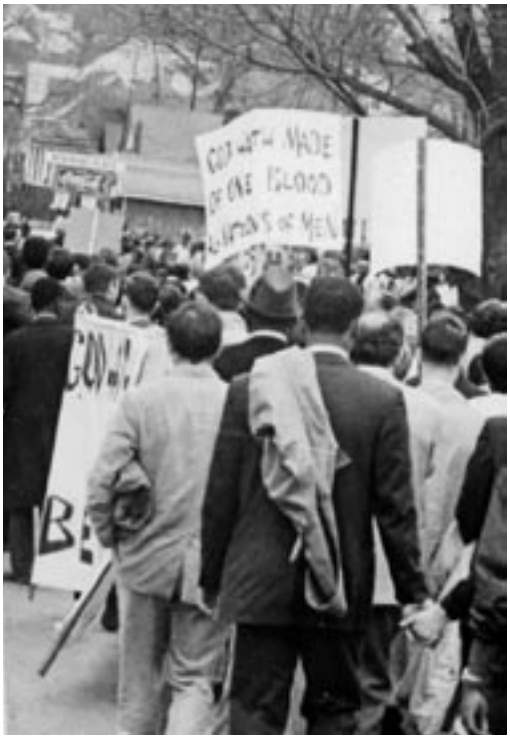


On Thursday morning, March 25, the Berea contingent arrived at the City of St. Jude, a Catholic hospital and school complex. Berea College Archives and Special Collections

In his autobiography, Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote, that the march contained "the most magnificent expressions of the ecumenical movement." The unity of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish marchers "reflected the injustices and the indignities that Negroes were facing in the state of Alabama and all over the South on the question of the right to vote."[78] After milling about until 9 o'clock, the Berea activists picked up their banners and lined up with thousands of other marchers to receive final instructions on the march, and civil disobedience.[79]

Around noon, the four-mile march to the capitol began. John Lewis, later a Georgia congressman, likened the march to "Moses leading the children out of Israel. King was leading African Americans and the whole nation out of political slavery into full political participation."[80] More than 50,000 demonstrators marched peacefully under a light rain into Montgomery. Three hundred marchers, who wore orange vests to signify that they had marched from Selma, walked in the lead with King.[81] According to Poole, their partici-

pation "was far more heroic and far more dangerous."[82] Under surveillance planes and helicopters, the raincoat-clad Berea delegation, positioned in the middle of the procession, carried its banners and American flags. During the quiet march, the activists chatted with onlookers and with each other. As they pressed toward the capitol, they sang "We Shall Overcome" and the popular "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize."[83]



On March 25, 1965, the Bereans marched through the streets of Montgomery to the state capitol. Photograph by Michael S. Clark

Unlike the adversarial posture that local law enforcement had taken in Selma during "Bloody Sunday" and "Turnaround Tuesday," the presence of hundreds of federalized Alabama National Guardsmen and U.S. Marshals protected the activists along the route. In this safer environment, the Berea marchers joyfully walked through black neighborhoods, where "radiant faced" men, women, and children cheered them from their windows. The activists passed the business district, where some local black residents marched alongside them.[84] Sara Wade Brown sympathized with black onlookers who chose not to join the march. Brown "knew deep down that that they wanted to be in the march as well, but they had to live there after the march was over."[85]

As the Berea columns made their way through the white section of town, their anxieties increased. John Fleming said later that the group "didn't know what to expect from the people alongside the road or what to expect from law officials."[86] English professor Thomas Kreider recalled seeing white people with "stony faces and angry eyes" sitting on their porches. He had never before felt such hatred directed against him.[87] Brown, too, remembered white people sneering at her with "disgust and hatred."[88] Alfred Cobbs recalled white locals screaming, "You niggers got more than we've got now."[89] The hatred intensified as the Bereans continued through the white neighborhood. One resident called them "black sons of bitches;" another threw a lit cigarette at them. Acting upon their lessons in nonviolence, the marchers broke into song.[90] Despite the hostility that surrounded them, they derived inner strength from each other, knowing that they "were part of this whole movement."[91]

