



MAY 2017

**YOUTH FORUM SHAREHOLDER'S REPORT
PLYMOUTH CHURCH UCC - SEATTLE, WA**

OUR FAITH JOURNEY THROUGH THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH YOUTH FORUM MISSION TRIP SHAREHOLDER'S REPORT

APRIL 8 – APRIL 15 2017

Our faith journey through the American Civil Rights Movement

We are the high school Youth Forum Ministry of Plymouth Congregational Church UCC, Seattle, WA. Every year our youth forum class develops a mission trip to deepen our faith, build our community and serve the world through education, direct service and/or working for justice. This year we wanted our trip to connect to the work our congregation and church conference has been doing to undo institutional racism, dismantle systems of white supremacy and to continue to work for justice in the world.

We were connected to Suzzanne Lacey and Museum Without Walls through Rev. Kelle and Indigo Brown, who had both been on a Museum Without Walls trip about 11 years ago. Suzzanne graciously took on putting together our trip and worked tirelessly over the past six months along with her co-leader Nicole Czubin. Without their leadership and organization this trip would not have been possible.

On April 8, we embarked on a week-long educational civil rights pilgrimage. We traveled across Georgia and Alabama to locations that were the front lines of the civil rights movement in our country; Atlanta, Birmingham, Montgomery, Selma, Anniston and Tuskegee. Our trip centered on engaging with faith, community and civil rights leaders to connect both our past and present fights for racial justice.

As a predominately white congregation in downtown Seattle, we are deeply committed to working every day through our faith community to become an anti-racist congregation that is actively working to dismantle systems of oppression and white supremacy. Our group worked through a year-long anti-racism and white privilege curriculum in our youth forum community to prepare for this trip and to serve as young leaders in the larger Plymouth community.

Plymouth Church has been a part of the movement for justice since our inception. As the young leaders of our faith community, we are committed to continuing that legacy.

TRIP PARTICIPANTS:

Youth Forum Students: Beata Landes, Sam Neer, Nolan Griswold, Morgan Gwilym Tso, Eleanor Maul, Sophie Rose Boyd-Fliegel, Matt Castle, Alyssa Fung, Cyrus Ogle, Alex Putnam

Plymouth Adult Leaders: Gary Robins, Anna Colwell, Katie Stultz, Rev. Kelle Brown, Indigo Brown

Museum Without Walls: Suzzanne Lacey, Nicole Czubin

Supporting Guest: Prince



TRIP ITINERARY

April 8

7:10 AM Depart Seattle/Arrive Atlanta, GE

April 9

9:30 AM Ebenezer Baptist Church

11:00 AM The King Center

2:00 PM Brunch at Café 458

6:30 PM Freedom Riders film

April 10

9:30 AM Clark University session

11:00 AM Morehouse (Men) Spelman (Women)

2:30 PM Greyhound Bus Terminal

6:00 PM Four Little Girls documentary

April 11

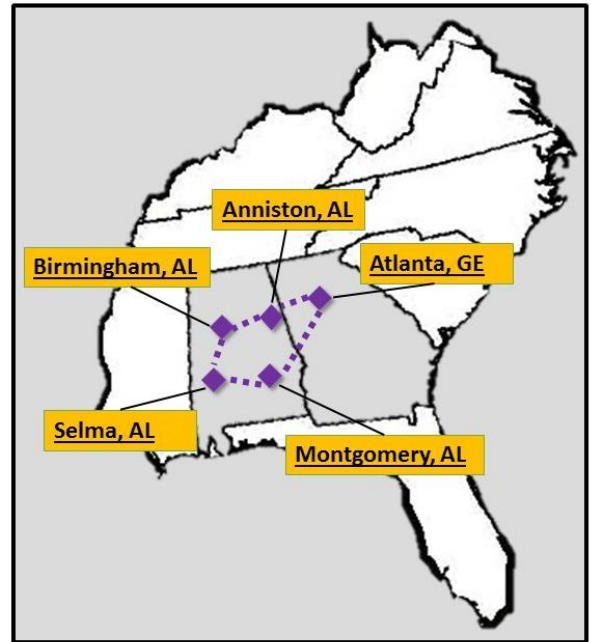
10:00 AM 16th Street Baptist Church

11:00 AM Civil Rights Institute

12:00 PM Lunch at Kelly Ingram Park

1:00 PM Depart for Montgomery

3:30 PM Rosa Parks Museum tour



April 12

10:00 AM Dexter Ave Baptist Church

11:00 AM Dr. King Parsonage

1:30 PM Southern Poverty Law Center

3:00 Dr. Bernard Lafayette, Freedom Rider at Freedom Riders Museum

6:30 PM *Selma* Movie

April 13

10:00 AM Voting Rights Museum

11:30 AM Slavery Museum and walk over Edmund Pettus Bridge

April 14

9:00 AM Tuskegee Airmen Museum Tour - in World War II.

11:00 AM Speaker Fred Gray - Martin Luther King's attorney

12:00 PM Lunch at Tuskegee University cafeteria

1:30 PM Booker T. Washington home

April 15

10:00 AM Drive to Atlanta/Fly home to Seattle

Day 1: Atlanta, GE

EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH AND THE KING CENTER, FREEDOM RIDERS DOCUMENTARY

Sunday, April 9, 2017

Our first full day in Atlanta, Georgia we started our morning with worship at Ebenezer Baptist Church, on the anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. We toured the King Center, heard the recording of Martin Luther King's "I've been to the Mountaintop" speech while sitting in the pews of the original Ebenezer Sanctuary where his funeral was held, and we visited his childhood home up the street. We ate afternoon brunch at Café 458 including the best chicken and waffles many of us have ever had. The Café is only open on Sunday and completely volunteer-run, as it provides funding and job training for folks who are experiencing homelessness and those escaping domestic violence and abuse. We closed our day by watching the *Freedom Riders* film.



EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH

BY: SAM NEER



Most every American knows who Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is. And many others know the church that he grew up with is called Ebenezer Baptist Church. So you can kind figure out that this is a pretty significant place. And with that you can figure out that it was an amazing feeling to simply see that church in person. But you know what was more amazing than just seeing the church? Attending Palm Sunday Service there. Now this church was very different from Plymouth. First of all in terms of clothing the expectations are way higher there. Anyone at Plymouth who knows me knows that the only time I ever really dress up for church is on like Easter and Christmas where I wear a pair of nice pants, a white long sleeve button down shirt and a neck tie. Other than that it's just normal attire. At Ebenezer I wore the same thing I wore to Easter Sunday at Plymouth. Another big difference is the people. I know Plymouth at times doesn't really enjoy admitting it but the truth is that our congregation is extremely white. But at Ebenezer the congregation is mostly African American people. Another thing is the music. Their main choir is just like Plymouth's Soul Choir and I hate to say it but they're way better than Plymouth's Soul Choir. I mean Plymouth I like what you do, but wow does Ebenezer's choir sound amazing. Anyway the point is that the churches are very different. We arrived at church a few minutes before nine o'clock so we could make it to the nine o'clock service. When we got there I was really amazed by the size of the building. I mean it had a balcony that you had to go up four flights of stairs to get to. So since it was so huge there were a ton of people. Like a lot of people. Then the service began. This service was very different than any service I had ever been to. It was very basic and average, yet the power and spirit put into it made it a crazy unique thing. You know in the beginning of the movie *The Blues Brothers* there's that scene where they go into the church and everyone is singing and dancing with insane amounts of energy? The Ebenezer service was sort of like that, minus the dancing and throwing people eight feet in the air. At the end of the service we visited the King Center.

A few of us decided to go to the eleven o'clock service when that hour rolled by. By the end of the service everyone was there. And at the end we saw someone who looked like they could just be anybody else going to church. But in fact this person was a whole lot more than that. This person was Christine King Farris. If you don't know who that is, it's Martin Luther King Jr.'s sister. Yeah, you heard me right. She's still alive, and she's still well enough to go to church on Sunday morning. So of course we got a photo with her. I mean how often do you see Martin Luther King Jr.'s sister? ***In conclusion, this was probably one of the most amazing Sundays of my life. Full of energy, diversity and spirit.***



Center second from the left: Christine King Farris
Center front: Rev. Raphael G Warnock

CAFÉ 458

BY: SOPHIA BOYD-FLIEGEL

This civil rights mission trip I took with a predominantly white, middle-class youth group from Seattle forced me to address stigmas, privilege and prejudice. I know I am privileged and would like to think I am unaffected by bias, racial or otherwise. However, a week in the south taught me more about my inherently close relationship with these evils than I expected. I confronted my stigma about homelessness at Cafe 458 in downtown Atlanta. The mission of Cafe 458 is to permanently rehabilitate people experiencing homelessness in Atlanta. The volunteers at the cafe embark on this daunting task by first simply serving their clients brunch. Monday through Saturday they serve for free, and Sunday it is open to the public to fund the operation.





Our group of fifteen was greeted at the door by an old but exuberant woman who ardently explained that her clients rarely get the chance to sit down and choose what they want off a menu. She showed how Cafe 458 serves humanity to everyone, regardless of finances, by giving them choices from the extensive menu and the option to get help achieving a stable life. She explained that, contrary to popular belief, people do not choose to be homeless, do drugs or have abusive partners. I would like to say that I knew this all before, especially since my parents both work in low-income and homeless housing. I knew homelessness was complicated, but I also thought of it as something that doesn't happen to people who do the right thing. This oration delivered by a passionate volunteer moved me to make charity my life's work, as this woman had. But the hunger pangs from sitting through two whole church services that morning kept my mind on the food that awaited.

I ordered the breakfast sandwich with potatoes, eggs, cheese and ham. Once I had scraped my plate clean, I proceeded to eagerly eat left-over chicken and waffles and biscuits and gravy. Our group took up the majority of the cozy space and we sat talking until the counter closed, weighed down by

waffles. I looked at the head shots of rehabilitated clients of the charity that covered the walls and wondered what it would be like to apply for a job without a house, or credit or a full stomach. Seeing the smiling faces of people who looked just like my friends and family, I thought about people who do the right thing and still experience the malice of life.

We left the Cafe and went about our day, touring Dr. MLK's home and memorial. We went through the week and continued to learn about the civil rights movement and injustices, old and current. I was left wondering how we could possibly tackle problems as ubiquitous as prejudice and as emotionally buried as implicit bias. It wasn't until the end of the trip that I connected the dots to see that Cafe 458 is itself a continuation of the civil rights movement.

The most empowering thing for someone to do is choose. Choice is a basic human right; liberating those who have it and oppressing those who don't. The civil rights movement included the push for black people in America to be granted choice held back from them by the ruling white class. African-Americans sought their right to choose their own elected officials, occupations, housing, schools and bus seats. My privilege allows me to take these choices for granted. I operate under the assumption that I will always be able to choose what happens to me. Often, I fall into the trap of thinking that everyone else in this country has these same choices. From my throne of privilege, I admit, it is easy to ignore the signs of inequality that plague my neighborhood and school, this city and the nation. Learning about the power of the civil rights movement on this trip encouraged me to delve into the struggle of the disenfranchised, rather than guiltily avoid the truth that we are still not all given the choices of equality. At Cafe 458 and other institutions like it around the country, volunteers work tirelessly to give choices to people who don't have any. **As people with privilege, we have the choice to spend our time, money and resources to give some of those options back to others. I am grateful for being given the opportunity to confront my privilege and my judgment. I pray for the courage never to forget it.**



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Anniston & Birmingham, AL

MOREHOUSE COLLEGE AND SPELMAN COLLEGE CAMPUS TOURS
AND ANNISTON FREEDOM RIDERS MUSEUM, "4 LITTLE GIRLS"
DOCUMENTARY

Monday, April 10, 2017

Our second day started with an information session at Clark University and campus tours of Morehouse College and Spelman College. We were lucky enough to have Rev. Brown with us, who is an Alumna of Spelman College. Getting to visit her alma mater with her was such a gift!



ANNISTON, AL AND THE FREEDOM RIDERS MUSEUM

BY: MATT CASTLE

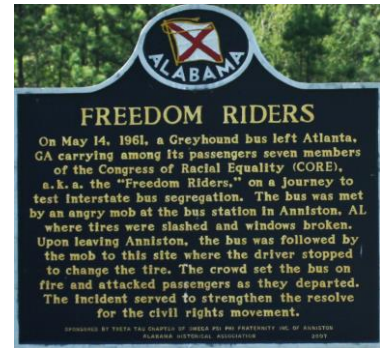


After a fantastic start to the trip in the beautiful city of Atlanta, Plymouth YF made its way to Birmingham. Personally, after an early morning wakeup I was not too excited for the three and a half hour drive to Birmingham. When I heard we had a stop along the way, I'm not going to lie, I sighed. As we drove into Anniston, I observed a fairly run-down town with many empty buildings and very few stores. Most people I saw were white, and I was curious to know more about the town and its current state. Upon arrival, we were greeted by a white man who took us into the museum. When we entered the museum, I was surprised to see that it was not a museum at all, but an empty room with a bunch of chairs in a circle. We all sat down and the man told us we were the first people to come to this museum, and by this time next year, it will be a national park with signs and artifacts about the event. Then he got into some history about Anniston, and told us how the city was currently still laid out how it used to be, with wealthier, predominantly white people living on one side of town and lower income, predominantly black people living on the other side. He also introduced us to an old black man who witnessed the Anniston bus bombing and who shared his experience to us from that day. We then went to the sight where the bus burnt down, which was a powerful experience. You could put yourself into these freedom riders shoes and really feel the fear they felt. While we stood at the sight, I asked the 90 year-old man, who followed the bus in his car and saw KKK members beat the freedom riders, if there was still racism in Anniston. He told me that there was no longer any racism in Anniston that black people could sit in the same places and use the same bathrooms as white people and shop at the same stores. It really made me think that that is how he sees racism and that things are completely normal now when I have grown up to see it as so much more and think of it as something that is engraved into our society.

