THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965 (A):

THE SELMA CAMPAIGN

On August 6, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This case, the first of three, examines the part played by voting rights drives in Selma, Alabama, in the enactment of the law.

The Selma Campaign: Beginnings

The first stirring of the Selma voting rights movement occurred in 1961, when Reverend Fred Reese, newly elected president of the local black teachers' group, read a statement to a meeting of all local teachers and administrators urging black teachers to attempt to register to vote in Dallas County. Fearful of recriminations, few black teachers heeded Reese. However, the seeds had been planted in Selma's black middle class for a voting rights movement.

By January 1963, when approximately 125 blacks were registered to vote in Dallas County, Marie Foster, a dental hygenist, began to feel that something should be done to correct low Negro voter registration rate:

> I was just sitting around my house one day when I became angry because Negroes didn't seem to be getting anywhere in Selma. Only one hundred and twenty-something-odd were registered in the entire county at that time. Selma is just the largest city in the county. But there were a lot of Negroes in other parts of the county. And everytime one of us went down to the courthouse to register the reistrar would be out to lunch or he would say it was closed for the day or would quiz you on something he knew you couldn't answer. One of their favorite questions was "How many bubbles are there in a bar of soap?"
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> So I was thinking about all of this and getting angrier by the moment. So I called my friend, Amelia Boynton who is now Amelia Billips. She was active in the civil rights movement so I asked her what could be done about it. We ended up talking about what was going on around here. We didn't have any kind of movement then or any major registration effort. It took them years to register me but

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> Mrs. Boynton and I were both registered at that time, which had to have been the winter of 1963. Anyway, we discussed conducting a class to teach black folks how to fill out the application and how to act once they got down to the courthouse. You see, attitude could make a difference. They had to register a Negro every now and then so the ones they did register had the right attitudes. So it was stuff like that that we wanted the people to know.

By February of 1963, Marie Foster and others in the black community had begun to conduct the voter registration class. Ms. Foster kept a daily roster of who attended classes and who passed the tests she and the other instructors gave. In the summer of 1963, she met Assistant Attorney General John Doar, head of the Civil Rights Division, who was working on a voting suit against Dallas County. At Doar's request, Ms. Foster allowed him to take her roster to Washington. She explained, "He wanted to let the folks in Washington know that things were being done in the voting area in certain places in Alabama." Still, the registration drive proceeded slowly: by January, 1965, only 300 blacks were registered in the county.

During the spring of 1964 Marie Foster, Reverend Reese, Amelia Boynton Billips, and other black leaders in Selma began to conduct mass meetings at local churches to raise political consciences of the Negroes in the town. Marie Foster recalls what went on during the meetings:

> Sheriff Jim Clark and his deputies would come to just about all of our meetings to observe and to so-called keep the order. In a way we did not want them there, being as how they tried to degrade us. In another way, we were glad they came because we could involve them and speak to them. The organizers would ask me to bring up a topic in black history every night, you know, to make the black man know that he was somebody, and that he had just cause to hold up his head. I would say things like this: "Whites would rather die and actually go to hell than to call us Miss or Mrs. Their parents have always told them that we stank and didn't bathe and that black women couldn't be ladies. They told their kids 'You don't call any colored woman Miss or Mrs. because they are not ladies.' I know Sheriff Clark and his deputies never thought they would hear such things coming from my mouth and we were in the church and we showed them that we didn't give a hoot about their being in there.
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> And I would stand up in the pulpit and I would tell them, "You know I thought white people were supposed to have a lot of sense"--and I'd be looking right at Clark or his men--"but it seems that Selma white folks don't have much sense. I am sick of going into these stores running up two and three hundred dollar bills. You mean to tell me that our money is good but we are not good enough to be called MR. Brown or MISS Johnson." And the crowds would go wild clapping and cheering in agreement.

In July of 1964 Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark persuaded Alabama Circuit Court Judge James Hare to enjoin the black Selmans from meeting in groups of more than five. Reverend Reese explains what happened then:

> For a while we didn't do anything. Finally a small group of maybe seven of us--people like Marie Foster, Amelia Boynton and a couple of the other local ministers--began to meet secretely at Mrs. Boynton's home. After a few meetings we decided that the injunction would have to be broken. It was then agreed that Dr. King would be the best person to break the injunction. His presence and the publicity we would receive was just what was needed to put some pressure on the county officials.