At two o'clock in the afternoon, as the lead column turned on to Jefferson Davis Avenue, the state capitol with its Confederate flag appeared in the distance. The building was flanked by hundreds of state troopers armed with rifles and gas masks. The large security force and the flag failed to intimidate the marchers. Evelyn White Lloyd refused to let the sight of the flag deter her because she had seen it before; instead, this "dangerous situation," made her fearless and "more determined" to march.[92]

After the marchers assembled in the massive capitol plaza on Dexter Avenue, they listened to performances by Peter, Paul, and Mary, Harry Belafonte, and the Chad Mitchell Trio. The activists next heard black citizens describe their unsuccessful attempts to register or to vote. The Bereans and the rest of the crowd responded sympathetically, but remained enthusiastic.[93] Joining King and John Lewis of SNCC on the speakers' platform in front of the capitol were Rosa Parks, James Baldwin, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Whitney Young of the Urban League, A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin.[94] Besides listening to the speeches, some Berea marchers responded affirmatively to print and broadcast journalists who asked them whether the march had been worthwhile.[95] Richard Drake, a Berea faculty member, stood on the plaza and thought about the significance of the event: "What is freedom unless all are free? What is democracy unless all citizens actually have equal rights? And what is the meaning of America unless freedom and democracy are present?"[96]

Shortly following the speeches, King's assistant, Rev. Ralph Abernathy, introduced the keynote speaker: "As God called Joshua to lead his people across Jordan, so also he called Martin Luther King to go to Montgomery to tell Pharaoh Wallace, Let my people go."[97] As King had done at the March on Washington, he energized the audience, announcing: "We are on the Move now."[98] He promised that pervasive racism, the burning of churches, the bombing of homes, and the killing of clergymen and young activists could not stop the crusade for civil rights. As the sun set behind the capitol, the crowd interrupted King with rounds of deafening applauses and cries of "Preach!" "Say it, brother!" "Make it plain!" "Right on!" "Yes sir!" and "That's right."[99] King's message resonated with the Berea activists, who likened the successful march to the obstacles that they had faced before traveling to Montgomery. As King said, "They told us we wouldn't get here. There were those who said that we would get here only over their dead bodies, but all the world today knows that we are here and we are standing before the forces of power in the state of Alabama saying, 'we ain't goin' let nobody turn us around."[100]

On March 25, 1965, the Bereans and other activists marched through the streets of Montgomery to the state capitol building. Photograph by Michael S. Clark

King promised that freedom "will not be long, because truth pressed to earth will rise again." Then he asked: "How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever. How long? Not long, because you still reap what you sow.

How long? Not long. Because the arm of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice. How long? Not long, because my eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."[101] He concluded the speech by leading the marchers in singing the inspirational "Battle Hymn of the Republic," to thunderous applause.[102] Immediately after King spoke, the Berea delegation and the other marchers sang "We Shall Overcome" but changed the line "We shall overcome someday" to "We have overcome today." The marchers then went their separate ways.[103]

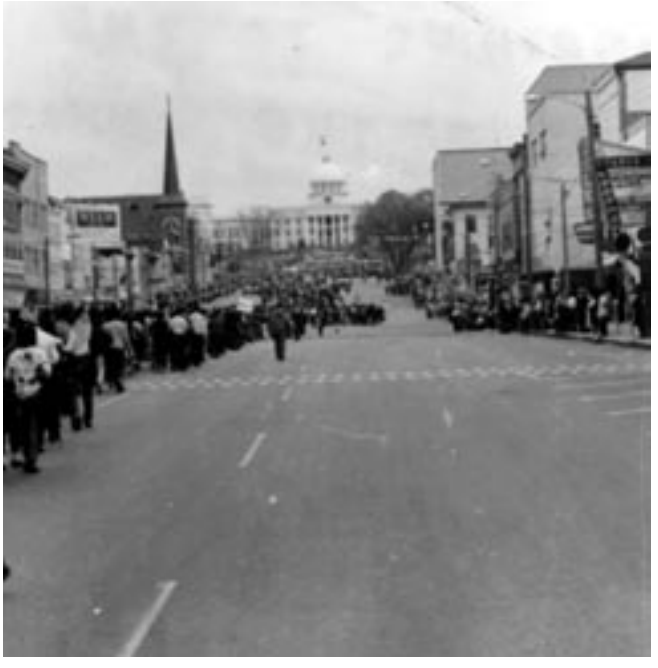
At nine o'clock that night, the traveling Bereans made a scheduled rest stop in Collinsville, Alabama, at the home of Zodia Belle Johnson Vaughn, the African American mother of Berea freshman and marcher Robert Johnson. Vaughn was one of the matriarchs of her community; like many other "brave mamas" she welcomed civil rights volunteers, providing them with food and a place to stay, introducing them to members of her community.[104] The marchers were delighted to find that Vaughn and fellow community members greeted them with a delicious dinner of fried chicken, collard greens and biscuits. Johnson's hospitality reassured Ann Beard Grundy, who was all too aware that she was still in the Deep South, that they "were doing right."[105] Mrs. Johnson and her friends treated the Berea delegation like family. Her comfort and support meant a great deal to the marchers. Johnson realized that she and her community had lived under racism since long before the Berea student activists had even been born. She had battled racial discrimination before the Selma march. Consequently, their appearance in her community was not the "beginning of the fight for freedom but the continuation of one."[106]

