"It's Not My History:" The White Counter-Narrative of Selma, Alabama, 1965-2015

by

Julianne Garner

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Approved by

Keith Hébert, Chair, Assistant Professor of History
David Carter, Associate Professor of History
Matt Malczycki, Associate Professor of History

Abstract

Almost immediately after the dust had settled behind the Selma-Montgomery Voting Rights March, forces within Selma began competing for control of the march's historical legacy. After the successful passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the Civil Rights narrative of Selma, championed by national media and historians, became the national narrative. The reactionary segregationist counter-narrative advocated by white segregationists, challenged this Civil Rights narrative.

This thesis is a local study that examines how the white counter-narrative developed in Selma, Alabama, in the five decades (1965-2015) that followed the Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March. Selma, located in Dallas County, Alabama, is a place with a long history shaped by white supremacy and African American resistance. I examine how the white counter narrative formed and evolved due to the influence of municipal, state, and national politics. This thesis asserts that many Selma residents and many round the country, have rejected the Civil Rights narrative of what happened in Selma because of the white counter narrative's effective use of a racially coded language.

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List of Abbreviations

AFB	Air Force Base
BEST	Best Educational Support Team
CMA	Confederate Memorial Association
CRM	Civil Rights Movement
DCVL	Dallas County Voters League
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
MOM	Mothers of Many
NAACP	National Association Advancement of Colored People
NPS	National Park Service
SAVE	Selma Area Voting Enlistment
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
UDC	United Daughters of the Confederacy
VRA	Voting Rights Act

Introduction: The White Counter-Narrative of Selma, Alabama, 1965-2015

March 9, 2015, was an overcast chilly day in central Alabama when President Barack Obama and an estimated 70,000 people descended on the Alabama city of Selma. They came for the commemoration honoring the 50th anniversary of the Selma demonstrations, in which protestors–black and white–peacefully marched to Montgomery to demonstrate for their constitutional right to vote. Of Selma's commemorative space, President Obama said, "we have to recognize that one day's commemoration, no matter how special, is not enough. If Selma taught us anything, it's that our work is never done. The American experiment in self-government gives work and purpose to each generation."[1] Of his entire speech, no truer words about the tension-filled town could have been spoken. Obama understood that even in 2015 Bloody Sunday's legacy was a contested subject among area residents.

Fifty years earlier, the Selma-to-Montgomery March for voting rights ended months of standoffs and earth-shattering events that represented the political climax of the Civil Rights Movement. Between 1961 and 1964, SNCC had led a voter registration campaign in Selma, a small town with a record of white

[1] "Remarks by the President at the 50th Anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery Marches," *Whitehouse.gov*, accessed October 28, 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/07/remarks-president-50th-anniversary-selma-montgomery-marches.

resistance to black voting. County law enforcement officials repeatedly frustrated SNCC's efforts. Local activists persuaded Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and SCLC to make Selma's intransigence to black voting a national concern.

During January and February, 1965, King and SCLC led a series of demonstrations to the Dallas County Courthouse. On February 17, a Civil Rights demonstrator, Jimmie Lee Jackson, was fatally shot by an Alabama state trooper in nearby Marion, Alabama. In response, a protest march from Selma to Montgomery was scheduled for March 7. Six hundred marchers assembled in Selma. Led by John Lewis and other SNCC and SCLC activists, these protestors attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge over the Alabama River on U.S. Route 80 in route to Montgomery. Alabama state troopers and a local sheriff's posse blocked the highway and demanded that the protestors return to Selma. When protesters refused, officers fired teargas and charged the crowd beating protestors with billy clubs. More than fifty protestors were hospitalized. Television news crews captured the entire event, today known as "Bloody Sunday," and broadcast those violent images around the world.

On March 9, King led a symbolic and reactionary march to the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Marchers did not cross the bridge or continue onward to Montgomery because King feared state troopers would force an injunction to prohibit the actual march. In Selma that night, a group of segregationists ambushed and murdered Rev. James Reeb, a white Unitarian Universalist minister from Boston.

During this time, civil rights leaders sought court protection for a third, full-scale march from Selma to the state capital in Montgomery. Federal District

Court Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr., weighed the right of mobility against the right to march and ruled in favor of the demonstrators. “The law is clear that the right to petition one's government for the redress of grievances may be exercised in large groups…” said Judge Johnson, “and these rights may be exercised by marching, even along public highways.”[2]

On March 15, President Lyndon B. Johnson went on national television to pledged his support on national television for the Selma protesters and asked Congress to pass a new voting rights bill. “There is no Negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem,” he said, “…their cause must be our cause too. Because it is not just Negros, but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we *shall* overcome.” Johnson’s support lent some added credibility to the protestors’ actions. Between March 15 and 21, thousands of protestors, black and white, poured into Selma in anticipation of the upcoming march to Montgomery. Support came from across the nation as Federal protection for the demonstrations appeared to be guaranteed.

On Sunday, March 21, approximately 3,200 marchers set out for Montgomery, walking twelve miles a day and sleeping in fields. By the time they reached the capitol on Thursday, March 25, they were 25,000-strong. King spoke at the steps of the capital, while Governor George Wallace hid in his office.[3] The

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[2] CNN Library, “1965 Selma to Montgomery March Fast Facts,” *CNN*, March 16, 2017, accessed January 16, 2017, http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/15/us/1965-selma-to-montgomery-march-fast-facts/index.html.

[3] Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2000).

march, however, failed to end the violence. That evening, while shuttling protestors back to Selma, Viola Liuzzo, a Civil Rights activist from Michigan, was shot dead in her car. Jackson, Reeb, and Liuzzo became martyrs for the Civil Rights narrative, but the opposing white counter-narrative cast these figures in a less complimentary fashion that questioned their motives and blamed the victims for the violence. Less than five months after the last of the three marches, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Federal legislation, however, failed to heal the permanent scar that Bloody Sunday left on the Selma community.

Selma, the seat of Dallas County, Alabama, is a small city of 20,000 inhabitants situated in the heart of the Black Belt region in central Alabama. Perched on the bluff above the Alabama River, the state legislature incorporated Selma in 1820 one year after Alabama became a state. Prior to the Civil War, merchants and bankers dominated Selma's urban social classes. The surrounding region contained some of the largest and wealthiest cotton plantations in the world. Black slaves provided the region with the cheap labor required to turn cotton cultivation into a profitable enterprise. Selma stood at the center of this "King Cotton" economy.[4]

During the American Civil War, white Selma residents firmly threw their support behind the Confederate States of America. Hundreds of local men served in the Confederate military while many others remained at home to work

[4] Selma and Dallas County Sesquintennial Committee, "Selma and Dallas County: 150 Years," 1969.

in the city's growing iron industry. As Confederates lost key manufacturing centers elsewhere, Selma developed into a large industrial city that provided rebel armies with critical iron production. Shielded from the war's destruction until the spring of 1865, most of Selma was destroyed during one of the last major engagements of the war. Union cavalry under the command of General James H. Wilson defeated the outnumbered Confederate forces under the command of General Nathan Bedford Forrest. The battle was minor, but the memory surrounding Forrest and the "Lost Cause" survives today.[5]

What Selma is best known for outside of the South is the role it played in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Selma's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement has drawn the attention of numerous historians. Among the most prominent texts is David J. Garrow's *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Voting Rights Act of 1965*. Garrow traces King's skill of mobilizing protests and discovers how localized protests focusing on a single issue could effectively change national politics.[6] Likewise, Taylor Branch's *At Canaan's Edge, 1965-1968* (2006) follows Garrow's lead in focusing on the role of King and SCLC.[7] Charles Fager's *Selma 1965* (1974), is perhaps the oldest analysis of the demonstrations. Fager was a journalist at the time of the marches. His firsthand accounts chronicles the day-by-night influence of the movement: the massive impact of King and SCLC; Sheriff Clark and his maniacal posse; the invading

[5] Paul Ashdown and Edward Caudill, *The Myth of Nathan Bedford Forrest* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).
[6] David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1978).
[7] Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire : America in the King Years 1963-65*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1999).

white clergymen and women; the freedom songs; and the martyred death of Lee, Reeb, and Liuzzo.[8]

While histories of Selma devote much of their attention to the actions of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., other works have appeared that shed light on numerous first person accounts from local and grassroots figures. *Selma, Lord, Selma* (1980) tells the story of Rachel West Nelson and Sheyann Webb, who were children during the movement.[9] J.L. Chestnut's *Black in Selma* (1990) recalls his life in Selma and his role as the only black lawyer in the city.[10] Chestnut provides the most comprehensive account of the African American experience in a town plagued by racial tension. John Lewis' *Walking with the Wind* (1998) chronicles his life and covers his time as the chairman of SNCC during the Selma campaign.[11] Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson's *The House by the Side of the Road* (2011) offers a personal account of her interactions with the movement and particularly with the SCLC leadership from a black middle class perspective.[12] *Turning 15 On The Road to Freedom* portrays the strength and dedication of black teenagers to the movement and their future.[13] These localized grassroots versions of the Selma demonstrations, while slightly divergent from the

[8] Charles Fager, *Selma, 1965* (New York: Scribner, 1974).
[9] Sheyann Webb, *Selma, Lord, Selma: Girlhood Memories of the Civil-Rights Movement* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1980).
[10] J. L. Chestnut and Julia Cass, *Black in Selma: The Uncommon Life of J.L. Chestnut, Jr.* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1990).
[11] John Lewis and Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2015).
[12] Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson, *The House by the Side of the Road: The Selma Civil Rights Movement*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University Alabama Press, 2015).
[13] Elspeth Leacock, Susan Buckley, and Lynda Blackmon Lowery, *Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom: My Story of the Selma Voting Rights March* (New York: Dial Books, 2015).

King/SCLC narrative, continue to build upon the single narrative: the righteous crusade of demonstrators.

Taken together, these analyses and personal voices of the past have created a story of what happened in Selma and why. This narrative has evolved into an often repeated and exemplified story seen among scholarly works and NPS interpretation so much so that it has become the dominant public narrative. But these righteous crusade accounts, while historically accurate, tell only part of what happened at Selma and ignore the voices of white residents, many of whom interpreted these events differently. The dominant civil rights moral crusade narrative provoked an angry, and at times violent, reactionary narrative spearheaded by local segregationists within Selma. Almost immediately after the dust from the final march had settled, a struggle for the historical legacy of Selma began within the community between these two forces. While the VRA was an important result it obscures the story and the aftermath of the demonstrations within Selma.

Before divulging into competing narratives of Selma's national legacy, it is crucial to discuss the distinctions between memory and history. Memory and history often appear as diametrical poles. Pierre Nora, a prominent French identity and memory historian, observed that memory often becomes a subject of study especially when great changes take place in society and rupture the existent flow of events.[14] Memory, historian Nora argues, "is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of

[14] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 3.

the past."[15] The decline of Jim Crow in the South or the demonstrations for voting rights are examples of such a change or rupture. Memory becomes further complicated when participants disagree with events and their overarching significance. While competing interpretations are healthy and a sign of public veneration for these historic sites, they can also provoke immense contention and disagreement.

Edward Linenthal's *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (1990) explores the process of how patriotic meanings are communicated through commemoration. His examination of America's battlefields catalogue "veneration, defilement, and redefinition that have characterized public attitudes."[16] He examines five historic battlefields, including Pearl Harbor, Gettysburg, and the Alamo, and claims that these sites of bloody sacrifice are "sacred centers" of power, those most important to the symbolic life of the nation and its patriotic faith.[17] This is the same notion that the civil rights narrative purports about the meaning of Selma. The problem is that, while Americans would be hard-pressed to find sympathy for the Japanese at Pearl Harbor or the Spanish at the Alamo, the "villains" of Selma are white American men and women who supported segregation. The counter-narrative is a reactionary response taken by those "villains."

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[15] Ibid., 8.
[16] Edward Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 1.
[17] Ibid., 215.

Current scholarship of Civil Rights memory is severely lacking. Renee Romano and Leigh Raiford are editors of *Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (2006), a compilation of memory-centric essays that address critical question about how to construct memory of these historic events. But the most effective works in the compilation are Owen J. Dwyer's essay, "Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement: Contradiction, Confirmation, and the Cultural Landscape." Dwyer effectively shows how modern Civil Rights monuments memorialize the "great men" of the movement, often leaving out supporting characters.

In another book, *Civil Rights Memory and the Geography of Memory* (2008), Dwyer and Derek H. Alderman evaluates the competing approach to civil rights memory. The authors write about two strict interpretations: the "won cause" described by Glenn Eskew that focuses on great men like King, and a "many movements" approach advocated by Ella Baker and Septima Clark.[18] Although memory of the Civil Rights Movement is still a fresh and relatively unexplored field, thus far research about memory of the movement tends to fall under these two interpretive schools. While the actual events leading to the culminating Selma-Montgomery March can be divided into these two competing memories within the Civil Rights Movement groups, within Selma, a third expression of memory exists: the white counter-narrative.

Although few books have been written about this existing third form of Civil Rights memory, its reactionary nature allows scholars to explore the

[18] Owen J. Dwyer and Derek H. Alderman, *Civil Rights Memorials and the Geography of Memory*, (Chicago: Center for American Places at Columbia, 2008), 28.

relationship between white supremacy, memory, and history. One seminal piece of literature that deals specifically with Selma is J. Mills Thornton's *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma* (2002). The book devotes one third of its text to a detailed study of local politics in Selma during the civil rights period, including a nuanced assessment of the variety of opinions on either side of the racial divide.[19] Thornton stipulates that the transcendental higher moral purpose of Selma completely misses the mark on its national legacy. Thornton suggests that because of it, the overly noble Civil Rights narrative characterizes the disillusionment that followed the Civil Rights Movement. Selma, which continues to be one of the most racially segregated cities in America, is divided almost literally between black and white opinions. Thornton declares, "[B]oth of these sets of attitudes derived from the conception of the earlier movement as a struggle for rights rather than for political influence."[20]

Stepping away from Selma-specific literature, other works explore the depth of white counter-narrative on a community. In *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era,* sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva answers the question of whether racism still exists with a resounding "yes," describing a contemporary system that operates in a covert, subtle, institutional, and superficially nonracial fashion. Bonilla-Silva redefines racism in the post-Civil Rights era as:

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[19] J. Mills Thornton III, *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University Alabama Press, 2002).
[20] Ibid., 569.

> (1) increasingly covert nature of racial discourse and practice; (2) the avoidance of racial terminology and the ever growing claim by whites that they experience "reverse racism"; (3)the elaboration of a racial agenda over political matters that eschews direct racial references; and finally, (5) the rearticulation of some racial practices characteristic of the Jim Crow period of race relations.[21]

We see each of these definitions used by the white counter-narrative forces from the 1965 demonstrations to the 2015 50th anniversary.

In the immediate aftermath of the demonstrations, Selma's internal community memory consisted of two narratives: The Civil Rights narrative of the moral high ground, which combined the "great men" and grassroots participation narratives, and the segregationist counter-narrative that challenged the Civil Rights claim. The latter, which I will first describe as the segregationist counter-narrative and later simply label white counter-narrative after full integration of public places, is much more powerful and problematic than competing memories of the Civil Rights story.

An important illustration of these competing memories is the 2014 film, *Selma*. The British-American historical drama film directed by Ava DuVernay and written by Paul Webb was based on the Selma marches led by James Bevel, Hosea Williams, Martin Luther King, Jr., and John Lewis. The film, like most Civil Right memory monographs, focuses on the tension between grassroots movements and "won cause" by great men elements of memory. This can be seen in the tension between the SNCC students and King's SCLC in the months before

[21] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Pub, 2001), 90.

Bloody Sunday. However, the film never adequately shows the smear campaign used within Selma itself or the overarching white counter-narrative. The movie portrays some of the key characters of the white counter-narrative: Sheriff Jim Clark, George Wallace, and J. Edgar Hoover. Filmmakers chose to depict these individuals as monolithic nefarious villains, reflecting the Civil Rights narrative of the Selma demonstrations.

Selma, like popular memory, ends with King making a victory speech near the steps of the Alabama State Capital in Montgomery. Adding to the moral high ground narrative, DuVernay changes King's final Capital speech. The movie version of King says:

> Our society has distorted who we are, from slavery to the reconstruction, to the precipice at which we now stand. We have seen powerful white men rule the world while offering poor white men a vicious lie as placation. And when the poor white man's children wail with a hunger that cannot be satisfied, he feeds them that same vicious lie. A lie whispering to them that regardless of their lot in life, they can at least be triumphant in the knowledge that their whiteness makes them superior to blackness.[22]

King's actual speech hits upon similar themes but is much longer and more drawn out. Changing the speech was probably done for cinematic purposes as well as copyrighting issues of King's original speeches.[23] But it also fits perfectly into the Civil Rights narrative, which DuVernay's film epitomizes.