Dr. King was contacted in late November at the SCLC national headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. He and his staff began to discuss the possibility of conducting a voter rights campaign in Selma. It was decided that the campaign would be launched on January 1, 1965, the 100th aniversary of the day the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect.

Why Selma?

John Lewis, former head of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), explains what made 1965 and Selma right for voter registration activity:

> SNCC first went into Selma in 1962, three years before SCLC arrived. The field secretary for SNCC conducted a preliminary survey of the problems in Selma and did not discover anything really different or surprising except in Selma--and throughout the black areas of Alabama--there were hundreds of thousands of black people who were not registered to vote. In some places blacks made up the majority of the political subdivisions. After the 1964 summer project and the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City in 1964 all across the South and particularly in SNCC there was a great sense of bitterness, a great sense of frustration. Many people--many of the young people and many of the people in both SNCC and SCLC felt that we had suffered a major setback in involving black people in the political process because the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegation was not seated at the convention in Atlantic City.

According to Dr. Ralph David Abernathy of SCLC, a sense of political frustration was felt by certain members of his organization, which contributed to the group's decision to go into Selma. Dr. Abernathy recalls other reasons:

> It was late 1964 when Dr. King, myself, and other members of the executive staff began to discuss Selma. We were glad to find an area where there was a brutal sheriff and yet an area that was accessible to the news media.

Abernathy, the present head of SCLC, admits that he felt some reluctance about going into Selma:

> My family comes from Lydon, Alabama, which is only 50 miles from Selma, and I still have seven or eight brothers and sisters and sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law who teach in the adjoining county, Merinco, which is our home county. I did not want to start something in Selma and get my family members get fired and have them looking at me funny. So I had to prepare myself psychologically for Selma. I'll never forget Martin asking me, "Well, Ralph when will we be ready to go to Selma?" He really understood and did not want to do anything to jeopardize me or my family. We did not get to Selma on January 1, the Emancipation Day. But we got there on January 2.

From Voter Registration to Protest Movement

Arriving in Selma on January 2, 1965, Dr. King spoke at Brown Chapel:

> I'm not here to tell you tonight that violence has never won a victory in history. Nations have often won their independence through violence. But I do come to tell you tonight that violence may win a temporary victory, but it cannot win a permanent peace. . .

King was unable to be in Selma full-time during the course of the campaign: he spent most of his time in Atlanta or in keeping speaking engagements throughout the country. His presence, nonetheless, was always felt and seemed to provide the necessary spark to ignite the Selma black community.

On January 19, 62 demonstrators were arrested as they tried to enter the front door of the Selma courthouse. The arrests followed a verbal confrontation between Sheriff Clark and Reverend C.T. Vivian of Chicago:

> If we're wrong, why don't you arrest us? We're willing to be beaten for democracy. And you misuse democracy in the street. You beat people bloody in order that they will not have the privilege to vote. . . . This courthouse does not belong to Sheriff Clark. This courthouse belongs to the people of Dallas County. And you know this in your hearts, Sheriff Clark. You are not as evil a man as you act. You know in your heart what is right. . . [Clark turns his back on Reverend Vivian] . . . you can turn your back on me, but you cannot turn your back on the idea of justice. You can turn your back now, and you can keep the club in your hand, but you cannot beat down justice, and we will register to vote, because as citizens of these United States, we have the right to do it.

Sheriff Clark hit Reverend Vivian with his club and then arrested him and the other demonstrators.

Between January 20 and February 8, 1,147 adults and 1,200 children and high school students were arrested. Federal marshals and FBI agents were sent to the area. Dr. King had returned to Selma in February and was one of those who was

arrested. While in jail he was supposed to be in New York at the monthly meeting of his New York Research Group, a group of lawyers, businessmen, labor leaders, and civil rights activists who served as a sounding board for many of his plans and ideas. Harry Wachtel, one of the lawyers in the group, recalls talking to King aide Andrew Young by phone about whether Dr. King would be able to attend the meeting:

> The date as I recall was February 5. Andy Young was not in jail. He told me that Dr. King would be released some time that day but would not be coming to New York. And I asked Andy what was Dr. King planning when he was released. Andy said, "Nothing." I said, "That stinks. Television cameras are going to be there and people all over the nation will be watching and he has nothing special to say, no plans, no gimmicks." Andy then asked did I have any suggestions. Off the top of my head I said, "He should tell the press that he's going to Washington to petition the President." Andy thought the idea was good but he had to get word to Dr. King to see what he thought. King liked it so he told the press later that day that he was going to take his case to the President.