On March 25, 1965, folk singers Peter, Paul and Mary performed before Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke on the state capitol plaza. Photograph by Michael S. Clark

As soon as they were finished eating, the Bereans resumed their trip back to campus. They had no way of knowing that tragedy had struck in Selma. Four Klansmen, speeding along Highway 80, targeted Viola Liuzzo, a Detroit housewife and mother who had taken part in the march and transported marchers. On a deserted section of the highway the men pulled up alongside her automobile and "shot her to death."[107] News of Liuzzo's death shocked the nation and the Berea delegation.[108] Indeed, according to the historian Robert Weisbrot, the murder "became as much a symbol of the voting rights campaign as the march she had aided."[109]

Safely back on the Berea campus by seven o'clock the next morning, the delegation assessed its trip. The activists were pleased that the demonstra-

tion had gone well. Kreider said, "We believed that we had done the right thing, and we hoped that our action would help. Certainly, no one felt that we were heroes; rather that we had made a statement about human rights and equality."[110] Dean of Women, Julia Allen, an ardent supporter of the Berea activists, praised their efforts in a letter to Barry Bingham, a Berea trustee and publisher of Louisville's *Courier-Journal*. Bingham responded by thanking Allen for informing him about Berea's involvement in the "civil rights crises in Alabama," pointing out that the fifty-eight members of the delegation clearly reflected the progressive "tradition of Berea College."[111] A year after the march in Montgomery, Mike Clark, a participant and *Pinnacle* editor, assessed the effectiveness of the event in an editorial letter. He argued, "the fight against racial prejudice and bigotry still continues and the march on Montgomery is considered a milestone in the civil rights war." Clark reminded readers that the civil rights movement "is their battle-and ours, for this nation cannot stand divided between two races and two beliefs."[112] Berea students continued to promote the activist tradition of the college. Some black and white students staged protests on campus, demanding administrators introduce courses in African American history. These demonstrations forced the college to develop and offer courses related to the black experience.[113] Spurred by the civil rights movement, interracial campus groups also mounted several anti-Vietnam protests in the early 1970s.



On March 25, 1965, a view of the Alabama capitol in Montgomery as seen by some of the marchers. Photograph by Michael S. Clark

The Selma to Montgomery march profoundly influenced the lives of the Berea activists. Upon graduating from the college, several of the march participants pursued graduate degrees. Fleming, Daniels, and Cobbs, for example, earned doctoral degrees. After graduating from Berea, Fleming furthered his commitment to civil and human rights, first at the Kentucky Human Relations Commission, then as a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa. While obtaining his Ph.D. in History at Howard University, Fleming worked at the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. Roy Birchard continued his activism as a gay rights advocate in San Francisco. Evelyn White Lloyd became a marriage counselor and Jane Powell, a high school English teacher. Alfred Cobbs and Danny Daniels became college professors and Fleming is currently vice-president of museums at the Cincinnati Museum Center.