But in real-life Selma, the march's successful conclusion did not end the march's contested narrative. Instead, in the ensuing months, white segregationist memory countered with an array of documents offering "the other side of the

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[22] Ava DuVernay, *Selma*, Drama (Paramount, 2014).
[23] Tim Appelo and Stephen Gallowaym "Oscars: How 'Selma' Filmmakers Made a Movie About MLK Without Using His Words," *The Hollywood Reporter*, December 16, 2014, accessed January 17, 2017, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/oscars-how-selma-filmmakers-made-755242.

story" of Selma. Civil Rights historians have predominately overlooked or ignored this counter-narrative. Civil Rights historian Charles M. Eagles addresses this issue in, "Towards New Histories of the Civil Rights Era."[24] According to Eagles, Civil Rights historians:

> … have tended to emphasize one side of the struggle, the movement side, and to neglect their professional obligation to understand the other side, the segregationist opposition… [historians] have resorted to telling the story from a vantage point within the movement; only rarely have they sought a detached view or broader perspective that would necessarily encompass all of the South to explain the momentous changes in racial relations.[25]

Eagles identifies the major problem that NPS officials and people connected with these sites encounter daily: where does the opposition fit into our interpretations of the national narrative.

In the immediate aftermath of the demonstrations, Selma became ground zero in an epic struggle for the collective memory and heritage of the town. Conflicting narratives about the demonstrations emerged. Black demonstrators told an account of bravery in the face of adversity, a moral crusade for equality. Whites, on the other hand, crafted a segregationist counter-narrative of depraved debauchery surrounding the Civil Rights groups intended to discredit the protestors as nothing more than godless communists and sexual miscreants. Within Selma and Alabama, numerous pamphlets and books were printed describing this "other side of the coin," a euphuism for the segregationist counter-narrative.

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[24] Charles W. Eagles, "Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era," *The Journal of Southern History* 66, no. 4 (2000): 815-848.
[25] Ibid., 816.

With the passage of the VRA, the American people validated the Civil Rights narrative as a national narrative. With increased integration in the public sphere, segregationist counter-narrative became white counter-memory as it evolved in an effort to challenge the national narrative of moral high ground. Evolution does not always mean progress, however. White counter-memory capitalized on disagreements in the African American community, eventually leading to a 1990 education demonstration on the eve of the 25th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. These demonstrations showed just how deeply ingrained "keeping them in their place" had become, as black parents protested against an educational system that kept black children from advancing at school. Although black parents were successful at dismantling "tracking" and keeping African Americans in a position of power at Selma schools, the white counter-memory was forced to once again change and evolve.

By the 50th anniversary of the demonstrations, white counter-memory grabbed hold of Selma's minor role in the Civil War. The vitriolic language of the early segregationist counter-narratives were gone, but the underlying assumptions and arguments remained. Reactionary white memory had simply rebranded itself. Capitalizing on a minor Civil War battle, Selma's national legacy was split into two black and white stories. African Americans commemorated Selma as the celebrated epicenter of the Civil Rights Movement, while whites venerated the last stand of General Nathan Bedford Forrest and the Confederacy. Forrest, who is a reprehensible character to African Americans for his role as a slave-trader and founder of the KKK, became a heroic figure for the new narrative of white Selma.

This thesis examines this contested memory throughout the fifty years that followed this tumultuous event. My work pays special attention to the 25th and 50th anniversaries of the march. Each commemoration serves as a point in time for historians to reexamine how locals remembered the march. Using primary sources and secondary literature, I examine how municipal, state, and national politics, intersected with and altered the memory and use of the Selma demonstrations in lives of black and white residents.

The national narrative and the counter-narrative of the Selma demonstrations are important to understanding the legacy of Selma through the eyes of locals as well as nationally. According to Scott Ellsworth in his seminal work *Death in a Promised Land*:

> It is part of our nature as human beings — whether as individuals, groups, or societies — that we create 'pasts' with which we can live. If the reality of our history poses questions about our lives of today which are too painful or ominous to ponder, then we will mold our past into a less threatening chronicle, or repress it entirely. If anything, our "historic memory" is as malleable as our personal one.[26]

Selma's national narrative and white counter-narrative offers proof of this past creation defining oneself and the legacy of places, people, and times.

[26] Scott Ellsworth and John Hope Franklin, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, 8th edition (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1992), 98.

Chapter 1: "The Other Side of the Coin:" The Segregationist Counter-Narrative of the Selma Demonstrations

In March 1965, after several months of local demonstrations and marches, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the iconic march from Selma to Montgomery. Prior to the march, local governments in towns along the the route sought to prevent it from succeeding, unleashing one strategy of containment after another. Despite the brutality of the local and state police, the marchers maintained their goal of securing the guarantees of the U.S. Constitution for vast populations of African Americans. Five months later, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the VRA into law.

Using Linenthal's examination of "veneration, defilement, and redefinition," an analysis of the five months prior to the passage of the VRA shows segregationists working tirelessly to maintain a status quo and destroy the legacy of the demonstrations.[1] Meanwhile, African Americans both locally and nationally portrayed what had happened as a moral crusade that had unleashed the forces of righteousness across the land. In those early months after the demonstrations, competing interpretations fought to either venerate or defile the legacy of the 1965 demonstrations. Those that sought to defile the legacy participated in rhetoric that I have labeled the "white counter-narrative."

[1]Linenthal, *Sacred Ground,* 1.

The evolving white counter-narrative is reactionary. Initially, angry hardliners reacted to the efficacy of the march and widespread acceptance of the Civil Rights narrative of high morality by creating an invective-laced counter narrative that attacked the triumphantly high moral tone of the marchers and the people who wrote about them. After this approach failed to appeal to a mass audience, 'moderate' Selmians reacted to the incendiary anger of hardliners by changing their rhetoric from frothy diatribe to quiet "dog whistle" language. The new, subtler strategy resulted in both an evolving version of white counter-narrative and a semi-successful damage control to the legacy of Selma.

To understand early veneration of the demonstrations, it is important to understand the Civil Rights imagery of King and the SCLC. King had long been a leader among southern African Americans, but after the Birmingham demonstrations and his March on Washington speech, he became the spiritual leader of a moral crusade of equal rights for all. SCLC equated black protest with Christian righteousness. Framing the Selma demonstrations as a moral crusade reflected the movement's general tenor. Furthermore, histories written about the movement have more than often lacked a level of objectivity. According to Charles M. Eagles, "historians have often lacked detachment because of their profound and justifiable moral commitment to the aims of the civil rights movement."[2] The challenge of critically analyzing the movement is further challenged when many of its leading historians were directly involved in it.[3]

[2] Eagles, "Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era," 815.
[3] Ibid., 815-816.

This is also the same narrative of righteousness shown by the 2014 *Selma* film, as well as numerous Civil Rights museums spread throughout the South. The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, for example, tells a Civil Rights narrative as, "the Whiggish progressivism of the American master narrative, with a message that celebrates the moral righteousness of nonviolent protest, the potential of interracial unity, and the success of qualified integration."[4] According to Owen J. Dwyer in his article, "Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement," the Civil Rights narrative of high morality "renders civil rights memorials vulnerable to becoming mere repositories of a history that, while powerfully decrying the racism of the past, does not always make clear its connections to a local present."[5] This narrative also tends to suggest that the Civil Rights Movement is over, rather than an ongoing, fluid, and constant struggle.

The early veneration of the Selma demonstrations began in March 1965 and was often a direct result of King and SCLC's involvement. Civil Rights historian, Jane Dailey's wrote, "Sex, Segregation, and the Sacred after Brown," about the use of King for sanctity. Dailey argues that the black press called the Selma march a moral pilgrimage invested with religious as well as political significance. Dailey says, "the ranks of marching clergy represented a concrete witness to the rightness of integration, a walking testimony to an ecumenical belief in racial equality rooted in a common Judeo-Christian heritage."[6] Dailey

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[4] Renee Romano and Leigh Raiford, eds., *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 29.
[5] Ibid., 18.
[6] Jane Dailey, "Sex, Segregation, and the Sacred after Brown," *Journal of American History* Vol. 91, no. Issue 1 (June 2004): 119–24.

also illustrates how black historical memory used Christian imagery to interpret its moral high ground. She cites *Ebony* magazine to portray the language of these demonstrations:

> … Rev. Martin Luther King, the magazine declared, had "accomplished the virtually impossible: he had converted leaders of the so-called white church" to civil rights… Understanding the march in religious terms helps explain both SCLC's tactics and the segregationists' response to those tactics, which was to emphasize the alleged sexual sins of the clergy and the desecration of holy spaces. Surely good Christians… could not behave the way these supposedly religious supporters of civil rights were reported to have done in Alabama. [7]

As Dailey suggests, the early historical memory of the movement can be understood as a game of one-upmanship in morality, a feature evident in the language of morality within the counter-narrative of the Selma demonstrations.

After the final Montgomery march, hardliner segregationists took a new approach tone to their portrayal of the march. Previously besmirching the Civil Rights march had long been acceptable rhetoric under Jim Crow and segregation laws. But after various successes by civil rights groups, the national tone towards the subjugation of African Americans was changing. In an effort to protect status-quo Selma, which included lawful segregation and suppression of African American rights, hardliner segregationist developed a counter-narrative that depicted the local Selma demonstrations as immoral and troublesome. When this hardliner segregationist counter-narrative proved unproductive, and not well-received by the majority of Americans, a different and more effective voice emerged by "moderate" segregationists. This white pushback came in the form of

[7] Ibid., 122.

pamphlets, newspapers articles, and other types of publications. These forms of propaganda discredited the demonstrations as a riot of sexual promiscuity and pure debauchery. The battle lines for early historical memory of the demonstrations were drawn between the cause of Civil Rights and the segregationist claim that the march was nothing more than immoral self-indulgence. In other words, Selma's early historical memory was a fight for moral high ground between two distinctly different accounts of the same event.

The segregationist counter-narrative is not one all-encompassing narrative, shared by every white person within Selma. Combing through the evidence shows that that the segregationist counter-narrative had many different shades and practices, reflecting everyone from moderates to hardliners. Historian Dan T. Carter identifies this hardliner segregationist counter-narrative in his book *Politics of Rage*, "pamphlets, press releases, and speeches by conservative Americans, reveal an obsession with 'orgies' and 'fornication' and 'debauchery.'" Carter goes on to say that they "foreshadowed the beginning of the sexual culture wars that would resonate through American society in the 1960s and 1970s."[8] In many ways the world-wide broadcasting of the horror of Selma's Bloody Sunday hate crime hindered most segregationists from continuing unaltered hate speech against the movement. Some segregationists went in the closet, as it were, there were still plenty who were open and up front in expressing their rage and bigotry even going so far as to besmirch the memory of victims of KKK violence like CRM martyrs Jackson, Reeb, and Liuzzo.

[8] Carter, *The Politics of Rage,* 59.

The hardliner segregationist counter-narrative first emerged in the language surrounding the deaths of Jimmie Lee Jackson, James Reeb, and Viola Liuzzo. The Civil Rights narrative used their deaths as martyrs for the greater cause, while the counter-narrative merely saw them as rabble-rousers. Jimmie Lee Jackson, a young African American male, was killed on February 26th in Marion, Alabama at the hands of a state trooper. The *Selma Times-Journal*, a more moderate paper, first wrote that at his funeral, "the mourners entered the church under a huge streamer draped on the front of the building which proclaimed, "Racism Killed Our Brother."[9] During the ceremony, King allegedly cried, "Farewell, Jimmie! You died that all of us could vote, and we are going to vote!"[10] His tombstone, provided by the Perry County Civic League reads, "Jimmie Lee Jackson 1938-1965, He was killed for man's freedom!"[11]

Jackson did not receive the same fanfare from whites. Instead, on his deathbed, he received a warrant for his arrest by the Alabama State Trooper Colonel Al Lingo. L. C. Crocker, the chief deputy to Sheriff Clark, declared, "I believe [Civil Rights leaders] wanted him to die… they wanted to make a martyr out of him, and they did."[12] The charge was "assault and battery with intent to murder one of his officers."[13] He died of his wounds before receiving an inevitable indictment. It was not until 2007 that former state trooper James Fowler was

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[9] Roswell Falkenberry, "Hundreds Attend Memorial For Marion Youth," *Selma Times-Journal*, March 3, 1965, regional edition.
[10] Richard Lentz, *Symbols, the News Magazines and Martin Luther King* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1999), 148.
[11] Steve Fiffer and Adar Cohen, *Jimmie Lee & James: Two Lives, Two Deaths, and the Movement That Changed America* (New York: Regan Arts., 2015), 62.
[12] Ibid., 56.
[13] Fager, *Selma, 1965*, 80.

charged with the murder. After pleading guilty to manslaughter in 2010, Fowler served six months in prison.[14]

James Reeb, a white Unitarian Universalist minister from Massachusetts, was one of several white ministers who came to support the marchers in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday. On March 9, after answering King's call for assistance by religious leaders, Reeb arrived in Selma. After eating dinner in the downtown area of Selma, Reeb and his colleagues left the café. On the street, the white ministers were violently attacked by white men, labeling them "outside agitators."[15] Clark Olsen, one of the ministers with Reeb, recalled an attacker swing the club like a baseball bat and hit Reeb squarely in the left temple, "I heard the sound it made. And I saw Jim fall."[16]

Reeb died two days later due to blunt force trauma to the head. Prior to the announcement of his death, demonstrators held a candlelight vigil for Reeb. Reporting on the vigil, the *Selma-Times Journal* wrote on March 11th:

> As the hours dragged on, many marchers produced blankets and air mattresses and started bedding down on the asphalt street and on the grassy area bordering the street. Officers stood by and talked of events in Montgomery, where a group was reported conducting a lie-in in front of the Capitol. Security was tight, with few unauthorized persons permitted in the vicinity. The demonstrators prayed and sang during the first three hours.[17]

Later the *Birmingham News* would run a story with a vastly different description reminiscent of the hardliner segregationist counter-narrative. A March 28th article

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[14] Robbie Brown, "James Bonard Fowler Pleads Guilty to 1965 Shooting of Jimmie Lee Jackson, Civil Rights Marcher," *The New York Times*, 15 Nov. 2010, regional edition.

[15] Fiffer and Cohen, *Jimmie Lee & James*, 114.

[16] Ibid., 114.

[17] "Sylvan Street Demonstration Continues," *The Selma Times-Journal*, March 11, 1965, regional edition.

in *Birmingham News* wrote, "Lovemaking in open definitely occurred in Selma prayer vigil [as he supposedly witnessed] kissing and loving and drinking." In the same article, Associated Press writer Kelso Sturgeon claimed, "I saw at least three couples involved in intercourse. There was considerable other hanky-panky."[18] These descriptions were considerably different than the *Selma Times-Journal* account. By taking away the martyrdom frame of Reeb's death to portray degeneracy amongst Civil Rights participants, hardliner segregationist counter-narrative challenged the righteousness of the Civil Rights cause.

After the demonstrations ended and most demonstration participants returned home, three men, Elmer Cook, William Stanley Hoggle, and Namon O'Neal Hoggle, were tried for Reeb's murder. An all-white jury acquitted the men, despite testimony identifying them as Reeb's attackers. A fourth man indicted, R.B. Kelley, was never prosecuted. He gave authorities the names of those he said attacked the ministers.[19] The cold case was again reopened in 2011, but was closed almost immediately. The FBI delivered a letter to Reeb's widow and daughter in June 2011 which stated, "We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation. Please accept our sincere condolences."[20]

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[18] "Lovemaking in Open Definitely Occurred in Selma Prayer Vigil," *Birmingham News*, March 28, 1965, regional edition.

[19] Fiffer and Cohen, *Jimmie Lee & James*. 213-216.

[20] Scott Helman, "FBI Reopens Civil Rights-Era Cold Case, Painful Past," *Boston.com*, July 17, 2011, accessed January 24, 2017, http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/articles/2011/07/17/fbi_reopens_civil_rights_era_cold_case_painful_past/.

Depictions of Viola Liuzzo's murder represents the worst examples of hardliner segregationist counter-narrative defamation. Liuzzo, a white Civil Rights activist, was attacked and killed by KKK members for having an African American male in her car. One of these KKK members was Gary Rowe, a Klan informant working with the FBI. Shortly after her death, President Johnson lamented, "Mrs. Liuzzo went to Alabama to serve the struggles for justice." Johnson used her death to frame his own cause of the Vietnam War by comparing the "terrorists of the Ku Klux Klan" to the "terrorists of North Vietnam."[21] Her killing elicited grief as well as a new urgency for voting rights legislation.

Not everyone shared the president's high moralistic view of Liuzzo. The Imperial Wizard of the KKK, Robert Shelton suggested that both Reeb and Liuzzo deaths were staged by Civil Rights activists. Shelton asked, "How are we to know that this was not another created incident?"[22] Shelton also declared, "If this woman was at home with the children where she belonged, she wouldn't have been in jeopardy."[23] In addition to KKK slander, FBI head J. Edgar Hoover ordered an investigation on Liuzzo's background in an effort to disparage her character. Wanting to draw attention away from the informant Gary Rowe, Hoover committed a character assassination to Liuzzo's reputation declaring, "Liuzzo had needle marks on her arms." He also said that Liuzzo had been

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[21] Mary Stanton, *From Selma to Sorrow: The Life and Death of Viola Liuzzo* (University of Georgia Press, 2000), 5.
[22] Ibid., 175.
[23] Ibid., 54-55.

attacked because the Klansman saw "this colored man… snuggling up pretty close to this white woman … it had all the appearances of a necking party."[24]

In the monograph, *From Selma to Sorrow: The Life and Death of Viola* Liuzzo, historian Mary Stanton says that although the FBI had no proof of this claim against Liuzzo, the damage to her reputation was significant. "A victim of a capital crime, she was investigated by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation as if she had been a criminal herself."[25] Liuzzo would not be remembered as a martyr by either sides of the Selma demonstration narrative. The existence of federal intervention in the segregationist counter-narrative is evident in the FBI's assistance in slandering Liuzzo. This orchestrated destruction of her reputation shows just how far-reaching the counter-narrative was. The FBI's defamation offers evidence that the federal government was not entirely on board with the Civil Rights narrative.

