



3-9-2015

Lancastrians Marched with Dr. King in Selma

Michael J. Birkner
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/histfac>

 Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [Cultural History Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Birkner, Michael J. "Lancastrians Marched with Dr. King in Selma." Lancaster Online (March 9, 2015).

This is the publisher's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/histfac/55>

This open access opinion is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

Lancastrians Marched with Dr. King in Selma

Abstract

Fifty years after he addressed a crowd in Lancaster's Penn Square about "the idea that all men are one," Wayne Glick remembers that moment as if it happened yesterday. Glick's speech, inviting Lancastrians to participate in the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, on behalf of African-American voting rights, is a footnote to Lancaster County history. But the march itself, featured in the popular film "Selma," helped to change America. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Lancaster, Martin Luther King, Civil Rights, Selma, Montgomery, Protest, Civil Rights Movement, Edmund Pettus Bridge

Disciplines

African American Studies | Cultural History | History | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Social History | United States History

Lancastrians marched with Dr. King in Selma

Posted: Monday, March 9, 2015 6:00 am
MICHAEL J. BIRKNER | Special to LNP



In 1965 on Penn Square, F&M Provost Wayne Glick tried to enlist marchers for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s demonstration for African-American voting rights.

Spurred by King's call for people of goodwill to march for black rights, Glick collaborated with F&M chaplain Robert Taylor to publicize the effort and round up supporters.

Doing this, Glick recently told this interviewer, "was one of the highlights of my life."

Dr. King organized three marches, one of which was broken up in brutal fashion at Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge, and one of which King held up at the bridge for tactical reasons. The third march — a 54-mile trek to Alabama's state capital — was completed in the last week of March 1965. Participants in that third march included Glick and a dozen members of the F&M community.

How did this extraordinary adventure unfold?

Early in March 1965, Glick and Taylor drew up a resolution calling for President Lyndon B. Johnson and Congress to enact legislation assuring the right to vote. On March 11, Glick presented this resolution at a faculty meeting, where it was warmly received.

Fifty years after he addressed a crowd in Lancaster's Penn Square about "the idea that all men are one," Wayne Glick remembers that moment as if it happened yesterday. Glick's speech, inviting Lancastrians to participate in the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, on behalf of African-American voting rights, is a footnote to Lancaster County history. But the march itself, featured in the popular film "Selma," helped to change America.

In March 1965, Glick was serving as Franklin & Marshall College's provost. He was closely following events in the deep South as segregationists fought to sustain white supremacy and a way of life they thought immutable.

Four days later, at noon on a cold day, Glick spoke in Penn Square before a “chilled crowd of 200 persons,” according to an account in the Lancaster New Era. He decried the ongoing violence in Alabama directed at both local blacks and white supporters of the cause. At this rally, Glick and Taylor encouraged members of the Lancaster community to join them on a bus trip to Selma to participate in the first leg of King’s proposed march.

Though they were unable to enlist the 40 Lancaster citizens they hoped to attract, an F&M contingent of a dozen faculty, students and administrators did go to Alabama, along with local high school student Neil Sheneberger. None regretted the inconvenience of a car trip that took them to Alabama over two days and got them to the Brown Chapel in Selma just in time to attend a multidenominational worship service. In a brief sermon, Dr. King quoted Scripture regarding the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt — “most fitting,” Glick recalls.

At the close of King’s remarks, which drew a “swelling roar from the crowd” in Glick’s recollection, the group linked hands and sang, “We Shall Overcome.” Once final instructions were given, roughly 8,000 marchers moved through the streets in ranks of eight, across the Pettus Bridge, and onto the highway.

At the conclusion of their allotted 11 miles, the Lancaster marchers departed, leaving the legally permissible contingent of 300 with Dr. King to keep walking toward Montgomery.

The date was March 22, 1965.

Less than a week later, 11 members of the F&M contingent, still high on their experience, described it at a special student-faculty forum in F&M’s Green Room.

Glick said the cause was so important that not engaging in it “would darken the conscience.” English professor Gerald Enscoe noted that the value of the experience itself was reason enough to go. The abuse the marchers endured from segregationist onlookers, he said, was a badge of pride.

Student Steven Keroes recounted the night he spent in a North Carolina jail because his car broke down. He called this “Southern hospitality,” adding that the jail was segregated.

For Samuel Allen, a professor of Russian history at F&M, and one of the college’s few African-American faculty members then, Selma was safer than expected, perhaps because President Johnson had federal troops supervising the march. But as Allen would later recall, danger didn’t matter because he felt a “moral imperative” to show “solidarity with the black freedom struggle.”

There was reason to be fearful. Days before the final, successful march, a 38-year-old white minister from Boston, James Reeb, was clubbed to death by whites in downtown Selma. The night the march reached its triumphant conclusion, a Detroit housewife and marcher named Viola Liuzzo was shot to death by members of the Ku Klux Klan while driving along a dark highway in “Bloody Lowndes” County.

At various stopping points en route to Selma, F&M student Robert Rea recalled, the group had drawn “hate stares.” Heading home to Lancaster, Allen offered to stay in the car when the group stopped to eat. He later recalled he didn’t want a “martyr’s death at a truck stop in backwoods Georgia.” His traveling companions decided it would be better to keep going to Atlanta, where they might find a more welcoming establishment.

A half-century later, Rea recalled the march with the same quiet intensity as Glick. It was, he said, the defining moment of his life. “I was making a statement, standing up for what was right — being a body to march.” “I tried,” he said, “to live my beliefs.”

Lancaster participants in the march were making a statement about human equality. Fifty years later, the cause remains close to the center of the American conversation about race.

Michael J. Birkner is a professor of history at Gettysburg College and a member of the board of LancasterHistory.org.

http://lancasteronline.com/opinion/columnists/lancastrians-marched-with-dr-king-in-selma/article_63afa8d8-c443-11e4-a2af-c3bb7be7fd2c.html