Since the President did not like people to invite themselves to the White House, it was fortunate that Harry Wachtel knew LBJ aide, Lee White personally. A meeting between King and President Johnson was arranged for February 9 after Wachtel and White worked out minor details by phone.

As part of the plan, Dr. King and other civil rights leaders met in Washington on February 9 to confer with Vice President Hubert Humphrey about voting rights. President Johnson interrupted the meeting by telephone and requested that the Vice President immediately join him at the Oval Office. As Humphrey was leaving the meeting with the civil rights leaders, he asked Dr. King to come with him to meet the President. According to Harry Wachtel, "The Humphrey meeting, the phone call from the President, and HHH's insistence that King come to the Oval Office with him [were all] planned in advance. Johnson did not like for people to invite themselves to the White House. Not wanting to be upstaged by King, he made it appear as if King and he met by accident."

The February 10, 1965 issue of the New York Times reported:

> LBJ and King discussed broad new guarantees sought by Dr. King to secure the right to vote. King's proposal included a provision for enforcement of legislation by Federal registrars, appointed by and responsible to the people.
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> LBJ told King that the Justice Department was working on voting rights legislation and that he would send a message to Congress about it "very soon."
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> The White House disclosed Saturday that the President would make a strong recommendation on the subject to this session of Congress.

Dr. King's proposals included:

--allowing blacks to register at post offices if they were refused elsewhere

--providing machinery that would automatically eliminate the imposition of discriminatory standards by the state officials

--putting an end to literacy tests where Negores were disadvantaged by inferior schools

--making legislation apply to all federal, state, and local elections

--sending in federal registrars to enforce the law

--concentrating on the most oppressive regions of the country.

The tone of the Johnson-King meeting was cordial but frank, just as the Humphrey meeting had been. Both Johnson and Humphrey sympathized with the voting problems, although they wondered whether it was too soon after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to attempt the passage of another major piece of civil rights legislation. As Johnson aide Lee White suggests, "Johnson really had his heart in civil rights. He truly believed that the federal government should do more to make blacks first-class citizens. But Johnson was also a practical man, a politician. He took each day as it came. And when King met with him, the time was probably not right for voting legislation." Uncertain as to what he could expect from the President, Dr. King announced to the press that he would return to Selma and might concentrate on Lowndes County, Alabama where no blacks were registered. And on February 22, King announced a march from Selma to Montgomery, to be held on March 7, to petition the government of the state of Alabama for action to secure black voting rights.

Meanwhile, voting rights demonstrations continued in many Alabama towns. King, for example, visited Camden (seat of Wilcox County) and other towns to urge Negroes to attempt to register to vote. John Lewis of SNCC led an aborted march in Camden, turned back by locked courthouse doors. And the Dallas County registrars were now under a federal court order to process at least a hundred applications everytime they met; the average figure had been thirty. The movement was not free from violence, however. On February 18, Jimmie Lee Jackson, a deacon of St. James Baptist Church in Marion, Alabama, was clubbed and shot (reportedly by state troopers) in a voting rights march; he died on February 26.

On March 2, Roy Wilkins of NAACP met with President Johnson and received assurances that the President fully supported the right of every American to vote and would soon send a voting message to Congress. On the same day, Senate Republican Leader Everett Dirksen said that he favored new voting rights legislation and thought that Congress was ready to enact a new law without a filibuster.* Dirksen arranged to meet with Attorney General Nicholas B. Katzenbach to discuss the Administration's proposals. The March 4

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*On March 3 the Senate Rules Committee voted not to recommend a change in the Senate's cloture rules reducing the number of votes needed to invoke cloture.

New York Times reported that the Alabama campaigns had produced strong bipartisan support for a voting rights bill and that Southern Senators would not filibuster if the bill were limited to federal elections. According to the Times, even such a pillar of the Southern establishment as Senator Russell Long of Louisiana had admitted that a voting rights bill was needed.

Nonetheless, planning for the Sunday March 7, march continued. Alabama Governor George C. Wallace announced that state troopers would act to prevent any march from Selma to Montgomery, as it would constitute a "traffic hazard" on Highway 80. After learning that the troopers would block the march, King agreed not to lead it, apparently leaving the leadership to John Lewis of SNCC. However, King announced plans for a second march on Tuesday, March 9, and promised to seek a court order enjoining interference with the marchers.