While Selma residents grappled with the national spotlight, hardline segregationist Alabamians were working to change the Selma narrative for Americans. Republican William Dickinson, an Alabama freshman U.S. Congressman representing the 2nd District, launched a campaign to discredit King and his Selma rallies. As the *Selma Times-Journal* reported on April 2, "[Dickinson] has renewed his claim that the racial disturbances which have racked Alabama recently were Communist inspired."[26]

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[24] Fiffer and Cohen, *Jimmie Lee & James*, 178.
[25] Stanton, *From Selma to Sorrow*, 55.
[26] "Dickinson Renews Expose for King," *Selma Times-Journal*, April 2, 1965, regional edition.

In a speech before the U.S. Congress on March 30, Dickinson denounced the morals of the SCLC's supporters and declared that "Negro and white freedom marchers invaded a Negro church in Montgomery and engaged in an all-night session of debauchery within the church itself." In the same speech, he said drunkenness and "sex orgies were the order of the day in Selma, on the road to Montgomery. There were many – not just a few – instances of sexual intercourse in public between Negro and white."[27] No one could substantiate his slander, and the accusation died in Congress. However, according to Dan T. Carter, Dickinson was able to distribute 100,000 copies of his speech throughout Alabama.[28]

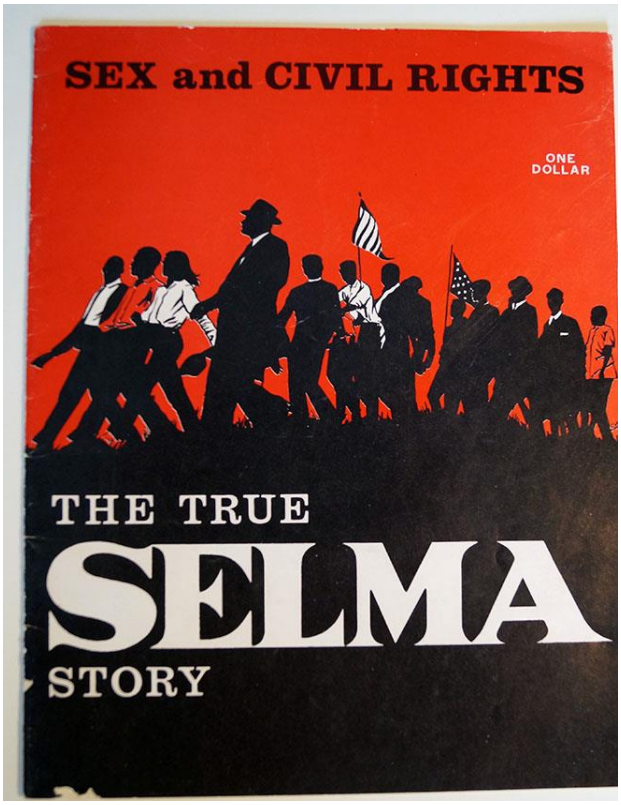

Figure 1 The True Selma Story cover

Dickinson's efforts to discredit King and the march as wicked culminated into a publication titled, *The Truth About Selma: Sex and Civil Rights*. The 32-

[27] "Congressional Record, 89 Cong., 1 Sess., March 30, 1965, P. 6333; Sworn Affidavit of Anonymous Black Man, April 12, 1965, Read into Congressional Record, 89 Cong., 1 Sess., April 27, 1965, P. 8597."

[28] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 260.

page magazine, was copyrighted in 1965 and published by Esco Publishers, Inc. in Birmingham, Alabama. It is attributed to Alfred C. Persons, described in a short introductory biography as a LIFE magazine writer. "Buck" Persons was described as a managing editor of an unnamed Birmingham newspaper and a pilot who had volunteered for the failed Bay of Pigs mission. The "about the author" section showed a picture of Persons: a white male with a military-style buzz cut, a cigarette hanging out of his mouth, and a 'no-nonsense' look.

Persons wrote *The Truth About Selma* "on a special assignment for Congressman William L. Dickinson of Alabama," he investigated the Selma-Montgomery demonstrations in March 1965. In summation he said, "The greatest obstacle in the Negro's search for 'freedom' is the Negro himself and the leaders he has chosen to follow."[29] The publication is an extended tract that casts seemingly endless aspersions on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Civil Rights Movement, and anyone those associated with it.[30]

The inside cover photo is typical of the work: imaginative, degrading, and revisionist in the worst sense. The opening page shows a photo of a crowd of demonstrators, black and white, standing on wet asphalt. The caption read, in part, "On the night of March 10, 1965, these demonstrators, who knew that once they left the area they would not be able to return, urinated en masse in the street on the signal of James Forman, SNCC Executive Director."[31] No proof for or against this claim has been found to justify the mass urination claim. Pearson

[29] Albert C. Persons, *The True Selma Story: Sex and Civil Rights* (Esco Publishers, 1965).
[30] Ibid., ii.
[31] Ibid., i.

framed this photo deceptively through white segregationist counter-narrative in the hopes of drawing support from other white Americans fearful of similar protests.

Pearson's writings also attempt to discredit the integrity of King and the demonstrations. One describes many religious supporters of the demonstrations as misled and attacks King as a liar and hypocrite. Readers are asked the incendiary question, "Is King leading his race in the United States – is it toward freedom, or is it back into slavery?"[32] Other articles describe the protests and marches as filled with moral corruption, clergy impersonations, public sex, prostitution, and drunkenness. So-called affidavits describe public sex between black and white men and women. These affidavits lack attribution, but later appear in a critique written by Sheriff Jim Clark. Another article smears Bayard Rustin as a homosexual and Reverend Ralph Abernathy for his promiscuity with white women. Persons says "in a so-called Christian movement morality would seem to play an important part. Here are the unsavory police and court records of the leaders of the civil rights movement."[33] The final article paints King as a communist, a consistent claim throughout given evidence.

[32] Ibid., 1.
[33] Ibid., 4.

In one final article titled, “How Images Are Created,” Person endeavors to discredit photographs that show police attacks on protestors using 1963 Birmingham protests. His argument attempts to demonstrate how the media inaccurately portrayed whites as the aggressors against blacks. The gravest example accused LIFE and TIME magazines of falsely attributing words to Birmingham police chief, Bull Conner’s mouth, “Here is more of TIME’s view of the Birmingham demonstrations. In the May 10, 1963 edition TIME says, ‘Birmingham saw a small civil war: whites against Negroes” (it never happened) “cops against children” (oh, come on now) “dogs against humans.” (Just like ancient Rome where they used to let the lions eat the Christians ever Saturday afternoon, eh?’”[34] The quotes in parenthesis belong to Persons. Simply, this article described a crude version of framing theory while purporting that the Civil Rights Movement is using images and media to wrongly display the demonstrations. Persons misses the irony in this argument of the media manipulating a narrative for its own purposes.


How 'IMAGES' Are Created

BY ALBERT C. PERSONS

Figure 2 "How Images Are Created" Article

[34] Ibid., 17.

Robert M. Mikell, an Auburn graduate and Montgomery-based writer, penned the book *Selma*, which was published in 1965. The book claimed to be a "comprehensive testimonial" about what really happened – as opposed to the "distorted facts and slanted reports" on television. The book, which was indeed a "comprehensive testimonial" of Selma white counter-narrative, continued to purport the public drunkenness and urination, men and women masquerading as religious clergy, beatniks and communists, and rampant sex everywhere.[35] The affidavits used by Mikell paint a story of sex – sex in the streets, front lawns, behind buildings, in the SNCC office, and even in church.[36]

In addition to Persons *Sex and Civil Rights,* Sheriff Jim Clark, the Dallas County Sheriff who rarely left home without wearing his, "Never!" button, published his side of the story in *The Jim Clark Story: I Saw Selma Raped.* He later claimed that the book was written by someone else, which might explain why it continually switched between first and third person writing styles.[37] Published in 1966, the inflammatory title alone explains the kind of venom that the remaining 105 pages purports. In a Table of Contents section, Clark lays out

[35] Danielle L. McGuire and John Dittmer, *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 184.
[36] Robert M. Mikell, *Selma*, 1St Edition edition (Citadel Press, 1965).
[37] Alvin Benn, "Sheriff Jim Clark Died Believing He Did Right Thing," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, last revised March 1, 2015, accessed September 26, 2016. http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/local/selma50/2015/03/01/sheriff-jim-clark-died-believing-right-thing/24214459/.

the issues he addresses: “Civil Rights and Sheriff Clark,” “The Selma Story,” “Civil Rights and Police,” “Sex and Civil rights,” “Civil Rights and Law,” “Civil Rights and News Media,” and finally, “Civil Rights and Communism.” Clark’s book appeared after Persons and Dickinson’s, *Sex and Civil Rights* and the Selma-Dallas County Chamber of Commerce’s *Selma: The Other Side of the Coin*. Clark copies passages out of both accounts.

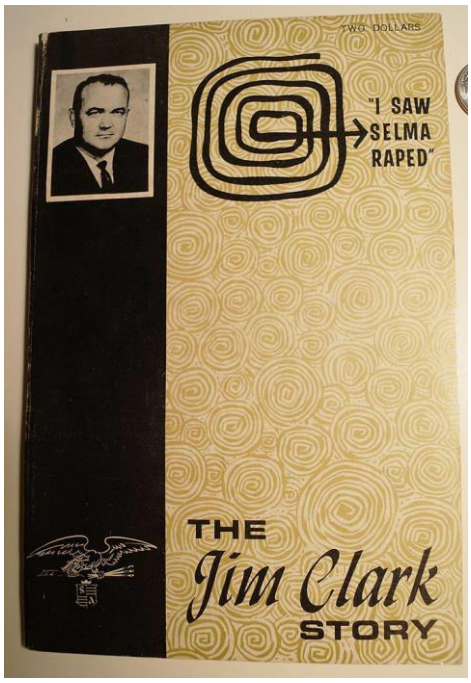

Figure 3 The Jim Clark Story

In the introduction, Clark purports that the victims of the demonstrations are the American people, who have been kept in the dark about what really happened at Selma in March 1965. “I think the time is much overdue for people who live outside the South to have an opportunity to learn something more about the people in the South, black and white; the way they live; the way they work; what the South really is and how it got to be that way.”[38] Seeking a national audience, Clark attempted to make the counter-narrative of Selma the national narrative. Legitimizing his version of the Selma events would not only detract from the righteousness of the Civil Rights narrative, but also prove that Bloody Sunday violence was necessary to fight debauchery of Civil Rights participants.

[38] James G. Clark, “The Jim Clark Story: I Saw Selma Raped” (Selma, AL: Selma Enterprises, Inc., 1966).

Clark's second chapter, "The Selma Story" tells the entire story of Selma, Alabama, and defends the community's past wrongs. Clark even defends the South's right to own slaves by stating, "People outside the South like to refer to this attitude as 'paternalism.' When they say it, it's as if they were describing something base and evil in the Southern character. Actually, a better word to describe this attitude would be just plain 'humanitarian.'"[39] Clark's controversial views mirrored similar opinions held by staunch segregationists that African Americans had lived better lives as slaves than in the century since emancipation. The chapter, which has little to do with Civil Rights events, exists to justify the status quo of separation between the races with whites in control of Selma prior to the demonstrations. It also fuels Clark's argument that people outside the South have little idea of what is happening.

Clark eventually gets to the real subject of his essay: "Sex and Civil Rights." The chapter title was the same as the Persons piece commissioned by Congressman Dickinson. Though he does not make the connection between the written pieces, Clark says of Dickinson, "I do know everything he said was true, and the proof was all there. I helped to provide him with most of it."[40] Although Dickinson and Persons do not cite Clark in *Sex and Civil Rights*, Clark provides an almost verbatim copy of the affidavits used in his chapter titled, "Sex and Civil Rights."

[39] Ibid., 11.
[40] Ibid., 30.

To address the participants of the demonstrations, Clarks offers several select descriptions:

> The whole performance would have been offensive enough if those involved had all been decent and well-motivated… The invasion of Selma by hordes of filthy, promiscuous degenerates began many days before the arrival of most of the high-ranking representative of the religious, social and political orders who participated in the final demonstration down Highway 80 into Montgomery. I describe these first cadres in these terms because I don't know how else to accurately convey the impressions created by these young people of both sexes and races who inflicted their almost indescribable indecencies on the people of a host community.[41]

Clark also targeted noted movement leaders such as Bayard Rustin and Ralph Abernathy. With the listed offenders, Clark equates sex and Civil Rights: "Make no mistake about it, sex and civil rights go together – in the most licentious ways possible to imagine."[42]

Clark's book included a graphic interview with a 12 year-old African-American girl who was allegedly raped and impregnated during the demonstrations. Because the alleged victim was a minor, laws prevented Clark from disclosing her identity while also giving him free rein to write whatever he wanted unchecked. The alleged victim accused several demonstration participants of raping her. There is a strong possibility that Clark fabricated this entire interview for his entire interview. It is a good example of the depths to white hardliner segregation counter-narrative would go to shape the 'true' story of Selma. Even in the alleged rape testimony, Clark bullies the young interviewee into answers. He asks her several times whether she witnessed intercourse on the

[41] Ibid., 30.
[42] Ibid., 42.

march, which she originally denies. Only after being repeatedly pressed does the subject admit to witnessing some sexual acts.

In a continued effort of fabrication, Clark asks and pressures the 'victim' about drinking and drug use during the demonstrations. She finally tells Clark exactly what he wants to hear: a list of high-ranking demonstration leaders that allegedly raped the victim.[43] Clark concludes "… regardless of the violent protests launched at Alabama Congressman William L. Dickinson when he made charges of widespread immortality during the Selma-Montgomery demonstrations. Rather, this confession points to one of the true problems confronting Negroes in their search for social progress."[44] In Clark's opinion, moral depravity is the real problem for African Americans and not the social injustices that they marched for.

The attention that the hardline segregation counter-narrative devoted to the supposed immoralities of the civil rights demonstrators was intended to distract readers from the protestors' demands and calls for equality and social justice. Dan T. Carter says, "The angry response of most Alabama whites temporarily silenced moderates in the Black Belt." [45]It was the narrative that hardliners told themselves in an attempt to make sense of a world where their values were being threatened. It was a narrative rooted in a harsh reaction to inevitable Civil Rights legislation. It was shaped by anticommunist conception of political subversion and sexual perversion, which had long characterized white

[43] Ibid., 56.
[44] Ibid., 57.
[45] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 261.

men's fixation on the subject of interracial sex.[46] That Congressman Dickinson would attempt to avert attention from black oppression to sexual perversions or that Sheriff Clark would fabricate a ghastly tale of rape of a 12 year-old African-American girl, was predictable because it attempted to destroy the image of the Civil Rights Movement as a moral crusade.

Hardliner segregationist counter-narrative was the first reaction to the demonstrations, but it was not the most powerful force in the ever-changing white counter-narrative. Instead, Selma 'moderates' slowly worked their way through new rhetoric that masked a coded language. This new coded rhetoric, or dog whistle language, met with sympathy from whites around the country. 'Dog whistle' politics is defined by Ian Lopez in his book *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*. Dog whistle politics are "coded racial appeals that carefully manipulate hostility towards nonwhites." [47] Within Selma, evidence of dog whistle language is often paired with concerns of public safety, role of religious leaders, and economics, rather than elicit language involving interracial sex, 'orgies,' and overt debauchery.

The dog whistle white counter-narrative created by the Selma community cannot be understood without examining the actions of the Selma-Dallas County Chamber of Commerce and the new "white moderation" group in Selma. Charles Fager writes, "the white leadership…. had to contend not only the increased

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[46] Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965*, 267.

[47] Ian Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*, Reprint edition (Oxford University Press, 2015), ix..

pressures of the Citizens Council, but also, for the first time, a public manifestation of what was referred to as 'white moderation,' people standing up to state in front of everyone that maybe there ought to be some changes in the way blacks were treated in Selma."[48] Moderates were by no means radical in their approach to the racial tension plaguing Selma. But most felt that African Americans deserved more rights. These "moderates" also provided definitive proof that not everyone in Selma was a hardline segregationist.