At times during this trip, I felt very emotionally challenged and hopeless that our society is going in a bad direction and there is not much I can do. After experiencing firsthand what happened in the South and how these people were treated made me sick to my stomach and honestly ashamed of America. However, as the trip went on, I started to relax and felt this feeling of peace that made me very grateful to be on the trip. I realized how once in a lifetime this was and how much the people we came across affected me. I am still

not very sure how I am going to bring this back with me and create change. But all I know is, it changed me and the trip will stick with me for a long time. I am beyond grateful to have experienced it with such amazing people from Plymouth by my side.





Photos: Anniston Star, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

Day 3: Birmingham, AL and Montgomery, AL

16TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, CIVIL RIGHTS INSTITUTE AND THE ROSA PARKS MUSEUM

Tuesday, April 11, 2017

16TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

BY: NOLAN GRISWOLD



One of the destinations on our trip was the 16th Street Baptist Church. For those that don't know, this was the site that could be regarded as one of the most tragic acts of violence in the civil rights movement. During a church service, the church was bombed killing four little girls. Many of us learned about this event in school or preparation for the trip, but learning is profoundly different from experiencing.

The church was our first stop that morning. We were a bit early for our tour so we started doing some self-exploration. As a group, we moved to the back corner of the church to see the memorial plaque for the people who lost their lives in the bombing. The plaque was located in the back because that was where the dynamite was placed in the bombing. The power behind its location surprised me. It wasn't a very fancy plaque; it didn't try to stand out. Despite that, it was still incurably powerful. The fact that that was where the bomb was placed and that very bomb was responsible for

taking four lives of children younger than me gave me a very disconcerting feeling. Standing there, knowing that level of violence was something that had really happened...again, disconcerting. But it's that kind of discomfort that allows us to grow as a person and truly understand things.

After a bit more wandering, we went for our tour. Every time we walked in to see a historic church (there were a lot) the person giving the tour always had some deep connection to the movement. Our tour guide told us about the events and history of the 16th Street Baptist Church, how it was a key meeting place for many marches that were happening in Birmingham. How teens my age were one of the biggest groups of marchers. How when they marched they were attacked with firehoses and dogs just in the park across the street.

Leaving the church, I felt the same feeling I got standing by the plaque. I already knew the marches and fire hoses and dog attacks had happened here, but there was a different feeling to it now. A feeling of tremendous *realness*. Reading about the events from a history class back in Bellevue just didn't do the movement justice. It had a degree of separation like watching a movie and knowing the *good guys* win. You can learn and then you can experience. Standing on the steps to the church and walking through the streets of Birmingham, things became real. I still can't say I understand the struggle perfectly, but I am a step closer, and I'm excited to continue learning with the new sense of *realness*.





And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

MATTHEW 25:40

Cover: The Wales Window for Alabama is a stained-glass window at 16th Street Baptist Church by John Petts of Wales. Petts was struck by the words of Christ in Matthew 25:40, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me," as evocative of the compassion and faith of the Christian community. As interpreted by Petts, the crucified figure, depicting a black Christ, has the right hand pushing away against injustice while its left hand is open, offering forgiveness. A rainbow, representing diversity and God's promise, crowns the figure's head.

EVENING CIRCLES & UNPACKING THE INVISIBLE KNAPSACK

BY: KATIE STULTZ



One of the most important parts of any mission trip is creating dedicated space to come together as a community to process our day. We do this through evening circles. We open our circle with a simple prayer and lighting a candle, saying, “We light these candles to remember who we are and whose we are.” This is a ritual that both Anna and I remember during our years in Youth Forum and a ritual that has continued ever since. I believe that by opening our space in ritual we are reminded of who we

are, a faith community of Christians, not a school or work group, but a faith community of people who have made the decision to be in community with one another on our own faith journeys.



Wednesday, about half-way through our week, Kelle and I led a discussion on Peggy McIntosh's article, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” In this article she lists 46 everyday conditions that encourage the reader to reflect and recognize their own advantages and disadvantages within our world based on race. When I attended the Fall 2015 Plymouth Women's retreat, Kelle led a similar discussion, but included her version of the “Invisible Knapsack” titled “Unpacking the Sacred Backpack.” Kelle's version specifically outlines advantages or conditions specifically within the church. As a group, we went around the circle reading each condition as an opening to our discussion. We included this discussion in our week because we cannot discuss civil rights history in our country without talking about white privilege (unearned societal advantages that benefit white people) and white supremacy (the belief that white people are superior to those of all other races, especially the black race, and should therefore dominate society).

This activity opened up a discussion about the Plymouth we know now, and the Plymouth we want to be. We discussed the value of bible study to our own faith formation and what lights us up in church. **I repeat, the youth leaders of our church led a discussion on the church they want to see.** They want bible study, sermons, worship and community, but most of all they want church to speak to the world around them. As a young adult in our church, I can say that hearing our Reverend openly talk about white privilege



and the systems of oppression that plague this country in Church is why I returned to Plymouth. Kelle told us at the Women's retreat that **the work of undoing institutional racism and unpacking white privilege is God's work, and you have a community that will love and support you through your own journey in this work.** I had been searching for a place to make sense of the racial and social justice work I was doing in my professional work, and didn't realize I had found that place right at Plymouth. The same place that gave me the values I hold with me every day, was also giving me a place to make sense of my adult life.

The following weekend after we arrived home, I attended a Non-Violence workshop at University Congregational Church led by Dr. Bernard LaFayette, a civil rights hero and one of the original Freedom Riders, who we met on our trip. During the training, I was paired with someone who knew about Plymouth. When I shared that I was attending the workshop because I just returned from a

civil rights mission trip with our high school youth group, he simply said, “I can tell you grew up at Plymouth by your courage. Plymouth is a courageous place.” His statement didn't strike me until later as I reflected on my day realizing that he is right. Plymouth is a community that stands up and fights for the future we want to see. It is a community that works to learn, grow, deepen our understanding of what

justice looks like and then has the courage to act. We lean into the uncomfortable feelings that are necessary for growth. Plymouth is the place that has taught me to have the courage to stand up for justice.

