

Selma to Montgomery March

Activity 2

On March 7, 1965, when non-violent marchers crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, law enforcement officers tear-gassed and beat them, stopping their procession. News media captured and broadcast worldwide this display of violence, heaped upon non-violent protesters. This event became known as “Bloody Sunday.” Outraged protesters from across the country joined the marchers for a subsequent five-day march that began in Selma on March 21, 1965, this time with state and federal law enforcement protection.

The marchers traveled along U.S. Highway 80 in Dallas County, continued through Lowndes County and Montgomery County, and ended the five-day trek at the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery. The Southern Christian leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organized the logistics for the march—providing food, water, sanitation, and other services for the marchers, who camped out along the way. Twenty-five thousand marchers concluded the historic march in Montgomery on March 25th. Many notable speakers addressed the crowd at a concluding rally near the capitol building. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered one of his most notable speeches at the rally. As a result of this historic event, the Voting Rights Act was passed on May 26, 1965.

Historians view the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March as one of the last great grassroots campaigns for human rights and the summit of the modern civil rights movement that originated in the 1950s. The March and complementary events brought the issues associated with voting rights to the forefront of the United States political agenda and raised the nation’s consciousness about the struggle of African Americans for equal rights.