Led by Selma locals Muriel and Art Lewis, who wrote a letter stating, "We could be called moderates but not liberals, for we believe in the rights of the Negroes, their right to free speech and their right to demonstrate in moderation."[49] Unfortunately, this letter ended up in the hands of the White Citizens Council of Selma. The result was "hate mail, threatening phone calls, and pressure on business associates downtown to shut the Lewises up." Whites turning against the Lewises demonstrated just how far hardline segregationists were willing to go to enforce their own counter-narrative. Instead of deterring the Lewises, this only built up their resolve to issue a public statement. The 'Declaration of Good Faith' was "little more than an affirmation that all citizens had the right to be protected from abuse and a pledge to support interracial communication."[50] It was the most 'radical' statement made by whites and it did almost nothing.

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[48] Fager, *Selma, 1965*, 179.
[49] Ibid., 181.
[50] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*. 261.

After the demonstrations, the statewide business community was tense and concerned about racial violence post-Birmingham and Selma's Bloody Sunday. The violent campaigns significantly damaged Alabama's national image. Concerned about future business prospects, the Chamber issued a statement against violence in conjunction with the Alabama Bankers Association, Associated Industries of Alabama, Alabama Textile Manufacturers Association, and seventeen local chambers of commerce and local business groups. The statement called for handling racial problems within the law.[51] Part of the statement read: "The vast majority of the people in Alabama, like other responsible citizens throughout the nation, believe in law and order, and in the fair and just treatment of all their fellow citizens. They believe in obedience to the law regardless of their personal feelings about its specific merits. They believe in the basic human dignity of all people of all races."[52]

Set to be published in the *Wall Street Journal*, a national business-focused syndicate, the statement was nothing radical in the realm of Civil Rights. Chamber members merely hoped to repair the damage that the white segregationist response to the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama had caused. The statement further read: "We believe in the basic American heritage of voting, and in the right of every eligible citizen to register and cast his ballot. We believe, however, that qualification of prospective voters, when properly and equitably

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[51] Anne Permaloff and Carl Grafton, *Political Power in Alabama: The More Things Change,* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 215-216.
[52] Alabama State Chamber of Commerce, "What We Believe and Where We Stand…," *Selma Times-Journal*, April 15, 1965, regional edition.

administered, is a constitutional responsibility that must be preserved."[53] State chamber members sought out a middle ground approach in the hopes of drawing attention away from white on black violence by asserting that the question of voter registration was a purely local matter. The appeal was also for moderates. But the Selma-Dallas County Chamber of Commerce had other opinions.

On April 9th, the Selma-Dallas County Chamber of Commerce met to consider endorsing the public statement, which had already been endorsed by some of the largest chambers in Alabama, including Birmingham, Montgomery, and other large Alabamian communities. According to Fager, the Selma-Dallas County Chamber meeting only contained nineteen of the Chambers' twenty-six members. All of those dead-set against endorsing the statement were present. The motion of endorsement was defeated.[54]

The front page of the April 15th addition of the *Selma-Times Journal* listed a column titled, "Chamber Rejected Declaration Here." The column refrained from explaining the local chamber's decision, but stated that "the local chamber, it is understood, learned of plans for the publication of the ad in a letter from the Alabama state chamber… it was reported members of the [Selma] board voted 13 to 5 not to sign the ad."[55] When the advertisement ran in newspapers across Alabama and in the *Wall Street Journal,* the absence of the Selma-Dallas County chamber's endorsement was noticeable.

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[53] Ibid., 184.

[54] Fager, *Selma, 1965*, 184.

[55] Roswell Falkenberry, "Chamber Rejected Declaration Here." *Selma Times-Journal*, April 15, regional edition.

In addition to setting the stage for Selma's conspicuous non-endorsement, the *Wall Street Journal* also wrote a derisive article titled "Lessons from Selma," which juxtaposed Hammermill Paper Company's announcement to move to Selma despite the area's mounting racial strife. In February 1965, Hammermill Paper Company of Erie, Pennsylvania, had announced its intention to build a paper mill in Selma. The new mill was projected to employ 250 people and to bring a steady cash flow into the local economy.[56] The scathing article warned that the "tense side drama [of Selma]… holds an important lesson for Northern businessmen eyeing expansion in the South."[57] While Hammermill tried to stay out of the Selma's racial problems, continuing criticism forced the company to make a statement. "Stung by continuing criticism, Hammermill, on March 17 issued a strong statement… gave public notice of its 'deep' concern of basic rights to the Negroes in Alabama and the Selma community."[58] The *Selma Times-Journal* republished this *Wall Street Journal* article in the same edition as the rejected endorsement article on April 4.

It did not take long for the Selma-Dallas County Chamber of Commerce to rethink its non-endorsement. Chamber president, J. M. Gaston called an emergency board meeting, while the county Board of Revenue and City Council voted to support the statement. Gaston later told the *Selma Times-Journal,* "I believe we made a mistake in not joining the other Alabama chambers of commerce who signed the declaration of beliefs… That wasn't the right attitude.

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[56] Fager, *Selma, 1965*, 55.
[57] Peter R. Kann, "Lessons from Selma," *Selma Times-Journal*, April 15, 1965, regional edition.
[58] Ibid.

We should have put our personal feelings aside and taken a stand in favor of that declaration of beliefs."[59] The second round of voting confirmed adopting the Chamber message in a vote of 21 to 8. Economic threats trumped racial tensions.

The Selma Times-Journal printed the endorsement statement twice in its April 18th edition: "Though some harm undoubtedly has been done, the local Chamber of Commerce … we hope, reestablished the confidence of two large industries presently planning to construct multi-million dollar plants in the area. Positively, we believe most industries already located here have been assured of the undeniable support they can expect from Selma's citizens and business community."[60] It was a calculated view of Selma's self-interest, and not a change of community leader attitudes toward the demonstrations and their symbolic meaning at-large. The real motives behind the statement adoption are summarized: "Hammermill… very concerned and feel that the Selma Chamber of Commerce is letting them down in some of the troubles they are having been so conspicuously absense [sic] from the advertisements."[61] It is clear in this statement that the Chamber endorsed the message because of economic pressure, rather than a change of heart on the moral message of the statement. Although hardline segregationist counter-narrative did not win the day, this new coded language created a new and more effective counter-narrative.

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[59] "Chamber Leader Cites Position," *Selma Times-Journal*. April 15, 1965, regional edition.

[60] Roswell Falkenberry, "A Mistake Is Rectified," *Selma Times-Journal*, April 18, 1965, regional edition.

[61] Roswell Falkenberry, "Chamber Reverses Stand On Advertisement Issue," *Selma Times-Journal*, April 18, 1965, regional edition.

The endorsement of the statement made solely because of economic pressures suggests that the Chamber had little to nothing to say about morality in the competing memories of Selma. Yet, the Selma-Dallas County Chamber of Commerce sponsored two important publications that suggest otherwise. Rather than using violence, the power of marketing was used to propose that the community of Selma was a victim of the Civil Rights demonstrations. This was obvious in the first pamphlet titled, "Selma Alabama: The 'Old' and 'New' South." This first pamphlet showed Selma's architecture, monuments, and advertised for a prospective future of the community.[62] It also focused on the future, effectively overlooking the events of March 1965.

The second booklet, "The Story of Selma or The Other Side of the Coin," takes a much clearer stance on the result of the Civil Rights demonstrations. The booklet is a disorganized collection of articles. The all-encompassing theme is an attempt to alienate readers away from the moral high ground narrative of the demonstrations with language covering public safety, media bias, outside agitators, and the role of religious leaders. Reading this 'dog whistle' language reveals that these articles are not that different than the hardliner counter-narrative in overall objectives. The most significant aspect of the pamphlet is how many different articles are sourced. Inside are approximately thirty articles from newspapers around the country including *San Francisco Chronicle, US News, Post Standard* (Syracuse, NY), *Detroit News, Greensboro Watchmen, Chicago*

[62] Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002).

Tribune, and *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rogue), to name just a few. Just seven of the articles are from Alabama newspapers or magazines.

Within its pages, several different articles from around the country confirm that the 'moderate' counter-narrative had an audience amongst sympathetic whites outside of Alabama. This is how powerful the white counter-narrative had grown: people from around the country were adding to it. These citizens from around the country were not influenced by proximity to Governor Wallace or ardent segregationists in the community, yet they shared these proclivities. For these outsiders, it was much easier to throw support behind 'public safety' and 'roles of religious leaders' than it was to support language of 'orgies' and 'debauchery.' Nevertheless, the sentiment is clear in the dog whistle language. By citing counter-narrative articles written in national publications in Los Angeles or New York, "The Story of Selma" tried to convince the American public that the segregationist counter-narrative was the real story of what happened in Alabama.

The main editorial of the *Other Side of the Coin* titled "The Wrong Way" first appeared in the March 22, 1965 edition of the *U.S. News,* a newsweekly magazine based in Washington D.C.[63] The writer was David Lawrence, who is described by *U.S. News* as, "stridently opposed to the civil rights movement, which he saw as too reactionary, and was unabashed in his support of Sen.

[63] The Selma and Dallas County Chamber of Commerce, "The Story of Selma or 'The Other Side of the Coin,'" April 6, 1965, 4.

Joseph McCarthy's efforts to expose Communists in the early 1950s."[64] Lawrence identified Dallas County officials as law abiding public servants who only sought to maintain democratic order in the face of the unnecessary provocations brought to their community by King and his followers. He wrote, "The race question will never be solved with a policeman's club anymore than by 'sit-ins' or other incitements to disorder and mob violence."[65] This dog whistle language is evident in Lawrence's attempt to cast the Civil Rights demonstrators as perpetrators of violence rather than peaceful marchers.

"The Wrong Way," like many of the other articles, seeks to distract readers from the debate over racial equality by casting the protests in a violent light. Rather than focusing on the rampant inequality that propelled the Selma demonstrations to occur, Lawrence discredits them by instead focusing on the violence and unrest that came out of it. By publishing this article, attuned readers began to understand the stance taken by the Selma-Dallas County Chamber of Commerce: violence is not tolerated, regardless of the moral questions associated with it. After "The Wrong Way" sets up the theme of the pamphlet, the ensuing articles continue to utilize dog whistle language to besmirch the moral high ground narrative of the march and cast doubt on equal rights for African Americans. These different articles all contain hints and suggestions to a variety of diverse things pertaining to the march from the safety of Highway 80 to the troubles of interracial couples in California.

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[64] "David Lawrence: A Profile," *US News & World Report*, accessed January 30, 2017, http://www.usnews.com/news/national/articles/2008/05/16/david-lawrence-a-profile.
[65] Ibid., 4.

Public safety is a major theme of the pamphlet and extends from role of police officers, government officials, and safety of highway for marchers. "Joint Declaration of the City and County Governing Bodies" published on January 21, 1965 is a joint statement between the City of Selma and Dallas County. The statement affirms Selma's commitment to law enforcement, despite being "strenuously opposed to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964."[66] An article titled, "United States Highway No. 80," lists all the rules and regulations that motorists must abide by to use this "dangerous" roadway. The article further declares that "the government forbade the Selma demonstrators to clog that highway… In no case would 550 Ku Klux Klansmen – or Boy Scouts or Shriners – have been permitted to trudge down that highway. Accordingly, the Negroes were forbidden to misuse the highway."[67] The theme of public safety veils anger and resentment toward Judge Johnson's order allowing marchers to use Highway 80 for their voting rights protest. The article also hints at unfairness and discrimination since the author does not think that organizations comprised of white males would be given the same privilege to march.

No piece of evidence concerning the white counter-narrative would be complete without at least one example of a besmirching the characters of King and his SCLC lieutenants. In conjunction with the fairly standard counter-narrative belief that King was trying to make money off the Civil Rights Movement, a hand-written letter from King asking for more funds after Selma is found in the pamphlet. Although there is not any written charge of extortion with

[66] "The Story of Selma or 'The Other Side of the Coin,'"3.
[67] Ibid., 10.

the King letter, readers of the pamphlet are already inclined to believe this fact about King. Towards the end of the pamphlet, a photo of King at the Highlander Folk School with the title, "Martin Luther King… A Communist Training School" appears. Being labeled a Communist effectively nullified any high moral ground arguments that could be made for King. On a later page, two articles are laid side by side to compare extramarital affairs that both King and Ralph Abernathy allegedly had. The King article is cut off and barely legible, but the Abernathy article contains a testimony by a fifteen-year-old girl, whom allegedly had an affair with the senior Civil Rights leaders. These articles do not appear to be any different from the character assassinations of Clarks *I Saw Selma Raped* and Persons *Sex and Civil Rights*.

Mistreatment of law enforcement and government by the national media also appears to be a vital theme. An unnamed photo purports to be proof that Sheriff Clark was actually a victim on Bloody Sunday. The photo caption carefully sidesteps the inflammatory language of hardliner segregationist counter-narrative and instead suggests media bias over the savagery of the marchers, "…the picture here clearly establishes that the woman has jerked the Billy from the deputy's hand and had possession of it. Will *Newsweek* and other press media across the entire U.S.A now admit that either the photographer or the authors of their cutlines misrepresented this episode to world readership?"[68]

Following the photographic "evidence" is an article from *Newsweek* that is placed on the same page as an article titled, "The Subtle Phrase and The

[68] Ibid., 11.

Journalistic Lie!" Both concern "slanted reporting" of the photo of Clark allegedly not beating an African-American woman. The Newsweek article from February 8, 1965 tells the story of Mrs. Annie Lee Cooper, who punched Sheriff Clark in the photo. "The Subtle Phrase" analyzes the *Newsweek* articles and claims that it has a "fairly strong dislike of anything Southern." Further purporting that "the article is saturated with untruths," its asks readers to write to *Newsweek* to "tell them what a farce their reporting is, although reporters were probably sent to Selma with instructions to file stories favorable only to the Martin Luther King crusade…"[69]

The editor of the *Greensboro Watchman* concurred with *Other Side of the Coin's* editor in the claim of media bias against law-abiding people of Selma. In "Pray Abate This Tommyrot," Hamner Cobbs writes about Jimmie Lee Jackson's death, "the State Troopers were in Marion to keep the peace, whereas the TV critters were to manufacture news as well as report it."[70] Cobbs claims that in his fifty years of reporting, he has never see a more unfair and inaccurate media than those that covered the Selma and Marion demonstrations. Cobbs concludes with, "Freedom of press means merely the guaranteed right to express ourselves. It does not mean a governmental license for a few self-appointed people, often incompetent, to distort and to misrepresent; to subvert the truth or to indulge in unwarranted exaggerations…" The problem is that the example Cobb lists as his "unwarranted exaggeration" is false and that the "responsible citizen" that reported the actual facts is unlisted and anonymous.

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[69] Ibid.,11.
[70] Ibid., 11.

"Selma Inscribes Note of Reason In History Text" comes from the *Montgomery Advertiser* and continues the theme of media bias against Selmians and Southerners. Wasson, the Managing Editor, sticks to tradition of blaming outside agitators, "their knowledge of the history and traditions of the South is totally nonexistent. Yet they come down dressed in unpressed clothes and superior attitudes and sniff around for trouble." These outsiders "see King get hit" and have their nicely crafted story. "The wires to New York and other centers of culture are kept hot with their unmitigated trash, their half truth and fabrications." In one last resounding declaration Wasson says, "We have warred with the northern and liberal before and we shall again."[71]


Treat Violence In Fairness

The Detroit News FINAL EDITION

3 Pastors Beaten on Selma Street

Harmony Out of Key for GOP

Clubbed Victim Is Critical

Gets Her Lumps

Newest Trouble at U. of California– 2 Top Officials Quit

King Tells Reason He Defied Court

9 Stabbed After Close Page Game

Frisco Bank Shaky

Figure 4 The Media is biased against murder rates

As if all the compelling evidence listed was not enough for readers to believe, the editors also added a photo of "The Detroit News" to highlight the injustices of the media. The front page of the paper highlights on the attack of James Reeb and his colleagues in Selma. But editors of *Other Side of the Coin* were quick to point out the bias in the media as the headline focused on Selma,

[71] Ibid., 21.

and overshadowed 9 stabbings in Detroit. In an editorial comment about newspaper, a *Birmingham News* reporter stated, "Alabama does not relieve itself at all of its problems by pointing fingers northward. But this will explain, again, why so many whites in Alabama became very irritated and even angry, at what they consider overplay of Southern troubles compared with 'back home' display of their own problems in the North."[72]

Another stunning theme that the pamphlet touches upon is interracial relationships among demonstrators. Instead of using dog whistle language to suggest problems of African Americans and whites together, the pamphlet shows just three photos with no captions. The first photo has three African Americans holding up what appears to be an injured white woman. The second and third photos are on a page together, separated only by a small question mark in the middle of the page. The second photo shows an African American male clutching the ankle of a white male, while the third photo shows a mix of races marching down the street. Without captions, readers, most of whom are already inclined to believe their own preconceived notions anyway, are forced to draw their own conclusions.

[72] Ibid., 15.