This year and this trip has shown me that the spirit and power of Plymouth is alive and well. To have all three of our Youth Forum leaders be alumni of our Youth Forum program means we must be doing something right. I know Plymouth's power is in our values, our courage and our fierce belief that the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice and we will never stop fighting for that because our future depends on it. And also, because even as I write this my Facebook newsfeed tells me that another young black boy has been shot by a white police officer just for existing. As my favorite comedian Hari Kondobalu once said, "Telling me that I'm obsessed with talking about racism in America, is like telling me I'm obsessed with swimming while I'm drowning."

Say it with me Plymouth: Black Lives Matter today. Black Lives Matter tomorrow. Black Lives Matter to us.





Day 4: Montgomery, AL

DEXTER AVE BAPTIST CHURCH, DR. KING'S PARSONAGE,
SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER, DR. BERNARD LAFAYETTE
AND THE FREEDOM RIDERS MUSEUM, SELMA MOVIE

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

DEXTER AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

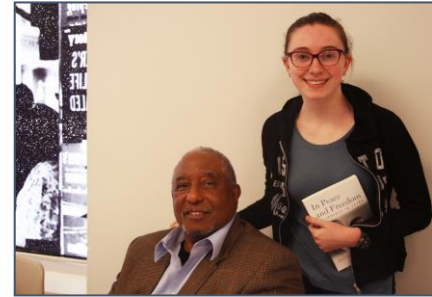
BY: ELEANOR MAUL

Where I'm from and where I've been

By: Eleanor Maul

I am from a church on the corner,
Tall and white
I am from a city that
Bathes in privilege
Swims in money
I am from a place that as I walk the street
Most of the people I meet
Look like me
Pale of face
I've been blessed by my heritage
That formed the system
To benefit those like me
I am from a place where I could never
Fully understand
This rigged game
This oppression
This hate

I have been to a church on a corner
A church of discarded bricks
Not bombed
because it stands too close to the capital
The capital of hate
First of the confederacy
It lives because
it's too close to the people
that wished it dead
I have been to the place where Wanda sings
That I am the light of the world
And my light will shine
I have been to the places where a man
Preached of love
And when beaten
Forgiveness was the only thing given



I have been to the places where the struggle
Lived and lives
And they have glimpsed
The system
The rigged game
The oppression
The hate
And I've seen the people
Who fought for change

I am where I'm from and
I am where I've been
And with these
I hope to be
I will be
the change I wish to see





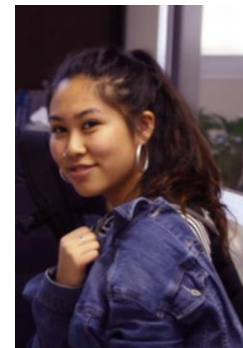
DR. KING PARSONAGE

BY: ALYSSA FUNG

309 S Jackson St, Montgomery, AL 36104, where Dr. King lost his worries and became the courageous and resilient leader that everyone admired then and now.

As we made our way to the parsonage, walking up the steps to the porch, I couldn't stop thinking that one of the greatest leaders of the civil rights movement walked the same path as me and how lucky I am. Although the parsonage was very interesting to see and walk around, what made the experience so amazing was our wonderful tour guide Ms. Shirley. This woman is full of love, enthusiasm and overall the most energetic and welcoming woman we could have asked for.

Making our way into the house, we passed the exact place where the house was bombed and to say the least I was in awe. Ms. Shirley explained to us how Martin Luther King Jr. took to his leadership position. While everyone was around the house and furious by the incident, ready to retaliate, this young minister calmly told everyone to go back home during which his wife and young daughter experienced a frightening act of hate. I think about the strength that Martin Luther King Jr. had, to be able to accept what had just happened and do nothing about it. But he was taking a stand, showing that nothing is going to stop him in the movement for civil rights, and that is a stronger act of retaliation than anything else. He looked at the bigger picture of how to fix everyone's problems not just his own. To me this is one of the most inspiring stories I have heard and being able to hear it on the same porch where Martin Luther King Jr. did made this experience even more special.



There are so many more inspiring stories I can share that we heard during this tour. The second learning moment that stood out to me was when Ms. Shirley explained to the group that we don't have to be afraid of

anything. She talked about how Martin Luther King Jr. had his revelation in his kitchen and that God told him not to be afraid and from there on, he didn't let his fear hold him back but became more courageous and strong. Being able to hear these stories in the exact place where this happened is something I never thought I would be able to experience. We are so blessed to be able to take mission trips like these, where they truly change your life. I couldn't be more grateful for this trip and everyone that was a part of it.

"And I sat at that table thinking about that little girl [his baby daughter] and thinking about the fact that she could be taken away from me any minute. And I started thinking about a dedicated, devoted and loyal wife, who was over there asleep... And I got to the point that I couldn't take it anymore. I was weak... And I discovered then that religion had to become real to me, and I had to know God for myself. And I bowed down over that cup of coffee. I will never forget it... I prayed a prayer, and I prayed out loud that night. I said, 'Lord, I'm down here trying to do what's right. I think I'm right. I think the cause that we represent is right. But Lord, I must confess that I'm weak now. I'm faltering. I'm losing my courage.' And it seemed at that moment that I could hear an inner voice saying to me, **'Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And lo I will be with you, even until the end of the world.'** ... I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone."

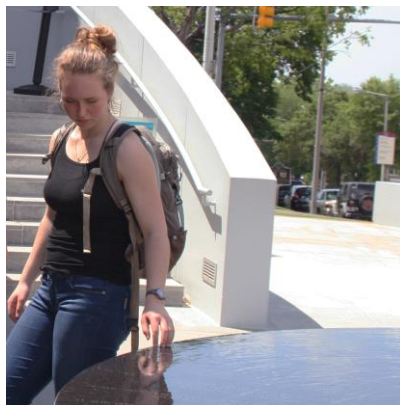
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr (The Autobiography of MLK Jr.)

SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

BY: CYRUS OGLE



Returning from this trip, I have been asked my impressions and my thoughts on it. My consistent answer has been "enlightening." With dozens of interesting speakers and locations all adding to this effect, I believe the Southern Poverty Law Center was one of the more enlightening sections. Although hearing men like Dr. Lafayette and seeing locations like the Edmund-Pettus bridge are interesting, The Southern Poverty Law center was one of the few places we visited doing something active in the community to combat racism as a frontline organization. Although they do not commonly march in protests, they do something of equal value; their organization pursues major allegations of hate crime and internal terrorism here in the states and specifically in the southern states. Their aim is to keep tabs on and legally combat organizations like the Klu Klux Klan, the American Nazi party and other organizations that threaten peoples based on race.