Governor Wallace's announcement seemed to supersede Selma Public Safety Director Wilson Baker's management of the protests. Baker, who had followed a policy of persuasion and arrests in dealing with demonstrators, had tacitly agreed with County Sheriff Jim Clark that Clark would handle the courthouse while Baker would police the streets. However, Selma Mayor Joe Smitherman, who was "in complete accord" with Governor Wallace's plan to use force to stop the march, had ordered Baker to cooperate with the state troopers under State Public Safety Director Colonel Al Lingo, who had been quoted as saying, "We don't believe in making arrests. It's better to break them [the demonstrations] up." Baker threatened to resign rather than carry out Mayor Smitherman's orders, and as the day of the march approached, Major John Cloud of the state troopers prepared to carry out Governor Wallace's order to use "whatever measures are necessary" to stop the march; in this he would receive the full support of Sheriff Clark and his various deputies and "volunteers".

When March 7 arrived, Dr. King was not in Selma. Instead, he was in Atlanta preaching at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Dr. Abernathy gives his version of the story:

> We had done some research in trying to get ready for the massive demonstration from Selma to Montgomery and we could not clear all of these things by Sunday, the 7th. Yet some publicity had gone out for people to gather at Brown Chapel Church and participate in our kickoff march but we had not even gotten the toilets and the tents. We really needed them since the march was going to take five days. Also, we had not even cleared up where we would camp out along Highway 80, the road between Selma and Montgomery. On top of all this, Judge Thomas in Mobile issued an injunction against the march. Dr. King and I decided to temporarily postpone the march and to return to our pulpits in Atlanta and preach on that Sunday. Other SCLC staff people like Andy Young and Hosea Williams stayed in Selma.

Dr. Abernathy has a vivid recollection of what happened that Sunday morning:

> I guess it was about 11:30 when an usher came upstairs to the pulpit and said to me, "There's an important long-distance

> call." It was an emergency from Selma, Alabama. It was the voice of [King aide] Hosea Williams. Hosea said, "Ralph, I know that you're the one person who Dr. King will listen to. Gobs of people are here at Brown Chapel Church. We've got to march today. We just have to march. And you're the only one who can arrange it."
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> I said, "Hosea, what do you mean by gobs of people?" And he said, "Well, we just have so many people here. Just hundreds of them. We have over a thousand people here and if we don't march today these people are going to lose face."
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> And I said, "Hold on a minute and let me call Dr. King." And I called Ebenezer Church; it was almost preaching time for Dr. King but he came to the phone.
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> He said to me, "Well, Ralph, what do you think about it? It's near time for me to go on and start preaching." And I said, "Well, I'll tell you what. If Hosea wants to go on and get his butt beat, let him go and get it beat." He said, "Well, okay. I'll turn it over to you then. Whatever you say is all right."
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> So I called Hosea back and told him to proceed with the march.

The stage was apparently set for a dramatic confrontation between the marchers and law enforcement officials. But whether anyone not present at the scene would know about it depended on the sort of media coverage it received. Thus it is important to know something of how the news media, especially television, had organized to cover the Selma campaign and the march.

T.V. News and the Selma Campaign

The national television news networks had covered the voting rights campaign in Selma in 1965 from the beginning. When asked how it happened that CBS News came to Selma in January of 1965, Charles Pierce, CBS news photographer, talked about his network's continuing coverage of civil rights events:

> From the standpoint of our continuing coverage, the civil rights struggle really began in the very early '50s, and our coverage continued throughout the years. The first [civil] rights related case I covered was when I was working as a stringer for CBS and was sent to a small town below Montgomery, Alabama, where a white woman, who had a black child had difficulties getting her daughter into the public school. Frank McGee, who is now dead, was with a local NBC station in Montgomery and I was there covering for CBS. After that Hughes Rudd of CBS did the corresponding work and I did the filming. We covered many a story in Mississippi and Alabama, you know, school integration, freedom rides, voting, what have you. What I am saying is that Selma came along routinely and when things really began to form in Selma, CBS and NBC and ABC had several people covering it.

Pierce recalls how he received his assignment to go to Selma:

> CBS at first did not have a bureau in the South. CBS was always located in New York. In the late '50s CBS opened a bureau in Atlanta and Hughes Rudd was the correspondent. The bureau consisted of four people: a secretary, Hugh, me, and my soundman. So I received the orders to go to Selma from our Atlanta bureau though prior to that all of my orders came from New York.