No evidence of racial dog whistle language could go without mentioning interracial couples, a serious hot button issue for segregationist whites. "A Debutante Has No Regrets 2 Years and 2 Lives Later" tells the story of an interracial couple in San Francisco. The complete article seems innocuous enough until whole paragraphs go missing in the reprint. While the story of a wealthy white woman marrying an African American and moving to a shabby slum apartment is evident, no context of the marriage is given. The parts of the article that do remain in the pamphlet include the mention of "having lots of children," how the interracial marriage hurt the status of the bride's well to-do parents, the husband asking the newspaper for a plug for his band, and their collective dream of running off to Morocco. These counter-culture details would have been completely abhorrent to moderate white counter-narrative readers. To send a

CHEER UP, SAN FRANCISCO HAS PROBLEM TO

A Debutante Has No Regrets 2 Years and 2 Lives Later

By Mary Crawford

It was love at first handshake, San Francisco post debutante Heidi McGurrin said reflectively today as she smiled at her Negro bridegroom, drummer Art Lewis.

"We were married a couple of months ago in San Blas," she explained, showing her ebony wooden wedding ring they bought in Guadalajara.

"I fell in love with Arthur the minute I met him. That was two years ago. We met through friends in San Francisco, mutual friends."

Heidi, 23 year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Howard McGurrin, wealthy and socially prominent couple who have given their two daughters all that money can buy, made her debut here in 1959.

THEN a couple of years ago, she abandoned the luxury of her Pacific Heights home, bowed out of San Francisco's high society, and moved to Big Sur.

Today she seems perfectly happy with a shabby, rear two-room apartment in what was once the Russian Embassy at 1198 Fulton St.

Hopping out of an old fashioned tub visible through a hole in the wall, she donned lace-edged white knee-length pajamas, and said, "There's nothing I want, nothing I miss. We don't have any problems at all. When we have enough money, we'll have lots of children."

Heidi said, "My family didn't understand. When I lived at home, I did the best I could—with my painting and the things I had to do. Then I couldn't endure it any more.

"I appreciate the way I grew up. It taught me a lot. I'm not a rebel. I've never been rebellious. I've never been antagonistic."

She explained she doesn't want publicity about he interracial marriage to hurt her father, former president of the San Francisco Real Estate Board, her socially prominent mother, or her sister Flica. All are still listed in the Social Register.

Arthur said of his mother, "She knows I'm a man. She doesn't think about black, white, pink or red."

He and his bride insisted that their mixed marriage causes no trouble except a few comments from "ignorant" people passing them on the street.

"BE SURE to give my band a plug," he said, putting a maroon sports shirt over a green sweat shirt. "It's the Monty Waters band, about 12 guys, all Negro, and we play on Sundays at the Both And," a jazz place at 305 Divisadero St.

He said sometimes he and his wife make as much as $200 a week . . . sometimes a dollar. She makes knitted hats for friends, works as a waitress occasionally and makes jewelry.

"IF YOU feel right inside, you keep doing what you've got to do," said Heidi.

"When we have enough money to get to Morocco, we'll go and then from there we'll go to Spain."

"I wish the band could get one of those State Department tours," Art said. The band is making a sound track now for a film. "We need a break."

HEIDI McGURRIN
Now Mrs. Art Lewis

ARTIST WIFE SHAPES NEW LIFE WITH JAZZ DRUMMER HUSBA
"I fell in love with Arthur the minute I met him," said former S. F. deb . . .

From a Reader of THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, July, 1965.
(The inscription at the top is his)

12-D

Figure 5 Cheer Up, San Francisco Has Problem

final message of this interracial couple article, the publisher of the entire pamphlet added their own opinion: "Cheer Up, San Francisco Has Problems."[73]

The pamphlet's authors also rely heavily on the questioning of religious leaders and whether their participation in the marches was right or wrong. The pamphlet editors adopted the same language of morality used by Selma protesters in their counter-narrative in the hopes of persuading Americans that God was on the side of the segregationist counter-narrative and not the Civil Rights crusade. A March 18 article from an unlisted newspaper, titled, "Toolen rips King, says priests, nuns should go home."[74] Thomas Joseph Toolen, the Catholic archbishop of Mobile had previously forbade all Alabama nuns and priests from participating in the demonstrations. Text in the article that is bolded include "Pointing out that 'some corrections in our attitude toward the Negro people' are needed, Archbishop Toolen said that, 'here in Mobile, where the problem has been handled sensibly, we've had no trouble. Sane and sensible Negroes realize we are trying to bring them up to standards they should have."[75]

On the same page as the Archbishop article, the editors posted two other articles reaching the Jewish faith and another sect of Christianity. "SNCC Lies, Says Rabbi From North" quotes Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Rubenstein is quotes as saying, "they [Civil Rights leaders] wanted dead bodies, our bodies." Following the inclusion of the Jewish faith in the segregationist counter-narrative is an article encompassing a Methodist ministry

[73] Ibid., 12-d.
[74] Ibid., 13.
[75] Ibid., 13.

from Birmingham. "Bishop Goodson Deplores March to Montgomery" quotes the Bishop as saying, "I see this march as doing a great disservice to the cause of human freedom and delaying still further the struggle for reconciliation which surely awaits all of us who call Alabama home."[76]

Other published articles in *Other Side of the Coin* that tap into the theme of religious leaders include, "I Am The Law," "Minister Administer," "Retired bishop rips 'outside' clergy," and *The Alabama Baptist's* "Other Side of the Picture." A *Fort Lauderdale News* piece from March 28, 1965, prompts, "How Far Should Clergy Go In Their Efforts to Overcome Wrongs?" The writer utilizes both themes of religious leaders and public safety when he asks, "but does this justify clergymen or members of religious orders leaving their pulpits or their own areas to point an accusing finger at other cities and other states and, particularly, when they know full well their actions may increase the possibility of other people being killed or injured?"[77] *The Montgomery Advertiser* article, "I Am The Law," endeavors to describe the hypocrisy of these ministers that have left their flocks for Alabama. Citing the dangerousness of New York City and Malcolm X, the murder rate in Philadelphia, and all these allegedly horrible places, "the insensate Pharisees have departed such crimson jungles to make incendiary excursions into Alabama to perform lawless acts. This is moral blindness and a vice."[78]

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[76] Ibid., 13.
[77] Ibid., 16.
[78] Ibid., 9.

The *Other Side of the Coin* is bookended with David Lawrence's "The Wrong Way" and an *Alabama Baptist* article titled, "Things Not Generally Known." *The Alabama Baptist,* a weekly religious newsletter published by the Alabama Baptist Convention, had long been associated with southern views and promotes Lawrence's idealized view of Old South values.[79] This final article erases all semblance of neutral legitimacy of the pamphlet and uses rhetoric much more similar to hardliner segregationist counter-narrative. Calling the Selma rallies a "holocaust," it reminds readers that they have not received "the full story of events."[80] The article states that "we know for a fact" that responsible Negroes did not participate in the marches and falsely claims that Governor George Wallace had allowed all qualified Negros the vote. Instead of offering some evidence to support these claim, the article claims "the disturbance is not for voting rights alone, but there is strong evidence that communism is either sitting in the drivers seat or next to the drive." Communism again rears its ugly head as a moral gauge, reinforcing the belief that communism is synonymous with immorality. Similar to Clark's description of the demonstrators, the article concludes, "human filth was so nauseating city workers had to wash the streets each morning with hoses."[81]

Like David Lawrence's first article in the pamphlet, the *Alabama Baptist* focuses on the violence and disarray, rather than the cause of these problems.

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[79] Waldrep, B. Dwain. "J. J. D. Renfroe." *Encyclopedia of Alabama*. Accessed January 31, 2017. http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1172.
[80] "The Story of Selma or 'The Other Side of the Coin,'" 23.
[81] Ibid., 23.

The final message, like the rest of the pamphlet, discredits the Civil Rights narrative of the demonstration without even acknowledging the inequalities that led the demonstrators to risk their lives to protest the injustices they had experienced. While most of the article used coded language veiled under the themes of public safety, media bias, and role of religious leaders, it was fairly obvious what overarching point the editors of the pamphlet were trying to make in conjunction with the white counter-narrative.

Hardliner Selmians like Sheriff Clark continued with campaigns of "Never!" throughout the Spring of 1965. On the front page of the April 18 *Selma Times-Journal*, "Clark Will Reorganize Posse on Technicality."[82] But most whites began to realize this inflammatory language was not sustainable in pushing white counter-narrative. Instead, regular citizens began to use dog whistle language in their approach to racial relations and the legacy of the Selma demonstrations.

Regular citizens that wanted their voice heard wrote regularly to the *Selma-Times Journal* "Letters to the Editor" column. Every week, citizens voiced concerned over Selma's besmirched legacy, the rabble-rousers that supported the Selma demonstrators, and other issues of public safety. Using just one newspaper sampling, April 4, as an example, all seven letters published continued the use of the segregationist counter-narrative.

The first letter by Thelma Burns demonstrates the more hardliner segregationist counter-narrative. Mrs. Burns declared, "[King] speaks of

[82] Roswell Falkenberry, "Clark Will Reorganize Posse On Technicality," *Selma Times-Journal*, April 18, 1965, regional edition.

Governor Wallace as breaking the laws, who has broken more than he? During that ridiculous march Selma was invaded by all the riff-raff from the four corners of our country, they came like a pack of wolves, and as the pack does, when one wolf is injured, they destroy him, that is what they are trying to do to our state."[83]

The other letters used dog whistle language to voice their opinions. Mrs. Mary Budrow addressed her concerns about religious leaders that participated in the demonstrations: "Has anyone down there investigated these priests, ministers, and nuns who march? It is difficult to understand if they have pastorates how they can leave their flocks" Budrow concludes her letter with, "Don't let your congressman vote for any ridiculous legislation to gain black votes. YOU are the hope for this country."[84] Her language is significantly less inflammatory than Mrs. Burns and much easier to agree with.

The most effective "Letter to the Editor" was written by Warrant Officer Billy Smith. Smith served with the Alabama National Guard protecting the demonstrators. Smith wrote, "while performing this duty in Selma and Dallas County I was able to meet and make friends with some of the finest people… First I would have to name Sheriff Jim Clark, Mr. Crocker, and all the deputies and posse members of Dallas County…" Instead of using his position to give legitimacy to the moral narrative of the marchers, Smith instead choses to veil his language in gratefulness to law enforcement, who he declares are the real heroes of the march.[85]

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[83] Thelma M. Burns, letter to the editor*, The Selma Times-Journal*, April 4, 1965.
[84] Mary E. Budrow, letter to the editor*, The Selma Times-Journal,* April 4, 1965.
[85] Billy Smith, letter to the editor, *The Selma Times-Journal,* April 4, 1965.

These segregationist counter-narratives sources and hard to find. Jim Clark's *I Saw Selma Raped* can be found in only twenty-one libraries worldwide, including five in Alabama. Besides two copies located in North Carolina, the rest of the copies are located outside of the Southern geographical region. *Sex and Civil Rights* has thirty-seven copies worldwide, including six in Alabama. Mikell's *Selma* has forty-eight copies, including eight in Alabama. Most surprising, however, is the Chamber of Commerce's *The Other Side of the Coin*, which is housed in only five places all in Alabama or Mississippi. The evidence suggests that the hardliner segregationist counter-narrative was more far-reaching than "moderate" counter-narrative. However, the "moderate" counter-narrative was already widely accepted throughout the country, as evidenced in the articles in *The Other Side of the Coin,* which contained articles from around the country. Simply because the pamphlet was not widely distributed does not suggest that this was not the dominant narrative. Instead, what is more surprising is just how far-reaching the hardliner counter-narrative actually was.

But within Selma, Alabama, locals observed the change within the community in the wake of the demonstrations. In the autobiography of J.L. Chestnut, Selma's only African American lawyer, Chestnut wrote, "tensions had lowered somewhat, but Selma remained unnerved… I began to notice a shift in white Selma – from don't-give-an-inch to something more like damage control. They had been held up to ridicule around the world. It was clear there were limits to what Washington and black people would accept. Major voting rights

legislations was coming."[86] As a member of the DCVL, Chestnut also noted that most African Americans in Selma seemed to think change was going to happen overnight with everything made equal. "I think the rosy notion came out of the excitement of the march to Montgomery. The news media, the Northerners who came down to participate, were full of talk of "changing history." They projected a kind of happily-ever-after – I knew was unrealistic."[87] In general, Chestnut wrote, the community remained quiet throughout the spring and early summer of 1965 waiting for voting rights legislation. Even in Selma, where the most ardent defenders of the white counter-narrative lingered, the passage of the VRA signaled a new era.

After Bloody Sunday and before the final march to Montgomery, President Johnson threw his support into legislation for voting rights. On March 15, Johnson proclaimed, "At times history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom. So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was a century ago at Appomattox. So it was last week in Selma, Alabama." Evoking the language of America's sacred battlefields and heritage sites, Johnson was already bestowing the moral meaning to the legacy of Selma. Later in the speech, he declared, "And we shall overcome." This statement, a direct connection to the Civil Rights leaders affirmed support for African Americans and the voting rights act. [88]

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[86] Chestnut and Cass, *Black in Selma*, 5

[87] Ibid., 227.

[88] "Speech Before Congress on Voting Rights (March 15, 1965)", Miller Center, accessed January 30, 2017, http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-3386.

The VRA, sponsored by US Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield and minority leader Everett Dirkson, was introduced on March 17, 1965. But it was not until April 9 that it was reported out of the Senate Judiciary Committee. On May 26, the Senate passed the bill on a 77-19 vote. Johnson called the result of the vote, "triumphant evidence of this nation's resolve that every citizen must and shall be able to march to a polling place without fear or prejudice or obstruction."[89] Some problems about specific legislation of poll taxes at local and state elections held up final passage, but on August 3, by a vote of 328-74, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the VRA. On August 4, the U.S. Senate passed it jointly with 79-18.

On August 6, President Johnson, while surrounded by several Civil Rights leaders including King, John Lewis, and Rosa Parks, signed the bill into law. The president announced that the bill, "is a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory on any battlefield.... Today we strike away the last major shackle of those fierce and ancient bonds [of slavery.] Today, the Negro story and American story fuse and blend."[90] The signing of the VRA was also the American government's symbolic policy to adopt the Civil Rights narrative of Selma, making it the national narrative.

Back in Selma, life returned to normal after the passage of the VRA. Chestnut said, "After centuries of ducking and dodging, black people had come out of the closet – and they liked the air... that's what America is all about –

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[89] Ibid., 245.

[90] E.W. Kenworthy, "Johnson Signs Voting Rights Bill, Orders Immediate Enforcement 4 Suits Will Challenge Poll Tax," *New York Times*, August 7, 1965, regional edition.

freedom to breathe, freedom from fear. That was fundamental. King often said, 'The vote is not the ball game, but it gets you into the ballpark.' That's where we were at the end of 1965. We had gotten into the ballpark. Now we had to learn to play the game."[91] At the end of 1965, *The Selma Times Journal* wrote, "The Selma-to-Montgomery march, highlight of a three-month-long Negro voter registration drive and spark behind the passage of the 1965 voting rights act, has been the top story in Alabama in 1965."[92] The struggle for the town of Selma's national and local narrative in 1965 centered around the framing of the demonstrations through the Civil Rights Movement high moral language and its white segregationist counter-narrative. Although the narrative of moral high ground ultimately won out in the end becoming the national narrative of Selma as the epicenter of the voting rights movement, the segregationist counter-narrative never really disappeared.

[91] Chestnut and Cass, *Black in Selma*, 235

[92] Roswell Falkenberry, "Selma March Is Voted Top Story Of State in '65," *Selma Times-Journal*, January 2, 1966, regional edition.

Chapter 2:
"Issue in '90 Is Local, Not As Broad As '65:" Evolving White Counter-Narrative On the Eve of the 25th Anniversary

As the nation's attention faded away in the aftermath of the demonstrations for voting rights, black citizens in Selma resolutely continued attacks on the repressive bonds of white supremacy. African Americans took on local political, economic, and social injustices by drawing strength from the new black voter base and mobilizing. For the first time since Reconstruction, the federal government used the law to force white officials to extend to African Americans their full rights as American citizens. Meanwhile, President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty agenda funneled federal funds into programs to eradicate poverty. It was a time of great hope for African Americans. In Dallas County, War on Poverty funding helped support farmers, provided day care programs for children and working families, employment for low-income teens and adults, and paved roads and streetlights for neglected neighborhoods. African Americans at the epicenter of the voting rights movement had reason to be optimistic.

By the end of 1965, the white segregationist counter-narrative had been forced to change from incendiary hardliner rhetoric to dog whistle language. Segregationists in the community still viewed the demonstrations as immoral, citing claims of "sex and civil rights" and "the other side of the coin," but this

local counter-narrative was certainly not the national narrative of the march.[1] With this defeat white segregationists lost the ability to effectively frame Selma as the stage for African American debauchery. Yet, the new hope prompted a new form of reactionary response by whites in the community. Proponents of the segregationist counter-narrative sought out new techniques and different narratives to reclaim the narrative and legacy of Selma. The years between 1965 and 1990, the 25th anniversary of the demonstrations, offer evidence of this evolving white counter-memory.