After an eventful day visiting the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and the Parsonage, and hearing some absolutely amazing speakers at each, we made our way to their offices in downtown Montgomery. Due to multiple threats of violence against them, they do not provide tours of the actual building, but have built a memorial to all those killed in hate crimes through the civil rights movement along with a Visitors Center detailing the same. Outside the Visitors Center lies the memorial for the fallen which lists the dates of deaths and the actions taken against them along with an excellent quote from Dr. King stating "Until justice rolls down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream." After a quick lunch alongside the memorial, we entered the Visitors Center. We went through security and promptly entered a room with the same names we observed on the memorial, a more detailed summary of their lives and their actions in the fight for civil

rights which led to their deaths. Touring through this area, we were led to a film that summed up what The Southern Poverty Law center is all about. Finally, after learning their mission and their early work, we moved on to a section detailing their work in the modern day fight for civil rights.

The Southern Poverty Law center was one of the most interesting places we saw because it is a still living organization on the frontlines fighting racism in the modern world.

**Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an
ever-flowing stream.**

-AMOS 5:24



DR. BERNARD LAFAYETTE AND THE FREEDOM RIDERS MUSEUM

BY: MORGAN GWILYM TSO

“To become educated in this untold history. To bring back this knowledge so we can share it with others and make changes in our community, country, and world. This was, as Dr. Lafayette so beautifully wrote in his book when he signed my copy, to keep the movement going.”



Upon return from this year's mission trip, many of my friends, peers and teachers barraged me with questions, as always. Usually when you ask someone how their spring break was, they say “good” or “so much fun,” maybe even a “warm and sunny, omg I got sooo tan!” If you asked me, however, you'd get a surprising response – “Life changing.” I subsequently had to explain that no, I didn't go to Hawaii or California, but rather on a mission trip in which I visited breathtaking historical sites and met the incredible leaders and soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement. Instead of small talk, people got a (sometimes unwelcomed) passionate spiel.

What I made sure to include in every story time was how YF got to meet none other than SNCC leader and nonviolence extraordinaire Dr. Bernard Lafayette. On one of our last days, in Montgomery, we walked into what had been the Greyhound bus station where several freedom riders arrived in May, 1961. Rising to greet us was a grinning man of surprisingly small stature. For some reason, the pictures and interviews we had seen of him formed an image of a legendary figure. Surely he had to be a lot taller than me (not saying much)! But something clicked immediately after that thought passed through my mind. Just by looking at him, I felt as though Dr. Lafayette had something more. He had a shine in his eyes and a smile that made you know he knew the power of love and kindness. Though it may sound cheesy, it was as though he understood how to truly forgive someone. As he began to tell us his stories as a young activist, most of our group were engrossed by his breathtaking tales of nonviolence. He described one particular moment where, during a sit-in at a diner, he was attacked by a group of cab drivers who viciously began beating him up. However, when they threw him to the ground, he didn't attempt to run away. Instead, he turned over, stood up, asked them politely to stop for a moment so he could brush off his coat, then proceeded to invite them to continue. They didn't know what to do. Their momentum was completely shattered by his willingness to almost literally turn the other cheek. I shook my head in disbelief when he shared this particular moment with us, amazed by how much strength and willpower it took.

Moments like these made the mission trip truly life-changing. Instead of blandly learning facts from a textbook, we actually went out and found ourselves in an environment that made things like nonviolence and resisting oppression a way of life for some people. It was painful to come back and have to explain to my friends who people like Dr. Lafayette are. These heroes don't have days named after them and you don't see their faces in books, despite them doing as much for the Civil Rights movement as legends like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. It was even more painful to realize that, before this trip, I was in a similar place to them. But that's what this trip was about. To become educated in this untold history. To bring back this knowledge so we can share it with others and make changes in our community, country and world. This was, as Dr. Lafayette so beautifully wrote in his book when he signed my copy, to keep the movement going.



Day 6: Selma, AL

VOTING RIGHTS MUSEUM, EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE, SLAVERY MUSEUM AND TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH

Thursday, April 13, 2017

SLAVERY MUSEUM AND WALK ACROSS EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE

BY: BEATA LANDES

Most likely you will never know what it's like to be a slave. I will never know either. I am also privileged enough to say that my ancestors did not have to go through slavery. Others are not so lucky. When we went to Selma, we visited the Ancient Africa, Enslavement & Civil War Museum. This is easily one of the most eye-opening experiences of the trip, and so unlike any of the other amazing museums that we visited. This was an interactive museum, where we were treated like slaves. Before I go further, I want to say that I know this is nothing close to what they must have really felt like, and what really happened to them. It must have been much, much worse. I was not sure what to expect, and at first I wasn't sure what was happening. We stood outside on the street; it was hot that day. "Line up against the wall," he yells. "You are now my property, not my equal. Don't look me in the eyes. You must call me master from now on." It was confusing, scary. My feelings throughout this whole experience kept changing. I have never done anything like this before.



He told us to go inside, to walk a certain way so it felt like we were wearing shackles. He led us into a room, a small one. Girls lined up on one side, guys on the other, but he didn't say it that nicely. They were many of us, so we were tightly packed together. He told us we no longer had names. We were now only referred to as numbers. He told us we would never be able to see our families again, that our old identities were gone.

He led us into another room. It was very dark. This is where the slaves were kept he said. He flicked on the light. The floor was brown. He said this was supposed to represent the five feet of bones and feces they lived and died in.

We were led into another room; this one had a fake boat in the middle of it. We didn't all fit, so many of us leaned against the wall. A video started playing. It showed waves and water. The whole time we could hear screaming, a baby crying. On the walls were pictures of people, skeletons, their ankles chained to other people. If a person died you were left chained to them. Many did.



We were told to duck through a low door into a long hallway, where we all stood in a line on brown carpet. He walked up and down the line and picked out about five different people who “he thought would make the best slaves.” He told them to each pick other people from the group. After they did, he turned on the original five and said if they were willing to turn on their own kind, they would also turn on him. He took them into a different room, where we couldn't see them. He then began beating the door that connected us with some type of stick, and the students started screaming. It was fake of course; they were not really being hurt.

I was scared. I shouldn't have been. Our tour guide wasn't going to hurt us, and I knew that. I knew I was going to be okay. But still for some reason, it felt scary. Being treated that way doesn't feel right. It makes you feel so inhuman, even if it's not real. I will never be able to know how the people who actually had to go through this really felt. If I was scared, sad and so many other mixed emotions, then they must have felt so much worse.