Richard Valeriani, NBC News correspondent, describes how assignments were given out in the NBC News network in 1965:

> Anything in the South at that time that seemed likely to produce a story or produced news automatically got covered--St. Augustine, Tuscaloosa, Gadston--I've been to all of them so I know. We did not have a bureau in the South then, so anything that would automatically be covered by the Atlanta bureau now would have come out of the New York office. In those days guys got attached to a beat. For example, I would be assigned to Chicago but if there wasn't a great deal happening in the Midwest, someone in New York would say, "Send Valeriani to Mississippi to fill in for the weekend." When I got sent to Albany, Georgia back in 1962, I was covering stories in Washington, D.C. I don't know where I was when my orders came to go to Selma, but I'm almost sure the orders came from the desk in New York.

Valeriani was hurt and hospitalized during the Selma campaign: white antagonists hit him with an axe handle while he was covering a demonstration in Marion. Charles Quinn was sent in as his replacement.

Quinn vividly recalls the Selma demonstrations:

> I had been doing all the ugly mean stories down South for about six months prior to Selma. I was becoming at that point the main racial guy around the time Dick got hit in Marion. I received my assignment to go to Selma from the New York desk. Such assignments were not coveted assignments but I was a brand new correspondent and was eager to work. A lot of other correspondents didn't want to go down South then because of the nastiness. People had been beaten up and so were newsmen and crew members. Black paint was sometimes thrown on camera lenses. I personally saw it almost from the beginning as a big story and I can remember disagreeing with colleagues who said, "King will go to jail, he'll write a letter, come out of jail and it will be over." And I said, "I don't think this story is going to turn out that way. I think we're going to be here for a long time." You see, I had a feeling that it was really voting rights. Political power is really where it is in this country and it's a lot different than somebody having the right to go into a movie or a restaurant.

Valeriani, Quinn, and Pierce found it necessary to keep their ears open to local rumors regarding the upcoming events and to keep a certain amount of personal detachment from the parties involved in the conflict. Valeriani,

for example, stayed in constant touch with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; he made it a point to know where the daily mass meetings were being held in the black community. He said, "I was pretty well plugged into all sides, I thought. A story like that is pretty difficult to cover so I saw my role as one who had to be as fair as possible." Quinn had good working relationships with both Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark, and the SCLC Executive Vice President, Andrew Young. Charles Pierce took pride in the way in which he and other CBS people interacted with the different personalities in the Selma campaign. He recalls:

> We were not an autocratic operation. We pretty much knew what the situation was. We had a day-to-day feeling on it and a day-to-day interpretation on it. It is almost all rumors, or you talk to some of the deputies or you talk to some of the hangers-on and they brag about certain things.
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> I am not trying to put myself up on a pedestal, but what I am saying is that regardless of what the situation was, if it happened, I reported it. Now I have worked with reporters who I thought were slanting the truth in one way or another. And after repeated times when I would say, "Bob, this is not exactly the way it was," and they would continue to do it, I would just tell them to get themselves another cameramen. It didn't make any difference whether they were reporting pro-black, anti-black, pro-Klan, anti-Klan, whatever--it was the minute they began to grind their own axe I considered that bad journalism.

The networks were extremely aware of the fact that their cameras could precipitate violence in Selma and that they could be exploited by civil rights groups. Charles Pierce, for example, can recall incidents in which black youths deliberately provoked white policemen because television cameras were present. In Florida once, he had to hide his camera until it was certain that the interaction between the policemen and the black youth had nothing to do with the presence of his camera. Charles Quinn of NBC news recalls:

> King could play off of Sheriff Clark beautifully for the drama of it. It worked out. It seemed to me that it was perfect from the start as just being a great story. Sometimes his field people deliberately provoked the white law officials. I incidentally reported that too; I could see that they were provoking them. That doesn't condone the violence on the part of whites, but there was a provocation down there too that incited Clark to violence and I saw it and reported it.

Charles Pierce of CBS asserts, "Well I am extremely proud of our president of CBS news because he recognized one vital element in news reporting. It was after the time of the Selma march. He recognized the fact that frequently the presence of a camera can precipitate an event so his orders were very concise. He said, "Whenever a camera crew becomes part of the action, you are ordered to withdraw."