Even though segregationists had mostly lost the early crusade against the Civil Rights national narrative of the Selma rallies, they mounted an assault on an important African American leader. On July 7th, 1965, Safety Director Wilson Baker and Sheriff Jim Clark arrested Reverend Fredrick D. Reese on for charges that he embezzled $1,850 from the DCVL. Reese was the pastor of Ebeneezer Baptist Church, the president of the DCVL, and a leader of the Selma Teachers Association. He had been a key figure in organizing the various marches and demonstrations. In January 1965, he used his influences in the Teachers Association to lead black teachers on a protest march for voting rights. Reese was also credited with inviting King and the SCLC to lead the voting rights protest. Preoccupied with its own internal politics as well as devoting resources to other campaigns, SCLC left Selma in the hands of Reese's DCVL after the demonstrations.

[1] "The Story of Selma or 'The Other Side of the Coin."

Reese took advantage of the victory of the demonstrations to meet with Selma leaders to demand equal opportunities for African Americans. According to Charles Fager in his book *Selma, 1965:*

> In this atmosphere of triumph, when meetings between the mayor and black leadership resumed on April 7th, Rev. Reese was acting like a real leader, a man in command who was ready to press firmly the advantages he now had in order to force important concessions out of whites. He went in and laid on the table a long list of demands: jobs for blacks, good visible jobs both in the city government and in the downtown stores where the cash registers were still practically silent because of the boycott… and the official adoption by the city and such institutions as the *Selma Times-Journal* of titles of respect – Mr., Miss, and Mrs. – for blacks in business discourse.[2]

Mayor Joe Smitherman, however, did little to appease Reese, except to wait for Selma to return to its pre-demonstrations status quo of rule by whites and division by color. In the meantime, Smitherman did not wish to alienate new African American voters. His ability to capitalize on divisions within the African American community kept him entrenched in power for the next 30 years. According to J.L. Chestnut, Mayor Smitherman approached Selma's new racial order using the mantra: "If you give just a little, you won't have to give a lot."[3]

After the march, donations and supplies began drifting into Selma from throughout the country. In early July, Reese was charged with embezzling these donated funds. J.L. Chesnutt, describes the incident, "the next day, Baker and Smitherman held a press conference, a big hypocritical show of concern for an organization they're repeatedly denounced."[4] Denouncing the corruption and immorality of black leaders was typical of the white counter-narrative in 1965.

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[2] Fager, *Selma, 1965*, 171.
[3] Chestnut and Cass, *Black in Selma*, 260-262.
[4] Ibid., 232.

Wilson Baker showed three blank checks that Reese had supposedly cashed. The potential crime hinged on whether Reese had permission of the other officers to use league funds for his own personal use. Since Reese's contract had not been renewed through the Selma school system and he had devoted his time to the donations and the DCVL, it was assumed that he could use this money for his own personal use.[5]

At Reese's trial in March of 1966, two DCVL officers were put on the stand. "They testified that Reese had approval to use the money… Reese's stock had reached its lowest level, but the trial revived it. A black man had taken on the Dallas County judicial establishment and won."[6] Reese was eventually rehired by Selma County school board. While Smitherman and Baker failed to destroy Reese, their actions did did have an unintended negative effect on the African American community. According to historian, J. Thornton Mill's, "in the meantime the unity of purpose that had characterized black Selma early in 1965 had been irretrievably shattered. Blacks had again returned to the factionalism, jealous rivalries, and shortsightedness that had been all too common among their leadership before the beginning of the demonstrations."[7] The 1965 smear campaign against Reese was one of the last public segregationist efforts to claim the moral high ground. They failed, and their failure led them to conclude that their tactics and narrative would have to change.

[5] Thornton, *Dividing Lines*, 491.
[6] Chestnut and Cass, *Black in Selma*, 233.
[7] Thornton, *Dividing Lines*, 492.

According to *New York Times* reporter, Roy Reed, the one year anniversary of the demonstrations found African Americans determined to use their new voting rights for one thing in particular: throw Jim Clark out of the sheriff's office.[8] As 1966 marked an election year for the position of Dallas County Sheriff, African Americans collectively threw support behind Clark's opponent Wilson Baker. Although Baker was not exactly a model of virtue and champion of black voting rights, blacks deemed him better than Jim Clark.

As soon as polls closed for the regular Democratic primary, Sheriff Clark and the Dallas County Executive Committee accused local African Americans of committing fraud. Because of this, Clark threw out six boxes of votes from primarily African American voters. The case immediately moved to federal court for voter fraud. Baker used the Department of Justice to resolve the matter, and Chestnut remarked, "it was the height of irony that Baker's victory was saved by the Department of Justice – in a suit filed under the provisions of the new VRA that Baker had worked so diligently to prevent… Baker got virtually all the Black vote."[9] Still, Clark tried to reenter the race as an independent while railing against the federal government and "black power" for taking over the Democratic primary, Clark vowed to maintain law and order in Dallas County.[10] Clark was unsuccessful and Wilson Baker became the new county sheriff.[11]

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[8] Roy Reed, "'Bloody Sunday' Was Year Ago; Now Selma Negroes Are Hopeful," *New York Times*, March 6, 1966, regional edition.
[9] Chestnut and Cass, *Black in Selma*. 241.
[10] Jim Clark for Sheriff, ad, *Selma Times-Journal*, Oct. 23, 1966, regional edition.
[11] "Baker Edges Clark in Sheriff's Race," *Selma Times-Journal*, Nov. 9, 1966, regional edition.

Even though this first municipal election failed to bring African Americans into office, it was impossible to deny that they had made serious gains since the Civil Rights demonstrations and the passage of the VRA. The number of registered voters had risen from 6,000 to 13,500 and the number of African American voters had grown from 250 to 5,000.[12] New optimism grew out of Clark's defeat and black candidates began to file for six of the ten city council seats, as well as the office of mayor. Yet, dissension in the black community deprived black candidates of any real shot. Strife kept other candidates out of new seats and the city council remained all white in 1968.[13] Reverend L.L. Anderson, who had challenged Smitherman for mayor, was criticized by Reese and his followers. Although these African American contenders won nearly unanimous support from the black voters, none of the candidates won.[14] The city's election system, which allowed all registered voters to choose the representative from a specific ward instead of limiting the vote to only people within the district, limited the chances of African American candidates. In Selma, at-large elections meant that the city's 5,200 registered black voters could never secure a majority against 8,200 registered white voters. This practice would finally end in 1972 when new state election laws forced Selma to change. Finally, in October 1972, the Selma City Council swore in F.D. Reese, E.L. Doyle, Lorenzo

[12] Thornton, *Dividing Lines*, 498.
[13] Thornton, *Dividing Lines*, 499.
[14] "Heavy Balloting Expected Tomorrow," *Selma Times-Journal*, March 4, 1968, regional edition.

Harrison, J.C. Kimbrough, and William Kemp as the first black city council members.[15]

With African Americans were slowly making progress at the ballot box, they faced increasing problems in local public schools. As per the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the U.S. Department of Education required school systems to submit integration plans or risk loss of federal funding. Selma submitted its first plans in 1965 and "adopted a freedom-of-choice plan for the first four elementary grades that resulted in the admission of a total of twenty blacks to three formerly white schools."[16] The Freedom of Choice plans assumed that no white parent would willingly enroll their child in a black school, while few black students would enroll in white schools.[17] Just as the district had hoped, only nineteen black students appeared in formerly all white elementary classrooms on the first day of school.[18]

This modest concession was still too much for some whites in Selma. A group headed by Judge Hare McLean Pitts and the White Citizens Council joined forces to fund a private Christian academy under the guise of "religious education." These private Christian academies sprung up all over the South as a form of massive white resistance to the Brown decision.[19]

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[15] Karlyn Denae Forner, "If Selma Were Heaven: Economic Transformation and Black Freedom Struggles in the Alabama Black Belt, 1901 – 2000" (PhD. diss., Duke University, 2014), 326-327.
[16] Thornton, *Dividing Lines*, 498.
[17] "School Desegregation Plan Is Approved," *Selma Times-Journal*, May 17, 1965, regional edition.
[18] "Schools Integrate Quietly in Selma," *Selma Times-Journal*, September 3, 1965, regional edition.
[19] Matthew L. Downs, "Massive Resistance." *Encyclopedia of Alabama*. Accessed February 1, 2017, http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3618.

This first Christian academy was christened the "John Tyler Morgan Academy," symbolically named for a white Alabamian politician from Selma commonly remembered as the "father of the Panama Canal." Morgan, who was born and raised in Selma, was also a white supremacist of the early Jim Crow era. He strongly supported policies of black disfranchisement and segregation and advocated "southern nationalist" philosophy calling for removal of African Americans from the South to be sent abroad.[20] Morgan was a former Confederate general, a confirmed white supremacist, and probably a member of the KKK. Naming the school after Morgan was a deliberate effort to clearly state the *raison d'etre* of this all-white academy. It is one of the first examples of white Selmians of the counter-narrative routinely naming public spaces and buildings after historical figures associated with the Confederate States of America or white supremacy. The tactic became commonplace from the mid 1960s onward. If any outsider questioned the reasons for naming the school after a known white supremacist, parents and administrators could honestly claim that they chose Morgan because he was a local boy who had done well for himself. After all, he was a war hero and was closely associated with a great American international achievement. How many Northern schools were named for Washington, Grant, or Roosevelt? The academy, which catered to upper middle class white families,

[20] Thomas Adams Upchurch, "John Tyler Morgan," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, accessed November 23, 2016, http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1508.

remained segregated for 40 years. It was not until 2008 that an African American enrolled in the Morgan Academy kindergarten.[21]

In October 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court tossed out the "deliberate speed" approach taken by most southern school districts in the wake of Brown v. BOE. This stalling tactic was used by segregated Southern communities to organize resistance against immediate integration. The Supreme Court ruled that continued operation of segregated school was no longer permissible, despite this 'deliberate speed' clause.[22] Two months later, a three-judge federal panel ordered Selma to eliminate the "freedom of choice" dual system by September 1971. At this point, Meadowview Christian Church, a reformed Baptist congregation, established a second white private school, and middle class white students began deserting the public school system *en masse* leaving behind poor whites and African Americans. Soon enrollment in the public schools was 70 percent black, while the private schools had become a rival all-white system.[23]

According to J.L. Chestnut, "That's when the crunch came. The Selma school board made a quiet announcement designed to do two contradictory things – reassure whites they weren't changing that much and assure blacks they were going to be fair. More white people left for the Morgan academy."[24] The remaining white public school students were predominately poor and lacked

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[21] David Holthouse, "Activists Confront Hate In Selma, Ala.," *The Intelligence Report*, November 29, 2008, accessed March 28, 2017, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2008/activists-confront-hate-selma-ala.
[22] "Alexander v. Holmes County Bd. of Ed. 396 U.S. 1218 (1969)," *Justia Law*, accessed December 3, 2016, https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/396/1218/case.html.
[23] Thornton, *Dividing Lines*, 498.
[24] Chestnut and Cass, *Black in Selma*, 286.

influence among the city's white elite leaders. These students found themselves trapped in the newly integrated school system unable to afford local private education options. Parris High School integrated and was soon thereafter renamed Selma High School. Despite integration, some aspects of the local public schools remained segregated. Chestnut says that in order to keep students separated in the school a "three-tier system of learning levels that to a significant degree resegregated the students, with the majority of the white students…in the top level."[25] According to Chestnut, this system discouraged "socializing across racial lines – and very little dating, that big bugaboo of the White Citizens' Council." This system also segregated students enough to allow for "dual homecoming queens, dual students officers, a black most popular students and a white most popular student."[26] This three-tiered system, called "leveling" or "tracking," would set the stage for massive racial tension in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Even though African Americans had gained integrated schools, the right to vote, and elected officials, and the ballot, some things about Selma remained exactly as they had been before 1965. In 1970, Chestnut said that black Selma, "still had many dirt streets, dark and unlit at night, smelly outdoor toilets, poor drainage, and block after block of run-down shotgun houses – the physical legacy of decades of municipal neglect."[27] Before Smitherman became Selma's mayor his predecessor, Chris Heinz, rejected federal money for renewal programs because

[25] Ibid., 286.
[26] Ibid., 286.
[27] Ibid., 268.

of fears of federal intervention. Smitherman, however, realized that these federal funds could keep him in office while appeasing constituents. The mayor brought in $3 million through the HUD to clear black slums. On the surface, it appeared that Smitherman was bringing in serious funding to revitalize the community. In actuality, he was using these funds to rezone and redistrict the black community under the mask of "urban renewal."

The problem was that these ambitious plans did not have any place for displaced people and also offered no way for blacks to offer input into this future neighborhood planning. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund thwarted Smitherman's plans to use these funds to further segregate the city black neighborhoods, suing HUD and Selma for perpetuating residential segregation with federal funds. After much negotiation, all parties involved signed the Selma Accord agreeing to locate low-income housing outside of majority black area, to hire a black urban renewal director, and to appoint a 50/50 racially-split advisory board.[28]

Racial politics continued to plague this Black Belt community throughout the 1970s. African Americans continued to push for change but were often met with stiff white resistance. In 1972, recent Harvard School of Law graduates, Hank and Rose Sanders, joined J.L. Chestnut's law firm. The Sanders, who were African American themselves, would eventually become spokespeople for Selma blacks. Hank would also go onto to become an Alabama State senator of the 23rd

[28] Nikki Davis Maute, "Renewal Project Will Turn Area into Model," *Selma Times-Journal*, November 19, 1972, regional edition.

district in 1982.[29]

Rose Sanders became known for her strong brand of activism in Selma, angering many whites and empowering many African Americans. In just a short time, she founded a pre-school, an after-school tutoring program, and a Saturday enrichment program for blacks. She founded MOMs, a youth leadership group, McRae Learning Center, and Black Belt Arts and Cultural Center. J.L. Chestnut observed, "Hank and Rose brought new life to black Selma."[30] The Sanders actively worked to improve the lives of African Americans in Selma, which often resulted in undermining the white counter-narrative in Selma.

African American within Selma also began commemorating the legacy of the demonstrations. Every year they gathered to memorialize the victory of voting rights. On March 8, 1975, thousands of African Americans commemorated the 10th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. Coretta Scott King spoke to the commemorators, "we must continue our nonviolent struggle without rancor and bitterness."[31] Sheyann Webb, who had been eight years-old on Bloody Sunday, wrote in her 1980 book, *Selma, Lord, Selma,* "In 1975, in March, we had a commemoration rally and march to observe the tenth anniversary of Bloody Sunday. Mrs. [Coretta] King came here and we had a church full of people at

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[29] "Alabama Legislature," accessed December 6, 2016, http://www.legislature.state.al.us/aliswww/ISD/ALSenator.aspx?OID_SPONSOR=85899&OID_PERSON=1137.

[30] Chestnut and Cass, *Black in Selma*, 258.

[31] "Thousands Mark '65 March in Selma, Alabama," *New York Times*, March 9, 1975, regional edition.

Brown chapel. Boy, did that bring back memories!... it was like old times that day.... I only wished Dr. King had been there for that."[32]

The 10th anniversary commemoration reflected, in many ways, the decade that had passed since the demonstrations. Selma had endured constant tensions created by racial integration and increased black activism. But in general, most African Americans were optimistic about strides in the community. African Americans had come far: schools and the city council were integrated, federal funds helped jobs in the Dallas County area, and the national narrative and legacy of Selma was that of the moral crusade of the Civil Rights memory. The segregationist counter-narrative, which had challenged the national image of Selma in 1965, was extremely quiet during these years. Proponents of this counter-narrative failed to attract much attention outside of Selma. But the legacy of the counter-narrative still appeared in the form of white pushback by the White Citizens Council, local government, and everyday citizens.

This all changed in 1977 when the Department of Defense closed Selma-based Craig AFB. The defense funding in the years of the Vietnam War and the Cold War made Craig AFB one of Dallas County's most important job creators. But changing priorities in defense interests cast uncertainty over the base's continued operation. Local delegates had traveled to Washington in 1945, 1962, and 1971 to (successfully) plead for Craig's retention. But by 1977, the Air Force could no longer justify funding the base.[33] Little by little military personnel and

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[32] Webb, *Selma, Lord, Selma*, 134.

[33] Chris Heinz quoted in Arthur Capel "Local Delegation to Pleas Cause of Craig Base," *Selma Times-Journal,* April 22, 1962, regional edition.

Air Force equipment made a final exit through the base's gates.[34] Already beset by high unemployment, poverty, substandard housing, and decreased federal funding, the closing of Craig AFB plunged Dallas County deeper into the national economic morass of the late 1970s. It was a time that America experienced what President Jimmy Carter referred to as a "crisis in confidence."[35] It was in this confidence crisis that Ronald Reagan was elected as the 40th president of the United States.

At the time of Ronald Reagan's 1980 election, nearly half of the people living in Dallas County were scraping by on incomes below 150 percent of the poverty level, a number that included an astounding 70.7 percent of all black residents.[36] Reagan's budget cuts and policies spelled disaster for them.[37] "Up until now, we had the luxury of everybody doing good and federal funds flowing," Mayor Smitherman but then he summed up the new reality: "Now the federal funds ain't flowing."[38] The combination of "the basic restructuring of the national economy" and the lingering effects of Craig AFB's closing "represent conditions that are almost beyond the control of the leadership of this area."[39]

In addition to the closing of Craig, Selma began to lose its status as a major

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[34] "Craig Given Back," *Selma Times-Journal,* April 20, 1971, regional edition.

