

Volume 5

Number 008

Selma, Alabama, 1965 - III

Lead: In 1965 the town of Selma Alabama was the scene of protests and brutal repression. The results: a march to Montgomery and a new Voting Rights Bill.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Martin Luther King, Jr. was convinced that the greatest ally the civil rights movement had lay in the consciences of white people. For too long the white majority had made gestures, had thrown rhetoric in support of

liberty and justice, but had acquiesced in the face of bigotry and ideas of white sovereignty. King knew that a frontal assault by blacks on the high wall of institutional prejudice would not succeed. Nonviolent tactics were designed to enflame those white consciences.

After several weeks of protests in the winter of 1965 intended to provoke a brutal white reaction, King had focused the nation's attention on Selma, Alabama and the town's suppression of Negro voting rights. On Bloody Sunday, March 7th nearly a hundred protesters were run down by club-wielding state troopers and a

mounted posse. Horrified by the continued intransigence of the whites led by Governor George Wallace, President Johnson personally brought a Voting Rights Bill to the floor of Congress, closing his message with the words of the protest song, “we shall overcome.”

With the way cleared by federal injunctions and protected by nationalized troops from the Alabama National Guard, on March 21st, more than 3000 marchers began the trek eastward to Montgomery where on Thursday King spoke to the largest civil rights rally in southern history gathered in front of the state

capital. Governor Wallace peered through the blinds of his office at the crowd below 25,000 strong. The result of the Selma demonstrations was that under Federal pressure the states of the deep South were forced to include thousands of African Americans in the rites of civil life: politics in the south were never the same again.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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