The part that was jarred me most was the end. We were taken to a corner of a dark room, with white sheets hanging over the walls. On the sheets were images. Many were of what looked like the KKK. One image was an African American man, who was hung by an American flag. There were many confederate flags around. It was chilling. The five students he took earlier were already in the room, some were on the ground, others sitting. Their eyes were closed. Nooses hung around their necks. I knew it wasn't real, but it was hard to look at. It ended here. He told all the students to stand up, and for everyone to take a deep breath. It was over now.

After all this, we were taken into a separate, lighter room where we had a discussion about what just happened. It was helpful to sort through all the mixed thoughts and feelings, and hear other people's perspectives.

When I say that this trip changed my life, I really mean it. This place especially. In school, we learn a brushed over version of slavery that is very rushed through. I learned more about slavery on this day than I have in all of my years of schooling. Going through something like this really opens your eyes. It helps you understand it, and makes you curious to learn much more. It also made me kind-of mad. I really get to experience how messed up it was, and some people might never realize this was happening to people in our country.

Something almost as heartbreaking as slavery itself, is a century after slavery ended, African Americans still had to fight for their rights, for their human, citizen rights, something as simple as voting. That is where

the Edmund Pettus bridge comes in. While in Selma, not only did we get to visit the Slavery museum, we also got the chance to walk over this amazing landmark.

The Edmund Pettus Bridge was very different, and felt more like a reflective experience. After all the chaos we just went through, it was now much more quiet. It was crazy to be there. This was the bridge that marches happened on, this was where Bloody Sunday took place. So many influential leaders in this movement stood on the exact spot we walked over. The bridge plays a huge role in the movement, the bridge itself changed history. It felt unreal.

My biggest takeaway from this day, from all of Selma, and the whole trip, really was learning. Learning about this movement and what came before it, and how this is still so relevant, especially today. On this trip, I learned so much my brain felt packed, like it was overflowing! I still wanted to learn more. I want other people to feel the same way about this as I do. Now, I will share what I learned with as many people as possible.

TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH

BY: GARY ROBINS

I didn't know what to expect to get out of our social justice journey other than I would be changed forever. I didn't know the change would be so fundamental. I have not changed in the "you've lost 100 pounds" kind of change, but "you've been to war," kind of change. I see the world in a new and more human way. I have a completely new perspective of God and realize how powerful God's love can be.

I go forth from this "mission trip" with the perspective of where God lives and how God's love is more powerful than any human love.

We met Mr. Kirk Carrington in Selma at the Tabernacle Baptist Church. Sitting on the bench of the Hammond 100 organ, he told us of his march on Bloody Sunday over the Edmund Pettus Bridge and the training he went through in preparation for that day. This story began over a year before Bloody Sunday. It started with true non-violence training from Dr. Bernard Lafayette. Kirk Carrington was 13. Just a kid! After school, and sometimes during, he would join others in the African American community in the Tabernacle Baptist basement to learn how to stand up to fear in one of its ugliest forms. They would have mock confrontations to prepare them for what they would face while marching. I learned that non-violence is not an inherent trait in humans. One must be trained to stare true fear in the eye. True fear hates...is angry...is violent, in order to survive. Not all have the ability to take on a non-violent position. Mr. Carrington's brother was not able to grasp non-violence resistance even with the training. During Bloody Sunday, his brother was put into the center of the crowd surrounded by people to keep him from lashing back. Mr. Carrington has story given me an



understanding of what was achieved and not achieved through the non-violence protests in the 1960's. The protests staved off overt attacks, but the hate did not leave. The ones who feared the movement did not, nor have they, truly changed. The fact is the opposition gave up Selma to the African American community. They left the city, moved to create a well-manicured suburb. The hate did not leave.



Now, how God lives in the midst of non-violence

Put your hands together like you're praying. Your left hand is the past. Your right hand is the future. Put them together tight. The space between your hands is where God lives. This is where anyone who faces violence with non-violence has to be. I believe those who were being beaten were there, while forgiving the person beating them, in the present. I believe, through God's love, they were able to take it even a step further. While they were being beaten and forgiving, they were doing this all with love... This is God love. This is something no human can do on their own.

I now see the Civil Rights movement as a series of actions, not a series of reactions. Decisions such as sending Dr. Lafayette to Selma to train, not fight. This had to be hard, looking into the future, and trusting God.

Today, I don't think we have the patience for this. I don't think most people want to be inconvenienced with action. There's only time for quick reaction, such as a like on a Facebook post. To get off our butts, look at the long term, and then...follow through? This is where Plymouth comes in. The "man" got us to sit safely behind our computer screen and view the world. We sit numb and do everything from there. We work there, we buy our socks there, we have food sent to us from there, we send bombs to Iraq from there. What will take us away from the safe, warm nurturing space we have created around our screen, to fight for something that will make us uncomfortable, ostracized from polite society and, if done right, possibly physically harmed. There is more fear out there than ever. Fear has a tighter weave around us than ever. What can we do to support God and love.

God is love. God is action.

Plymouth is Church of action.

Fear is the opposite of love.



Day 7: Tuskegee, AL

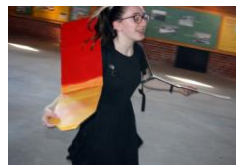
TUSKEGEE AIRMAN MUSEUM, TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY AND
BOOKER T. WASHINGTON'S HOME, ATTORNEY FRED GRAY

Friday April 13, 2017

On our last full day we traveled to Tuskegee, AL for a tour of the Tuskegee Airman Museum. The museum is inside the same hangar that served as the training center for the Tuskegee airman during World War II. After our tour of the museum, we drove up the road to visit the Tuskegee Human and Civil Rights Multicultural Center. The center was formed originally to serve as a memorial to victims and survivors of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. The study was done on over 600 African American men in rural Alabama. They were guaranteed free medical care for the study, but when funding ran out, the US Public Health Service did not treat the men. The men infected were never told they had the disease, and none were treated with penicillin even after the antibiotic was proven to successfully treat syphilis.

After touring the museum we went upstairs to hear from Attorney Fred Gray, the leading lawyer for Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr. and the men of Tuskegee Syphilis Study. Attorney Gray discussed the work he did on Rosa Parks' case and on the case to allow the five-day march from Selma to Montgomery, following Bloody Sunday, March 25, 1965. As we entered the room, we were told to sit with a seat empty next to each of us to make room for another group. In a few short minutes, we were joined by a college group from Boston College. It was the same group of students that had toured the Voting Rights Museum and the Slavery Experience Museum at the same time as our group the day before. So when they walked in, we greeted each other as old friends. They had about 30 students in their group, so they more than doubled our group, but it was great to experience our last two days with other students who were on a similar civil rights history journey. Following our presentation with Attorney Gray, we drove to Tuskegee University, where we ate lunch on campus before walking to tour Booker T. Washington's home The Oaks.