[35] "WGBH American Experience . Jimmy Carter | PBS," *American Experience*, accessed December 3, 2016, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/carter-crisis-speech/.

[36] Karlyn Denae Forner, "If Selma Were Heaven," 358.

[37] 47.4% lived on incomes under 150% of the poverty line. Bureau of Census. *U.S. Census of Population: 1980*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, Characteristics of Population (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 2-389, 2-484.

[38]Janet Gresham, "Smitherman's rhetoric: fast and breezy," *Selma Times-Journal*, Feb. 6, 1981, regional edition.

[39] Auburn Technical Assistance Center, What Happens to Workers After the Plant Closes, 116 – 117, 121, 129.

shopping center for residents of the Black Belt. People suddenly became more inclined to travel to the bigger cities of Montgomery and Birmingham for better options.[40] A new mall eventually opened in Selma in February 1972, but the new business ended up doing irrevocable damage to Selma's downtown business district. Many of the department stores that brought life to downtown Selma left vacant buildings to head for this new mall or they simply closed shop and disappeared.

After the success of attracting the industries of Hammermill Paper and Dans Rivers manufacturing, Selma's industrial growth stagnated. In 1972, Alabama Power Company announced its intention to build a nuclear power place in Dallas County. Even though the plant was to be located at Molette's Bend and not Selma, business leaders were hopeful for economic growth and incoming jobs into the area. However, after land was granted to the Alabama Power Company, surveyors and geologists discovered that the ground was too fractured to be safe for a reactor. Plans to build the power plant died and Selma and Dallas County would not receive any of the promised economic growth.[41] According to Karlyn Forner's economic study of Selma, "Between 1971 and 1976, over seven hundred jobs had disappeared from the county, and by July of 1975, unemployment in Dallas County reached 11.8 percent, its highest levels in the recent past."[42] Things were grim in Selma and Dallas County for both white and black residents on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the Selma demonstrations.

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[40] Meyer, Darrel C and the Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Commission, *Downtown Selma Plan* (Camden, Ala: The Commission, 1976), 11.
[41] Jackie Walburn, "Fighting for Farmland," *Selma Times-Journal*, Mar. 1, 1981, regional edition.
[42] Karlyn Denae Forner, "If Selma Were Heaven," 358.

In the midst of the economic decline, fractures in racial tension ceasefire began to materialize. While Rose Sanders mobilized Selma's African American youth and mothers, her law partners pushed for legal and political change through the courts. In 1983, a lawsuit filed by Chestnut, Sanders, and Sanders forced a court-ordered redrawing of Alabama's legislative districts, which guaranteed the election of an African American representative. Hank Sanders won the election for state senate in 1983, fulfilling a promise that his law firm had made to constituents.[43] His victory encouraged more African Americans to run for office. An example of this newfound confidence is found in F.D. Reese deciding to challenge Joe Smitherman's twenty-year reign as mayor.

That year Alabama Republicans enthusiastically supported President Reagan, while Jesse Jackson, a black minister with ties to the SCLC, fought for the Democratic nomination. A veteran of the 1965 demonstrations, Jackson highlighted Selma as one of his campaign stops. Jackson "preached the gospel of voter registration and black voting power," throwing his strong support behind F.D. Reese and other black candidates running for office. Jackson asked every non-registered person older than eighteen to come to the front of the hall and register with the waiting deputy registrar.[44] From the beginning, both the 1984 municipal and national elections promised to be racially-charged and contentious.

The combination of African American support for Jackson and Hank

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[43] Chuck Chandler, "Lawsuit seeks to halt Reed remap plan," *Selma Times-Journal*, Jan. 12, 1983, regional edition.
[44] Jackie Walburn, "Jackson 'preaches' voter registration," *Selma Times-Journal*, Feb. 8, 1984, regional edition.

Sanders' victory was seen as too empowering for African Americans. Although the segregationist counter-narrative could no longer be labeled segregationist because of African American strides in Selma, white backlash reared its ugly head once more as additional African Americans registered to vote. Marie Foster, the Dallas County deputy registrar, is quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* as saying, "Things have changed. They haven't changed as fast as we would have liked. We have a long way to go, but they have changed."[45] Foster, an African American woman who had participated in the march and had been attacked on Bloody Sunday, had become the deputy registrar. The *Chicago Tribune* says that since accepting the title, Foster registered 300 people to vote and "was responsible for more blacks being registered than any black in the county."[46]

Less than a week after Jackson's speech, white city council member Cecil Williamson kicked off Project SAVE, explicitly aimed at registering white voters. Williamson claimed he "didn't have anything against black people," but that white people and white industry would further leave Selma if blacks were in charge.[47] Williamson, another Selma personality who would go on to become racially controversial and influential in Selma's local politics, was a minister at Crescent Hill Presbyterian Church.[48] He was a vocal supporter of white local control and conservative causes, and he held the support of many local white

[45] Lentz, Phillip. "Racial Fears Ripple Calm in Selma (March 8, 1984)." *The Chicago Tribune,* March 8, 1984, regional edition.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Chestnut and Cass, *Black in Selma*,363.
[48] "Williamson Responds to Allegations from Local Attorney," *Selma Times-Journal*, Dec. 28, 2016, regional edition.

supremacists. “We are trying to do the same thing the blacks are trying to do,” he explained, “register all eligible voters.”[49]

Actions inspired by the white counter-narrative within Selma had evolved into fighting African Americans with a taste of their own medicine: fighting for the right to provoke change through the vote. Whites were now using politics and mass campaigning at the grassroots level to incite resistance. The approach of the Selma white counter-narrative reflected the Southern Strategy used by the Republican Party in the 1980’s to gain new voters in the formerly Democratic South. As Bob Herbert said in his *New York Times* article about the evolving Southern Strategy, “The truth is that there was very little that was subconscious about the G.O.P.’s relentless appeal to racist whites. Tired of losing elections, it saw an opportunity to renew itself by opening its arms wide to white voters who could never forgive the Democratic Party for its support of civil rights and voting rights for blacks.”[50] The Southern Strategy would eventually capture the South and firmly entrench the historically Democratic stronghold with conservative Republican voters.

As the twentieth anniversary of the VRA approached, white majorities still controlled all governing boards of the city and county, even though 52.6 percent of Selma’s and 54.6 percent of Dallas County’s population were black.[51] In the midst of the fierce registration drive, the three-member Dallas County board of

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[49] Williamson quoted in Janet Gresham, “Williamson heads up voter drive,” *Selma Times-Journal*, Feb. 12, 1984, regional edition.

[50] Bob Herbert, “Impossible, Ridiculous, Repugnant,” *The New York Times*, October 6, 2005, regional edition.

[51] Karlyn Denae Forner, “If Selma Were Heaven: Economic Transformation and Black Freedom Struggles in the Alabama Black Belt, 1901 – 2000,” 368.

registrars voted, along racial lines, to rescind the appointments of ten deputy registrars, including black veteran activists, Marie Foster and Perry Varner. The mayor, white state representatives, and two white registrars conveniently forgot to inform Edwin Moss, the sole black registrar, of the meeting where they made the decision. Both Moss and Hank Sanders accused the board of making a racially-motivated political move. Marie Foster, however, vowed that the change would not stop her; she would just go back to what she was doing for twenty-five years and bring people directly to the courthouse to register. As she saw it, "we were dismissed simply because we were registering too many blacks."[52] The *Chicago Tribune* pointed to the incident and declared, "as the presidential campaign moves into the South, the incident provides a revealing glimpse at the fearful way in which some Southern whites are reacting to the rising tide of black registration prompted by Jesse Jackson's campaign."[53]

Local voter registration continued at a hectic speed before the July 10 municipal election. Mayoral candidate F.D. Reese and presidential candidate Jesse Jackson, with the help of black activists, mobilized black voters. Cecil Williamson and Project SAVE went door to door in the majority-white sections of town, mobilizing white voters. From January 1984, the rolls gained 918 new black and 827 new white voters for a total of 9,909 registered black voters and 11,963 white.[54] But black voter registration efforts failed to pay off. Smitherman

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[52] Foster quoted in "Marie Foster to continue to help," *Selma Times-Journal*, March 2, 1984, regional edition.
[53] Lentz, Phillip. "Racial Fears Ripple Calm in Selma (March 8, 1984)"
[54] Jeanette Berryman, "Rolls show whites have vote majority," *Selma Times-Journal*, June 21, 1984, regional edition.

defeated Reese. The problem, according to J.L. Chestnut, was that only a little over half of eligible black voters had gone to the polls and cast their votes. [55] The election results, drawn along racial lines, demonstrate how whites began to use political mobilization to thwart rising black political power. The tactics that whites used were significantly more sophisticated than their predecessor hardliner segregationist counter-narrative tactics. Instead of overtly racist campaigns, whites were able to subvert the local political process to further their cause and claim of power. Despite the symbolism and overarching meaning of the 20th anniversary of the Selma's voting rights movement, the Civil Rights narrative failed to inspire significant amounts of black voters.

After the disappointing results of the municipal election, Jackie Walker, a black woman involved in MOMs, decided to run for tax collector in 1984. J.L. Chestnut claimed she entered the race to ward off defeatism among black voters. Much to the surprise of her challenger, Tommy Powell, she received enough votes to force a run-off election. In September 1984, Jackie Walker won and became the first black woman elected to an elected county official job by a margin of forty-eight votes.

Walker would never see the inside of an elected office. Tragedy struck and she died in a winter car accident before being sworn in. The all-white county commission refused to follow tradition and appoint her husband, Nathaniel Walker, as tax collector in her place. Instead, they selected her white opponent,

[55] J.L. Chestnut, Jr., "Had blacks 'stooped,' they would have won," *Selma Times-Journal*, July 15, 1984, regional edition.

Tommy Powell, for the position.[56] J.L. Chestnut said, "When after a hundred years we succeeded in electing a black, the historic nature of it alone should have been enough to select one of the people we put forward. And to appoint the man she defeated, a man who ran a write-in campaign against her, was spitting on Jackie's grave."[57] Racial tensions mounted as white conservatives found new ways to thwart black political power.

The 1984 elections demonstrated that even though Selma still maintained its title of epicenter of the Voting Rights movement, the national narrative could no longer mass mobilize Dallas County blacks. At the same time, just twenty years after the march, statistics provided hope for future progress. *New York Times* reporter William Schmidt found that in the 10 counties of Alabama with an African American majority, 55 percent of elected offices were held by blacks. Additionally, blacks in elected official offices grew nationally from 1,469 in 1970 to 5,700 in 1984. Reverend Jesse Jackson would carry 19 percent of the Democratic vote in the primaries in Alabama and Georgia and 42 percent in Louisiana.[58]

On March 3, 1985, just over 2,500 people paraded through Selma to remember the historic demonstrations. The commemorations were led by Reverend Jesse Jackson and Coretta Scott King. Mayor Smitherman presented the key to the city to Jesse Jackson and Joseph Lowery, current president of the

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[56] Jean Martin, "Blacks meet on collector decision," *Selma Times-Journal,* May 12, 1985, regional edition.

[57] Chestnut and Cass, *Black in Selma*, 370.

[58] William E. Schmidt, "Selma, 20 Years After the Rights March: 20 Years After Rights March: Much, and Little, Has Changed in Selma, Ala.," *New York Times*, March 1, 1985, regional edition.

SCLC. Sheyann Webb also marched and commented that, "…I still got that eerie feeling again, just like when I was that frightened child. But now it is beautiful. I'm proud to see a lot of young people here today."[59] Despite the optimism of the celebrations, *New York Times* correspondent, William Schmidt, was quick to note, "but few whites turned out to watch or join the march as it passed through otherwise deserted streets…"[60] But Schmidt also wrote that on the eve of the 20th anniversary, "race is no longer the most pointed issue in this town of 26,000. And neither is the fear that was once a daily constant."[61]

Twenty-three years after the voting rights movement, black residents in Dallas County finally secured a majority on a local governing body. African Americans successfully elected black representatives to three of five county commission seats in 1988 after a decade of litigation.[62] The new black-majority commission assumed power after ten years of industrial decline and wane of federal funds. The new commission was also set to undergo some of Selma's most turbulent years, including new sets of racial demonstrations.

On August 27, 1989, just seven months before the 25th anniversary, the *LA Times* reported that "the city whose name became synonymous with racial violence as a result of the brutal treatment of black protestors on March 7, 1965, has turned itself into a community justly proud of its racial harmony." Quoting

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[59] "Hirsley, Michael. "20 Years Later, The Law Joins Marchers In Selma," *The Chicago Tribune,* March 4, 1985, regional edition.
[60] William E. Schmidt, "SELMA MARCHERS MARK 1965 CLASH: 2,500 Greeted at City Where Predecessors Were Beaten 2,500 Join March in Selma To Mark Bloody 1965 Clash," *New York Times*, March 4, 1985, regional edition.
[61] William E. Schmidt, "Selma, 20 Years After the Rights March: 20 Years After Rights March: Much, and Little, Has Changed in Selma, Ala.," *New York Times*, March 1, 1985, regional edition.
[62] Rick Vest, "Blacks, whites vow to govern together," *Selma Times-Journal*, Dec. 28, 1988, regional edition.

Mayor Smitherman, "white leaders got tired of seeing Selma blasted for its segregationist past, tired of television showing the old films of state troopers and sheriff's deputies assaulting civil rights marchers with clubs and electric cattle prods at the Edmund Pettus Bridge on 'Bloody Sunday.'"[63] Smitherman went on to claim he decided to join other white leaders, along with Selma's black leadership, in a campaign to remake the city's image.

Smitherman was not the first Alabamian politician to attempt to discard Alabama's racist reputation by emphasizing its Civil Rights heritage battleground status. George Wallace is perhaps the best-known politician to remake himself from "segregation forever" to "I was wrong."[64] Smitherman and other Selma leaders decided, in fact, to try promoting Selma as the birthplace of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The *LA Times* said of the upcoming 25th commemoration celebrations, "… as city officials and civil rights leaders prepare a glorious celebration for next March to mark the 25th anniversary of 'Bloody Sunday,' they can point to a record of accomplishment that local backs and national civil rights leaders say other cities would do well to emulate."[65] Smitherman once again downplayed the racial tension bubbling just underneath the surface of his community.

It was in this quiet and calm atmosphere that on November 30, 1989, Georgia Congressman and Selma-to-Montgomery March organizer John Lewis

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[63] Jack Nelson, "Boasts 'Bloody Sunday' Led to Rights Act: Once-Violent Selma Now Proud of Racial Harmony," *Los Angeles Times*, August 27, 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-08-27/news/mn-1743_1_rights-act.

[64] Carter, *Politics of Rage,* 467.

[65] Jack Nelson, "Boasts 'Bloody Sunday' Led to Rights Act: Once-Violent Selma Now Proud of Racial Harmony," *Los Angeles Times*, August 27, 1989, regional edition.

introduced Bill 101 H.R. 3834. After passing through the US House and Senate, it was signed by the President George HW Bush on July 10, 1990. The initial bill released funding to study the Selma-Montgomery route for the potential national park protection, though it would not be until 1996 that the national trail became recognized as a historical landmark. The *LA Times* article and Act of Congress offer no clear evidence that anyone suspected the tumultuous six months Selma faced leading up to the 25th anniversary commemorations and the disappointing aftermath.

The most important year for the Selma demonstrations commemorations and the formation of the memory of the march was the 25th anniversary in 1990. All the racial tensions of elections and schools seemed ready to erupt in 1990, as Selma became the stage of protests for equal education within schools. The 25th anniversary was vastly different than the quiet commemorations of the 10th and 20th, because of racial tension in the community.

In 1990, twenty-five years after the voting rights protests, the local government still contained some familiar faces. Smitherman still held the mayoral office and had no intention of ceding it to anyone. Jim Clark had long been replaced as county sheriff, but the current Sheriff was F. D. "Cotton" Nichols, was a deputy in 1965. The city attorney during the turbulent 1965 year, Mclean Pitts, had retired but was replaced by his son, Henry Pitts. Only in 1972 did Selma begin electing city council members by geographical district rather than in at-large elections. Whites Selmians remained the majority.

By 1990 Selma's population had shifted from a narrow white majority to a narrow black majority. The economic turmoil of the 1970s and 1980s also

contributed to an overall population decline. Residentially the city was segregated, with whites on the west side and blacks on the east. But newer neighborhoods to the north were integrated. There were two historically black colleges in Selma, Selma University and Concordia College, and the two of the leaders in the city's public schools, Superintendent Norward Roussell and Selma High School Principal F.D. Reese, were black. Even though many white students had left public schools *en masse* in the 1970s after forced integration, by the late 1980s the tide seemed to be turning. Selma High had begun to send graduates off to Ivy League schools, and affluent white parents began to reenroll their children in the local public schools. [66] As the number of white students rose in Selma's public school, local white leaders and parents looked for new ways to segregate students within the classroom.