Bloody Sunday

The March 7 march has come to be known as "The Bloody Sunday March" because marchers were attacked by roughly 100 state troopers, mounted deputy sheriffs, and volunteers; 57 people were injured and 17 were hospitalized. Marie Foster and John Lewis were among the people in front of the line who were attacked; Mr. Lewis was hospitalized for a possible skull fracture. He has not forgotten Bloody Sunday:

> I'll never forget the day here in Atlanta on March 6, the day before Bloody Sunday. There was somewhat of a conflict between the people in SNCC and SCLC. Some people in SNCC always objected to the idea of Dr. King coming to Selma. They felt this should be SNCC's project since we had been doing voting work in Alabama for years. So people like James Foreman, our executive secretary, and Stokely Carmichael, who was a member of the SNCC executive committee, were against marching the next day. They thought people would get hurt or killed and that Martin Luther King and the SCLC staff were leading people down a blind alley. We left the meeting with the agreement if people wanted to march they would march as individuals and not as representatives of SNCC. Three other members of the SNCC staff and I left Atlanta that night and drove to Selma in preparation for the march.
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> The next morning Andy Young conducted workshops instructing people what to do during the march, particularly if violence broke out. Workshops on nonviolent behavior were usually conducted by Andy. But at least an hour and half before the march SCLC people decided that all of the key staff people should not participate in the march. That was decided because if there were mass arrests then some of the key people would not be in jail and could coordinate efforts to recruit more people to join in the campaign. They drew lots with straws or sticks to determine who would march.
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> Hosea marched. In fact he and I led the march along with Marie Foster and Amelia Boynton. The march started very quietly. We had no idea when we left the church and walked through downtown Selma that something would happen on the bridge. When we crossed the bridge* we were still in twos and came face-to-face with a sea of Alabama state troopers in blue and a major by the name of John Cloud. "Go back to your Church. Go back home," he said over a megaphone, "I'm going to give you three minutes to disperse."

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*The marchers followed the main street of Selma across the Pettus Bridge to the beginning of Highway 80, where Major Cloud and Sheriff Clark had stationed both their men and the news media.

> Within two minutes, the major said, "Troopers advance." So the troopers marched up to us and started pushing us.
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> Several people were just pushed and beaten down. And some people were pushed and beaten all the way back across the bridge. There was no possibility of running or trying to get out of the line of attack. The Alabama River was below us on both sides. We couldn't jump. While these troopers were beating us and pushing us backwards Sheriff Clark and his possee came in on horses with bullwhips and tear gas.

A young black woman who was a high-school student at the time also recalls Bloody Sunday:

> We were beaten down so that I was eventually just lying on the ground. Then, they threw tear gas on me while I was lying down on the ground. And then Sheriff Clark said, "Get them nigger women up."

And in the words of the New York Times (March 8, 1965, page 1), "Alabama state troopers and volunteer officers of the Dallas County sheriff's office tore through a column of Negro demonstrators** with tear gas, night sticks, and whips here today [March 7] to enforce Governor George C. Wallace's order against a protest march from Selma to Birmingham." Although some Negroes apparently fought back at one point with bricks and bottles,*** there is no doubt that by far the greater violence was committed by state and county officials. The important thing about the Bloody Sunday events, however, is that television cameramen captured them on film.

As noted above, the action of the Dallas County Sheriff, Jim Clark, and the Alabama state troopers on "Bloody Sunday" left 17 demonstrators hospitalized. All of the national news networks captured the brutality of the beatings on film for the benefit of television viewers: millions of Americans were able to witness vicious and merciless attacks on the marchers. Charles Pierce gives a sense of how he covered the march that particular day:

> Well, we were fairly aware that Jim Clark was going to be much in evidence on that particular day. The word came that they had horsemen and that he was going to use tear gas. I got this information almost all through rumors and some of the deputies.

** Joined by a number of Northern whites who, stirred by media coverage of the Selma campaign, had come to participate in the march.

*** When the troopers, deputy sheriffs and volunteers advanced, the marchers were caught in a bottleneck, as only a few could retreat back across the bridge at a time. Some of the marchers, apparently seeking to escape, turned back towards the troopers, which was interpreted by the troopers as--and may in some cases have been--an attack.

Strangely enough, Jim Clark and his limited foresight had positioned the press. He said, "This is the only place that the press could stand." And that was right where he met the marchers--at the foot of the Pettus Bridge. We caught a lot of tear gas there. In fact a lot of news people had been put out of commission. My crew was the only one there that had tear gas masks. We started filming when the marchers approached the bridge, continued to film when troopers began to beat them back, and were able to continue to film with the help of our tear gas masks.

We had a so-called utility case and in it we had cold weather gear and a Coleman stove, rain gear, hurricane gear, gas masks, all sorts of things. We did have advance rumor--word that it was going to get pretty rough and when it did, Ernie Noodleman, a stringer cameraman from CBS and I were both filming from the top of a Dodge camper bus that we had rented. We had an excellent view of what was taking place and we did get some fantastic film. In fact five or six days later they had a federal hearing on the Selma march in Montgomery. They subpoenaed my film and I had to testify during the hearing.