PEOPLE CHANGE

By: ALEX PUTNAM

Everyone's been biased about something in their lives. This is an opinionated world it's kind of hard not to be and it's also hard to say you haven't been in your life. It may just be something small like "who's the best baseball team this year" or "biking around town is better than driving." It could just be small opinions like these, or it could be something larger. For example, maybe "everyone from the south is a redneck" or "they all voted for Donald Trump." Now I know, these are very large and strong opinions but they are opinions I've heard way too many times in the city of Seattle from all different age groups and backgrounds. This trip wasn't to just look into the past, it was to also look at the present and prepare for the future. I can tell you right now the people we met in Georgia and Alabama are unlike any other people I've met here in Washington. Ask yourself, have you ever walked in Seattle, maybe down 3rd Ave, made eye contact with a stranger and said hello to them? Without having it be some awkward passing by? Have you waited in line for coffee and struck up a conversation with someone and just talked like you knew each other? I can tell you right now it's usually a one in a million chance for me to have that kind of encounter in Seattle. But down in Alabama and Georgia? That's all you get. I swear, southern hospitality is a real thing. At Ebenezer Church, waiting outside for the rest of the group, people said hi to me and shook my hand as if I knew them. When we first walked into the Dexter Ave Baptist Church, Ms.



Wanda gave everyone a hug as we entered the door like we had just came home from college. Even the housekeepers at the hotels we stayed in talked to us, asked us how our day was going and showed us that they cared. Look, the biggest thing I'm trying to get out of this reflection is: "People are amazing." I wouldn't have seen any of that though without Gary telling me that People are amazing. They have stories to tell, lessons to teach and voices to be heard. **So please, after reading all of these reflections, after hearing what we have to say, listen to their stories, learn their lessons and hear their voices. I promise, you won't regret it. I promise, you won't regret it.**

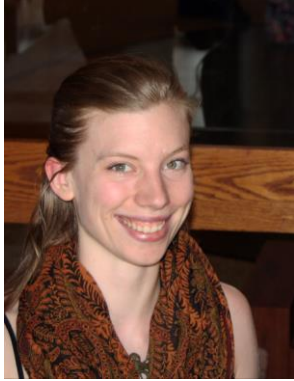
So please, after reading all these reflections, after hearing what we have to say, listen to their stories, learn their lessons and hear their voices. I promise, you won't regret it.

LISTEN → LEARN → LOVE

What's next?

REFLECTIONS ON WHAT COMES NEXT FROM OUR JOURNEY

BY: ANNA COLWELL



"The most spiritually splendid American phenomenon of my lifetime is how African-American citizens have maintained their dignity and self-respect, despite their having been treated by white Americans, both in and out of government, and simply because of their skin color, as though they were contemptible and loathsome, and even diseased. If this isn't nice, I don't know what is." -Kurt Vonnegut

It is hard to not see the world in black and white when you are traveling on the path of a civil rights pilgrimage. Every face I saw was through the filter that the history of each place carried. To stand in the spaces where such cowardice and hate was met with the courage and love of each civil rights foot soldier brought us a visceral connection to the past that distorted history textbooks could not touch. In each place, there was evidence of change and reason to hope.

The people of these places kept my heart in a constant state of melting and exploding with admiration. At its most basic level, southern hospitality is REAL. The level of civility and immediate recognition of each person's humanity is evident in the way they smile at you, welcome you and automatically honor you as a person. I could not help but need to take moments every once in a while to catch my breath. As a guest in the land of the stolen and disenfranchised, I saw more love, humor and humility than anywhere else.

Love was indeed evident in the way every speaker's volunteered time and energy centered around education and encouragement. Their wisdom acknowledged the progress while continuing to confront the work to be done. It was an honor to listen to the stories of those that lived through a time that demonized interracial conversations such as these.

If nothing else, this trip hit home for me just how deep it all goes. At night, I allowed myself to let the day marinate and to truly just feel it. I needed to feel the fact that we were down here choosing to learn what so many had no choice but to live. I needed to feel how much it hurt to hear of the disrespect and danger that at the end of the week I would leave behind as stories heard and not lived. It hurt just to listen, which is exactly why we must.

If we are not sure of the brilliant new steps we need to make for change, then we must build on what we know. Rumi said, "Walk and the way shall appear." We must cultivate conversations and contact. We must recognize the humanity in every story. We must talk with our relatives until Thanksgiving becomes less awkward. Our avoidance of emotional and political conversations has left us with a fragility that must go. It is the comfort that has kept us from talking about the issues that matter for too long. There is good work being done out there in the world and we as fellow humans and as a church must tap into that community and bolster the support for change.

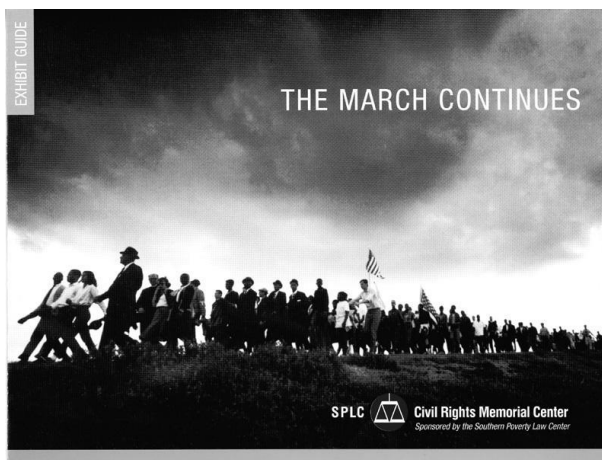
We can do this because we must do this.

For our final evening circle at the Drury Inn, the group asked to talk about how to bring back our experience to Plymouth. The discussion ranged from how everyone was feeling in the moment to how they were going to be able to share their experiences with their closest friends. While we didn't leave with final answers, the overwhelming feeling was that this trip was life- changing and this is just the start of the

transformation we are seeing at Plymouth and in ourselves. We developed a list of hopes and actions we hope to bring back to Plymouth.

- Host the Shareholder's lunch to share our experience.
- Re-connect with Mt. Zion's youth group.
- Donate to local grassroots movements.
- Raise money for the museums and locations we visited on our trip. Ex. Anniston Freedom Riders Museum and the Tuskegee History Center
- Work on Voting Rights policies in Washington and the Country.
- Attend Seattle Public School board meetings to fight discrimination and institutionalized racism with the public-school system.
- Attend teach-ins or host teach-ins at Plymouth.
- Support undoing institutional racism in school and ask for it at our own schools.
- Support congregation-wide undoing institutional racism training.
- Get involved with local grassroots activism like #NoNewYouthJail.
- Pledge to disrupt moments of oppression and micro-aggressions in our daily lives.
- Continue to support Plymouth's work with the Village of Hope.