The Selma to Montgomery march was a victory for the nonviolence movement and its leaders. Lyndon Johnson, impressed by the march and other

nationwide protests, won congressional approval of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, eliminating voting restrictions based on race and giving enforcement powers to the federal government. After passage of the legislation, the momentum of the civil rights movement slowed, especially after the federal government escalated the war in Vietnam. Although racism continued to plague American society, the civil rights acts offered protection for African Americans denied since the end of Reconstruction. The small Berea delegation's contribution to the march forged a bond between black and white students, one that reflected the multiracial nature of the nationwide movement and advanced the civil rights movement in the Black Belt.

The author wishes to thank Brittney Westbrook and Kimberly Adams for research assistance, as well as Al Perkins, Andrew Baskin, and the copyediting staff of *Ohio Valley History* for their editing assistance.

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3. The University of Kentucky was the first institution in the state to admit African Americans. Berea followed, initially admitting a black woman. For more information on Berea College during its early years, see Jacqueline Burnside, "Suspicion versus Faith: Negro Criticism of Berea College in the Nineteenth Century," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 83 (Summer 1985): 237-66; Paul David Nelson, "Experiment in Interracial Education at Berea College, 1858-1908," *Journal of Negro History* 59 (January 1974): 13-27; For excellent studies on Berea College after the overturning of the Day Law, see Isabella Black, "Berea College" *The Phylon Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1957): 267-76; Ralph T. Jans, "Racial Integration at Berea College, 1950-1952," *The Journal of Negro Education* 22 (Winter 1953): 26-37.
4. Burnside, "Suspicion versus Faith," 240. In the late 1820s, Maryville College in Tennessee, also founded by abolitionists, enrolled Cherokee Indians.
5. Andrew Baskin, "Berea College and the Founding of Lincoln Institute," *Griot* 13 (Fall 1994): 9-13; *Lexington Herald Leader*, February 8, 2004.
6. Andrew Baskin, "Berea College: A Commitment to Interracial Education within a Christian Context," *Griot* 9 (Spring 1990): 39-56.
7. Ed Ford, "A Long Look Back," *The Berea Alumnus* 55 (November/December 1984): 6-8.
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9. Souvenir Program, *March on Frankfort*, March 5, 1964, Record Group 10: Committee for the March to Montgomery, 1965, BCHLSCA.
10. *New York Times*, April 4, 1965.
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12. Benjamin Muse, *The American Negro Revolution: From Non Violence to Black Power* (New York: Citadel Press, 1970), 163-64; Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1990), 128.
13. David Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 31.
14. Evelyn White Lloyd interview with author, June 23, 27, 2004, BCHLSCA.
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16. Sara Wade Brown interview with author, June 25, 2004, BCHLSCA.
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18. John Fleming interview with author, June 17, 2004, BCHLSCA.
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21. Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound*, 140; Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 86; Charles E. Fager, *Selma, 1965: The March that Changed the South* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 101-102.
22. Ibid.; George Giffin interview with author, June 8, 2004, BCHLSCA. In 1964, Kinderman participated in the COFO project and was trained at Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio.

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25. Ibid.; Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 86.
26. Clipping, "Four Berea Students March in Selma with Martin Luther King," *Pinnacle*, March 13, 1965, Record Group 10: Committee for the March to Montgomery, 1965, BCHLSCA.
27. Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 86; Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound*, 140-41; Fager, *Selma, 1965*, 104; George Giffin interview with author, June 8, 2004, BCHLSCA.
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29. Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound*, 141; George Giffin interview with author, June 8, 2004, BCHLSCA.
30. Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound*, 141; James Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 582.
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32. Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 582.
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34. Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound*, 141; *Lexington Herald Leader*, March 12, 1965.
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37. Gibbs Kinderman to George Giffin, September 24, 2004, in author's possession; Muse, *The American Negro Revolution*, 170; Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound*, 142; Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 112; *The Berea Citizen*, March 25, 1965.
38. Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 112; Muse, *American Negro Revolution*, 171.
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41. "Special Senate Meeting Minutes," March 12, 1965, Record Group 10: Committee for the March to Montgomery, 1965, BCHLSCA.
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68. Nigel Allan interview with author, July 21, 2004, BCHLSCA.
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73. Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 583; Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound*, 147; Roy Birchard interview with author, June 8, 2004, BCHLSCA; *The Selma Times-Journal*, March 8, 1965.
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75. Nigel Allan interview with author, July 21, 2004, Record Group 10: Committee for the March to Montgomery, 1965, BCHLSCA.
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