The Reaction

Despite efforts by Governor Wallace and other state and local officials to defend the events of Bloody Sunday as legitimate law enforcement actions, the national reaction was overwhelmingly negative.* Members of Congress called the actions of the state troopers "sickening", "savage", and "disgraceful", and pressure for a new voting rights law mounted. Telegrams protesting the violence poured into Washington from private citizens and from such groups as the New Jersey State Assembly, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, and the Young Men's Business Club of Birmingham, Alabama.

In the days and weeks that followed, sympathy demonstrations erupted all across the nation: in Bangor (Maine) and Honolulu; in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York; in Boston, Hartford and Syracuse; in Springfield (Ohio) and Beloit (Wisconsin); in Berkeley, Louisville, and New Orleans. Ten thousand marched in Detroit, led by Michigan Governor George Romney and Detroit Mayor Jerome P. Cavanaugh, and the State of Michigan began investigating the possibility of a suit to reduce Alabama's congressional representation for denying Negroes the vote. New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller called for action, and President Johnson deplored the "brutality". The President of the International

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*A Gallup poll taken in March 1965 after Bloody Sunday showed that 52 percent of the American people believed "civil rights" to be "the most important problem facing the country", a figure matched only during "Birmingham summer", 1963. And a Gallup poll taken in April 1965 reported that 76 percent of the public favored a voting rights law. See Exhibits 1 and 2 for detailed poll data.

Longshoremen proposed a boycott against Alabama. And Alabama Attorney General Richard M. Flowers said his state was "being ruled by race hatred and defiance."

The day after the Pettus Bridge incident, Dr. King returned to Selma and announced a second march to Montgomery to begin the next day, Tuesday, March 9. Meanwhile, countless civil rights supporters--some famous, some not-so-famous--came to Selma from all parts of the country to participate in the second march. At 4:30 on March 8, four lawyers for Dr. King appeared in the Montgomery office of U. S. District Court Judge Frank Johnson to ask him to issue an immediate temporary restraining order (TRO) to keep state and Dallas County police from interfering with the Tuesday march. Such an order can be issued without hearing both parties; Thursday, March 11, was the earliest day on which Judge Johnson could arrange to hear the views of the State of Alabama. According to Time magazine (March, 1965), U.S. Attorney General Katzenbach spoke to Dr. King Monday evening by phone and said, "If you don't march tomorrow, government attorneys will help plead your case before Johnson on Thursday." Despite the plea, Dr. King decided to continue with his original plans to march.

Dr. King's lawyers again appeared before Judge Johnson to announce the plans to march to Montgomery. Judge Johnson then dictated an order denying King's request for a TRO and enjoining the marchers until after the Thursday hearing. Later on Monday President Johnson flew a mediator into Selma on Air Force One: Leroy Collins, Director of the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Justice Department. Collins conferred with Selma's Mayor Smitherman, Colonel Lingo, and Sheriff Clark. The three men were willing to let the civil rights marchers cross the bridge to the point on Highway 80 where the Sunday march ended in disaster, but they would then turn King and his followers back. Lingo even drew up a rough map of the route the marchers could follow.

While in Selma, Dr. King stayed at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Sullivan Jackson. Mrs. Jackson recalls Mr. Collins coming to her home to meet with Dr. King: he supposedly showed Dr. King the map that Lingo devised. It is not clear whether Dr. King agreed to the plan or not. What is clear is that Tuesday afternoon he and other prominent civil rights leaders (e.g., James Farmer of CORE and James Foreman of SNCC) led 1,500 persons on a second march across the Pettus Bridge. The state troopers again barred the route, but this time there was no violence: the marchers halted, prayed, and returned to Selma. King had saved face* by technically defying the injunction, and the state saved face by stopping the march.

However, on the night of March 9, three white Unitarian ministers in Selma for the march were attacked in downtown Selma and one--James Reeb of Boston--was taken to Birmingham for surgery.** He died Thursday morning, and new sympathy demonstrations began in Selma and across the nation. On Wednesday, the Justice Department sought a court order to prevent interference by Alabama officials with peaceful civil rights demonstrations, and on Thursday Attorney General Katzenback announced that the United States would prosecute state and local officials under an 1870 law making it a misdemeanor to deprive anyone of

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*A few days later, militant civil rights spokesmen were to express "open contempt" for King's leadership.