As the Southern Poverty Law Center says, The March Continues.



THANK YOU!

HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE PEOPLE WHO MADE THIS TRIP POSSIBLE:

GOD! –Thank you, God, for holding us all through the unanswered questions, the fear, the sadness, the joy and the love. Your light shined through each person we met and each story we heard. Thank you for guiding us throughout this year as we prepared for this pilgrimage, and thank you for holding us each day as we figure out “What’s Next.”

YOU! Our Shareholders and Donors – Thank you to every single person who donated to financially make our trip possible. You are the foundation of what allowed us to take this journey and we are forever grateful.

The beloved Plymouth Congregational Church community: You are our anchor and foundation that allowed this dream to launch. You have invested and loved us all for (many of us) our entire lives. Thank you for coming to every fundraiser – *Selma*, Coffee House, concerts and our GoFundMe page. Thank you for your words of encouragement and hugs in the hallway. And mostly, thank you for the courage to stand up for justice and for creating a community that stands up, speaks out and acts.

Reverend Kelle Brown: Thank you for all you share with and bring to our Plymouth family. You have breathed new life into the walls and hearts of Plymouth and we are forever grateful. Thank you for joining us on this journey, for sharing your other corner of the world with us. We LOVE you!

Suzanne Lacey, Nicole Czubin and Museum Without Walls: We are forever grateful for every hour you put into making this trip happen. The trip you organized was above and beyond any of our dreams and having both of you there was a gift we cannot begin to describe. Museum Without Walls is changing the world, and we are honored to be a part of it.

Indigo Brown: Thank you for sparking the idea to connect with Museum Without Walls and to take this journey! We are forever grateful for your love and support on this journey.

Our Youth Forum members: Thank you for all you bring to YF; your honesty, your vulnerability, your voices, your strengths and your hearts. You have come into this year with an energy and commitment to create the community you want to be a part of and trusted us to help guide you there.

Our Adult leaders (Anna, Gary and Katie) – Thank you for stepping into this role with open hearts and for guiding our Youth Forum this year. Thank you for trusting each other, our staff and God to help guide you through the challenges, questions, joys and fears this year. To Gary – Thank you for capturing our smiles in your pictures throughout the week. You have a gift of capturing the light in people!

The wonderful, amazing and incredible Plymouth Staff: To Rev. Steve Davis – Thank you for all you have done to share the message of our trip and support us in this journey. To Janice – Thank you for always being there to help us share events, for being 10 steps ahead of us at all times (thank goodness!) and for your patience with answering any and all of our questions. To Diane – Thank you for every check, dollar, Mod Pizza order you helped us manage. You are a foundational part of what made this year possible for us! To Jen Castle – our rock, our compass and our ever-patient, loving guide this year. You are a constant source of support for us as we navigate this role for the first time. To Wanda – Thank you for sharing your gift of music with us and supporting our trip!

To our Speakers, tour guides and the people who joined us on tours: Thank you for your time, your wisdom and for sharing your story with us. We would like to specifically thank: the Ebenezer Baptist Church congregation and Rev. Raphael Warnock, the staff of Café 458, the 16th St. Baptist Church staff, Ms. Wanda at Dexter Baptist Church, Ms. Shirley at Dr. King’s Parsonage, Dr. Bernard LaFayette and Kate LaFayette, Dorothy of the Freedom Riders Museum, the Anniston Freedom Riders Museum staff, Mr. Wood, The Voting Rights Museum and Slavery Museum staff, the Tabernacle Church and Mr. Kirk, the Tuskegee History Center and Attorney Gray. To all the other guides and people who joined us throughout the week, Thank YOU.

To the Civil Rights heroes who gave their lives for the justice movement. Thank you for your courage and bravery to fight for a better future for us all.

Places you can donate to continue to support this work:

- Ebenezer Baptist Church
 - 101 Jackson St. NE Atlanta GA, 30312
 - 404-688-7300
- The King Center
 - 449 Auburn Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30312
 - 404-526-8900
- Café 458
 - 458 Edgewood Ave SE, Atlanta, GA 30312
 - 404-446-4688
- Clark Atlanta University
 - 223 James P Brawley Dr SW, Atlanta, GA 30314
 - 404-880-8000
- Morehouse University
 - 830 Westview Dr SW, Atlanta, GA 30314
 - 404-681-2800
- Spelman College
 - 350 Spelman Ln, Atlanta, GA 30314
 - 404-681-3643
- NPS Freedom Riders National Monument (Anniston Greyhound Bus Terminal)
 - 1031 Gurnee Avenue Anniston, AL 36201
 - 404-960-9067
- Bus Burning Site (Old Birmingham Highway/State Route 202)
 - intersection of Old Birmingham Highway and Barkwood Dr., Anniston, AL 36201
- "Four Little Girls" movie
 - Spike Lee
- 16th Street Baptist Church
 - 1530 6th Ave N, Birmingham, AL 35203
 - 205-251-9402
- Civil Rights Institute
 - 520 16th St N, Birmingham, AL 35203
 - 205-328-9696
- Rosa Parks Museum
 - 252 Montgomery St, Montgomery, AL 36104
 - 334-241-8615
- Dexter Ave Baptist Church
 - Ask for Ms. Wanda
 - 454 Dexter Ave, Montgomery, AL 36104
 - 334-263-3970
- Dr. King Parsonage
 - Ask for Ms. Cherry
 - 309 S Jackson St, Montgomery, AL 36104
 - 334-261-3270
- Southern Poverty Law Center
 - 400 Washington Ave. Montgomery, AL 36104
 - 334-956-8200
- Freedom Riders Museum
 - 210 S Court St, Montgomery, AL 36104
 - 334-414-8647
- Voting Rights Museum
 - 6 US-80 BUS, Selma, AL 36701
 - 334-418-0800
- Ancient Africa, Enslavement, & Civil War Museum
 - 1410 Water Avenue Selma, AL 36703
 - 334-526-4000
- Tuskegee Airmen Museum Tour - in World War II.
 - 1616 Chappie James Ave, Tuskegee, AL 36083
 - 334-724-0922
- Tuskegee Human and Civil Rights Multicultural Center, <http://www.tuskegeecenter.org/donate.htm>
 - 104 S. Elm, Tuskegee AL, 36083
 - 334-724-0800
- Tuskegee University
 - 1200 W Montgomery Rd, Tuskegee, AL 36088
 - 334-727-8011
- NPS Booker T. Washington home
 - 1212 W Montgomery Rd, Tuskegee, AL 36088
 - 334-727-3200