**Colonel Lingo later admitted that an Alabama state trooper shot Reeb.

their constitutional rights under guise of law. (The maximum penalty was one year's imprisonment and a fine of $1,000.)

Sometime between March 9 and March 12, President Johnson told Attorney General Katzenback "to give them the strongest [voting rights] legislation that has a chance of constitutionally surviving." The wording of the first draft of the legislation was placed in the hands of Harold Greene, who directed the appeals section in the civil rights division of the U.S. Justice Department. The Thursday, March 11, New York Times reported substantial agreement between the Administration and the Senate on the shape of a new voting rights bill. By Friday, March 12, Greene and others had prepared the first draft of what became the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The legislation would suspend literacy tests and give the Attorney General the power to appoint federal examiners to supervise voter registration in states and political subdivisions where fewer than 50 percent of the voting age residents were registered to vote on November 1, 1964. Other provisions established criminal penalities for interference with voter rights, outlined a judicial recourse for delinquent state and local governments, and directed the Attorney General "forthwith" to institute proceedings against the use of state and local poll taxes as a qualification for voting. After a fruitless three-hour meeting with Governor Wallace on Saturday, March 13, President Johnson broke with tradition and requested the Voting Rights Act before a televised joint session of Congress on Monday, March 15. He sent his draft version of the bill to Congress two days later.

Postscript

On March 21 the successful march from Selma to Montgomery finally began, after a federal court had ordered the state not to interfere and after President Johnson had promised to call up the National Guard if needed to protect the marchers. The 54-mile march began at 12 noon and ended in the early afternoon of March 25. Dr. King delivered a speech at the conclusion of the march that was reminiscent of his "I have a Dream" speech:

> They told us we wouldn't get here. And there are those who said that we would get here only over their dead bodies, but all the world together knows that we are here and that we are standing before the forces of power in the state of Alabama . . . the road ahead is not altogether a smooth one. There are no broad highways to lead us easily and inevitably to quick solutions . . . we are still in for a season of suffering.
>
> How long will it take? I come to say to you this afternoon, however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth pressed to earth will rise again. How long? Not long, because you reap what you sow. How long? Not long, because the arm of the moral universe is long but the trend is towards Justice. How long? Not long, because mine eyes have seen the glory of the Coming of the Lord, tramping out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword. His Truth is marching on.

This speech marked the final act in the Selma voting rights drama, a tragedy marked by the deaths of Jimmie Lee Jackson, James Reeb, and Viola Liuzzo, a Detroit housewife who was shot to death as she transported marchers. The voting legislation had already been sent to Congress, and it was merely a matter of time before Congress would pass the bill and the President would sign it into law on August 6, 1965

Exhibit 1

PUBLIC OPINION AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Percentage of Population Who Believe

Civil Rights is "the Most Important Problem Facing the Country"

Major Events	Date of Gallup Poll	%
	June 1954	1
Brown decision - mass resistance to segregation		
	September 1956	18
	August 1957	10
Little Rock		
	October 1957	29
	March 1958	4
	March 1963	4
Birmingham march		
	September 1963	52
	April 1964	41
	June 1964	47
Civil Rights Act passes		
	September 1964	35
Selma		
	March 1965	52

Source: The Gallup Poll

Exhibit 2

EQUAL VOTING RIGHTS

A Gallup poll taken within a month after the Selma voting rights campaign ended suggests that an overwhelming percentage of Americans supported legislation to rectify discrimination in voting in the South.

Question: "A law has been proposed that would allow the Federal Government to send officials into areas where the turnout of eligible adults in the last Presidential election was so low that it was suggested that some persons were denied the right to vote. These officials would make sure Negores and whites are given an equal opportunity to register and vote. Would you favor or oppose such a law?

	April, 1965		
	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
	%	%	%
NATIONAL	76	16	8
Sex			
Men	73	20	7
Women	78	13	9
Education			
College	77	19	4
High School	75	16	9
Grade School	77	13	10
Age			
21-29 years	75	10	6
30-42 years	75	16	9
50 & over	77	14	9
Religion			
Protestant	74	17	9
Catholic	80	14	6
Jewish	x	x	x
Politics			
Republican	73	20	7
Democrat	80	13	7
Independent	70	19	11

The same poll also showed that the majority of Americans did not approve of the participation of the clergymen in the civil rights marches.

Source: The Gallup Poll, April, 1965