Yale graduate student, Christina Matthews, published in *The Journal of the Southern Regional Council,* "Selma: What Has Changed?" that analyzed this new form of segregating students within a school. Matthews wrote that "through a series of lawful tactics in educational tracking, African American students were resegregated and treated unequally in the classroom."[67] Matthews also found that prior to 1991, the Selma schools had never been governed by a school board with a black majority, despite having more African American children because of the existence of the private Christian schools.

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[66] Justin Fox, "Selma's March Backward," *Bloomberg View*, March 6, 2015, accessed March 18, 2017, https://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2015-03-06/selma-s-other-protest-movement-in-1990-revived-segregation.

[67] Christina Matthews, "Selma: What Has Changed?," *Southern Changes* Vol. 13, no. No. 4 (1991): 12–15.

Dr. Norward Roussell was hired in 1987 as superintendent of the Selma Public Schools. The system he inherited was known for its practice of leveling, which was ultimately a plan of organized instruction levels that assured white parents their children would get preferential treatment. For many black students and poor white students, it has meant being trapped in the lower levels where they received a second rate education and the message that they are inherently less gifted than peers in higher levels. Levels segregated students based supposed on ability. Students rarely had a chance to form friendships with students in other levels, and, because of the racial segregation in the levels, interracial friendships were even rarer. Leveling meant schools were effectively resegregated within the walls of a single school building. Of Selma's rigid tracking situation, Matthew wrote:

> Assignment of students to their level remained completely at the discretion of teachers, who did not have to justify their placement of a child based on test scores or even past performance. Though students placement was ostensibly based on ability, students – especially black students – with high test scores often found themselves in the lower levels. White students, particularly those from influential families, enjoyed the courses available only to students in the top levels, and reaped the benefits of some equipment, like computers, that was specifically intended for the top level. No black teachers taught Advanced Placement level classes of history or math. Only fifteen percent of black students took algebra, though eighty-five percent of American public high school students take the class. Neither the students themselves nor their parents could do anything to move their child out of classes that were too easy, the decision rested with teachers alone.[68]

In addition to Matthews findings, a 1991 study by the Civil Rights Commission piece, found a serious gap between how white and black residents

[68] Ibid., 12.

perceived the leveling problem. White residents strongly believed that ability levels enhanced learning and student achievement at all levels, while black residents typically saw the system as a means of preventing black students from taking more challenging, college preparatory classes. [69] It was Dr. Roussell's discovery that the "leveling" system was a form of resegregation that ultimately got him dismissed by the school board.

Before Roussell's attempt to bring more black children into the upper two levels of the schools resulted in his termination, a coalition of African American parents formed a group called BEST. These parents had spoken with Roussell about the leveling problem and had been lobbying for changes in the schools even before Roussell was hired. BEST met with Roussell to discuss the leveling issue in September of 1988 and spoke at school board meetings, voicing their concern over the leveling system. BEST also included many leaders from the African American community. Among others, it included County Commissioner Perry Varner, State Senator Hank Sanders and his wife Rose, Danny Crenshaw, director of Dallas County Youth Services and Ronald Peoples, dean of students at a local college.[70]

In December 1989, the school board's white majority decided not to reinstate the Roussell after he attacked the institution of leveling. The black community was furious. Hank Sanders described the situation, "there's been a lot

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[69] Alabama Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Crisis and Opportunity: Race Relations in Selma, December 1991, 33 – 34.

[70] Justin Fox, "Selma's March Backward," *Bloomberg View*, March 6, 2015, https://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2015-03-06/selma-s-other-protest-movement-in-1990-revived-segregation. 13.

of concern about tracking for a long period of time…We had the powder keg here all the while, but we didn't have a match." But when the board's voted not to renew Roussell's contract "were the matches that lit it."[71] This "lit match" prompted a first boycott of the public schools. The boycott resulted in the school board moving to keep Roussell around to appease the boycotters. But later in February, he was fired once again. This time he was reassigned and an interim superintendent was appointed. When the decision to remove Roussell set off demonstrations and school boycotts again, the board quickly rescinded his firing. The school board did not, however, agree to renew his contract.[72] The minor concession was not enough to prevent another round of school protests. Rose Sanders publicly led the way for boycotts, while the national media began to descend upon the community for the 25th anniversary.

During the protests, the board closed the district's eleven schools, fearing the tensions would escalate into violence. More than 100 black students turned the situation into a stalemate by occupying Selma High School, and both veteran and college-age civil rights workers descended on the city to participate in daily marches and rallies. BEST called another boycott and in light of that and because the protests downtown had escalated tensions, school was canceled on Wednesday, February 7. Matthews wrote:

> At around noon on Feb. 8, about two-hundred Selma High School students took over the cafeteria, and refused to come out until Roussell was reinstated. They remained in the school until the evening of the following Monday, when Roussell visited them and said that he would resign unless they came out. During their stay Mayor Smitherman asked Governor Guy

[71] William Snider, "Protest In Selma: Tracking Ignites A Powder Keg," *Teacher*, May 1, 1990, accessed March 18, 2017, http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/1990/05/01/8selma.h01.html
[72] Matthews, "Selma: What Has Changed?," 18.

> Hunt for National Guardsman and state troopers, which the governor sent Governor Hunt said "I've never been known to be fond of lawyers. I think they cause more trouble than they settle. I think that's what's happening in Selma." School remained canceled "for safety reasons" until Feb. 13th, and when it resumed the schools were still guarded by Alabama State Troopers and military police as well as by most of Selma's own police force; a helicopter hovered overhead as school reopened. The extra security at the schools--the troopers and the MPs--stayed in place until the 20th.[73]

A six-week occupation of Selma City Hall by protesters sleeping in tents outside the building did not end until March. The protest ended only because a state judge ruled the protests illegal because of interference with city government.[74] Dallas County Commissioner Perry Varner joked to national reporters that the protesters might be slow to comply with the order: "We just got the order and it might take us two days to read it because they've tracked us into the lower levels, you know.'"[75] The backlash against protesters led the Alabama State Bar Association to form an investigation of Chestnut, Sanders, and Sanders for "illegal activities," the firing of Selma University dean for being arrested with protesters, and the city government asking the Legal Services to remove their office from the town.[76] Roussell eventually accepted a $150,000 buyout from the public schools and agreed to not reapply for the job.

In February 1990, just a month before the 25th anniversary commemorations of the 1965 demonstrations, the *New York Times* wrote about revived racial tensions in Selma. The article offers one example of the white counter-narrative about these new demonstrations. Selma Councilman Tom

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[73] Ibid., 14.
[74] Snider, "Protest In Selma: Tracking Ignites A Powder Keg."
[75] Ibid.
[76] Matthews, "Selma: What Has Changed?" 15.

Headley told the *Times,* "I don't want to see outside forces such as the National Guard coming in here. It's not the kind of image we would like to project. This is 1990, not 1965."[77] Concern for the national image of Selma had become a major theme for counter-narrative dialogue. White pushback in the community rallied around the argument of a new changed and enlightened Selma. Instead of acknowledging continued racial tension in the epicenter of the VRA, white counter-narrative sought to belittle the issues as simply a local problem and one that should not exist in this more enlightened time.

Extreme voices pushing for the white counter-narrative emerged during this time as a reaction to education demonstrations. Pat Godwin, a Selma resident and eventual founder of the local group, Friends of Forrest, strongly opposed the education demonstrations. Friends of Forrest is a neo-Confederate group, which attempts to portray the Confederate States of America in a positive light, usually at the expense of its negative actions during and before the American Civil War. Godwin said, "Yes, I'm screaming about communism and we in the rural Southern communities are the most vulnerable, being seeded deep in the Bible Belt, we are unsuspecting. Selma's current problem is a perfect example of communist propaganda."[78] Godwin, a frequent "Letters to the Editor" contributor to *Selma Times-Journal*, would become a major figure in the subsequent Civil War element of the white counter-narrative. In subsequent

[77] Ronald Smothers Special To The New York Times, "25 Years Later, Racial Tensions Revive in Selma," *The New York Times*, February 11, 1990, regional edition.
[78] Pat Godwin, letter to the editor, *The Selma Times-Journal*, March 1990, regional edition.

years, Godwin's language would change from veiled language of communism to overt racist tones under the guise of combatting "reverse racism."

But African Americans, like Hank Sanders, spoke about the school dispute coming to symbolize unfulfilled promises of the 1960's. "'The Mayor has used tokenism, and blacks never got any real power,'" said Mr. Sanders, noting that only 5 of the 11 appointed school board members are black, although 70 percent of the enrollment is black. Sanders also pointed out that most whites go to two private schools that started out as '"segregation academies."'[79] Matthews notes that white students began to leave the Selma school system soon after the protests began for the schools that were founded in the 1960s and early 1970s as segregation academies. This "exodus of white students left the city schools eighty-five percent black – they had been about seventy-five percent black before the protests began." [80]

The strife caused by the education protests had a dampening effect on the commemorations. Sanders also told the *New York Times* that the protests would hamper and keep people away, "Some people have said that we were trying to enhance the commemoration effort with this protest, but that is not true."[81] National black leader Reverend Benjamin Chavez, Jr., who participated in the

[79] Smothers, "25 Years Later, Racial Tensions Revive in Selma," *The New York Times*, February 11, 1990, regional edition.
[80] Matthews, "Selma: What Has Changed?" 14.
[81] Ronald Smothers, "25 Years Later, Racial Tensions Revive in Selma." *New York Times,* February 11, 1990, regional edition.

25th anniversary commemorations, accused the Selma city council of "apartheid."[82]

Meanwhile, a March 6 article in the *New York Times* found Mayor Smitherman voicing white counter-narrative opinions about racial relations in Selma. During his interview, Smitherman pointed out statistics that showed improved racial relations, including a police force made up of 35 percent African Americans. However, he also minimized the education dispute concerning Roussell and the school protests. Smitherman also criticized the "the new wave of black activists impossible to please, insufficiently appreciative of the gains won by the previous generation." He also tried to use the segregationist counter-narrative tactics of the past to besmirch the education demonstrations of 1990 saying, "the blacks are now doing the same thing we did 25 years ago. We hollered for 'segregation,' and played on the white people's fear of integration - and this got us elected. Now, 25 years later, the black elected officials, and black leaders not elected, are hollering 'white racism,' and 'de facto segregation' and 'economic oppression' to get elected, and they're doing a good job."[83] By declaring his awareness to the crimes of the segregationist counter-narrative of the past, Smitherman almost adds a layer of legitimacy to his claim against the new back activists. His quote is one of the first examples of white Selmians using 'reverse racism' as their reason for reactionary actions.

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[82] Benjamin Chavis, "CIVIL RIGHTS: American Apartheid in Alabama," *Michigan Citizen*, March 25, 1990, regional edition.
[83] Gay Talese, "Selma 1990: Old Faces and a New Spirit," *New York Times*, March 7, 1990, regional edition.

One month after the vicious protests, Selma celebrated the 25th anniversary of the demonstrations and Bloody Sunday with sign markers placed around the city, "The Selma Movement: the Beginning."[84] The commemoration events also included a protest for education. On March 9, 1990, the schedule for commemorations included a march for Justice in Education from Selma High School, in respect to the tensions in the public schools. On March, 10, a Legal Symposium of Voting rights was held, followed by a Unity Benefit Concert by Reverend Jesse Jackson. On March 11, several important leaders were speaking to demonstrators in the community, including John Lewis, Rev. C.T. Vivian, Rev. Bernard Lafayette, and Joseph Lowery. Finally, on Sunday at 3:00 PM, a re-enactment of the bridge crossing was scheduled. At 4:30 the march to Montgomery would begin.[85] The re-enactment of the historic 50-mile march from Selma to Montgomery ended on March 9 with 3,000 people gathered in the shadow of Alabama's capitol.[86] Despite this display of public support, white city councilman Charles Morris, Jr., observed reduced white participation in the commemoration. He told *New York Times* correspondent, Ron Smothers, "Ninety percent of white Selma has no problem with this commemoration… 'It is the other issues that are clouding this.'"[87] White resistance in the form of non-participation was evident at these commemorations.

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[84] "A Historic Display," *The Selma Times-Journal*, March 1, 1990, regional edition.
[85] Andrew Williford, "Anderson Looks At Issues in '65 and Now," *The Selma Times-Journal*, March 1, 1990, regional edition.
[86] "Selma Marchers Hope for New Activism," *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 1990, regional edition.
[87] Ron Smothers, "A Selma March Relives Those First Steps of '65." *The New York Times,* March 5, 1990, regional edition.

The March 4 edition of *The Selma Times-Journal* is a fantastic example of the juxtaposition of the commemoration and the strife associated with the demonstrations. On the front page, "Jackson, Lewis Highlight Anniversary," which discusses the importance of the anniversary. "In the '60s we removed the threat to democracy caused by unequal taxation with representation. The voting rights act was a significant moment for all of America."[88] Yet again, the Civil Rights narrative invoked the noble instances of American history to propagate this narrative.

Other front page articles include, "Legal Symposium Looks at Struggle," and "National Media Sees Changes in Selma." Delving further into the edition finds an Opinion pieces titled, "Tracking the Truth," which purports that the education demonstrations are wrongfully misled. "Nowhere in the policy [tracking] was 'race' listed as a basis for placing students in Advanced Studies courses… Those claiming their children have been "racially tracked" out of higher level courses need to do their homework."[89] While this may be true, in Selma tracking was a form of dog whistle language: even though race was not listed as a qualification, people understood what it actually meant.

Another article in this edition is titled, "Issue in '90 is local, not as broad as '65," which attempts to diminish the importance of the education demonstrations on a larger scale. "Protesters use 1960s-style tactics of marches and sit-ins but the issue is local, not as broad as the ballot box. At stake now is

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[88] Andrew Williford, "Jackson Emphasizes Importance on March Anniversary," *The Selma Times-Journal*, regional edition.
[89] "Our Opinion: Tracking the Truth," *The Selma Times-Journal*, March 4, 1990, regional edition.

control over Selma's 5,800-student school system and impending ouster of the city's first black superintendent."[90] This article also attempts to use the noble instances of American history to purport their claims, but in this case the white counter-narrative uses it. By accepting the nobility of Selma's 1965 voting rights role, the counter-narrative managed to diminish Selma's 1990 problems as strictly local.

Yet, others saw the protests as healthy and truly characteristic of the spirit of Selma. "In the 60's, it was the Selma movement that brought down the walls of disenfranchisement in this country for black and brown Americans," said Joseph Lowery. "Now in the 90's we are starting again in Selma to bring down the walls of unequal education.'"[91] Despite what appeared to be a sure defeat with Roussell's resignation, in May 1990, the all-white school board named an African American man to fill in the interim role of Norward Roussell. The six board members agreed to give James Carter the interim vacancy while they sought a replacement for Roussell, who resigned with a his settlement from the city.[92]

By August, black and white leaders reached a tentative agreement to give blacks equal representation on Selma's school board and end eight months of racial strife, the mayor said. It was the first time Selmians had ever managed to settle a racial dispute by themselves, through negotiation.[93] Perhaps it was just

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[90] "Issue in 90 Is Local, Not As Broad As 65," *The Selma Times-Journal*, March 4, 1965, regional edition.
[91] Snider, "Protest In Selma."
[92] "NATION IN BRIEF: ALABAMA: Black Gets Interim Selma Schools Post," *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 1990, regional edition.
[93] Thornton, *Dividing Lines,* 552-554.

"tokenism," but regardless, African Americans found themselves in the majority of control of local schools. The proposal would end white dominance of the school board and ultimately establish a plan to alternate control between the two factions. This apparent success was short-lived, writes J. Mills Thornton in *Divided Lines*, "neither… emerged from from the episode the clear victor, neither man his vision for the future of the city fully realized; but their collision had so polarized the community that the moderates' vision was rendered perhaps perpetually quixotic."[94]

[94] Ibid., 552.

Chapter 3:
"It's Not My History:" New Competing Narratives at the 50th Anniversary

After the 1990 school demonstrations, black protest and white resistance were relatively quiet throughout the remainder of the decade. Marches continued yearly to commemorate the events of Bloody Sunday. They drew meaning from the narrative of a high moral crusade. On the 30th anniversary of the voting rights demonstrations in 1995, John Lewis said, "It's gratifying to come back and see the changes that have occurred; to see the number of registered voters and the number of Black elected officials in the state of Alabama to be able to walk with other members of Congress that are African Americans."[1]

The 30th anniversary in 1995 was also significant in that, former Governor George Wallace repented for his past militant opposition to black citizens' rights. Speaking to marchers as they arrived in Montgomery, Wallace said,

> My friends… as you retrace your footsteps of 30 years ago and cannot help but reflect on those days that remain so vivid in my memory. Those were different days and we all in our own ways were different people. We have learned hard and important lessons in the 30 years that have passed between us since the days surrounding your first walk along Highway 80.[2]

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[1] Jet Magazine, "Demonstrators in Selma Mark 30th Anniversary of March Across Edmund Pettus Bridge," March 27, 1995, regional edition.

[2] Rick Bragg, "30 Years Later, Wallace Apologizes to Marchers," *Baltimore Tribune,* March 11, 1995, regional edition.

The repentance of Governor Wallace seemed to indicate that even the most ardent proponents of segregation could change their minds. However, it is important to note that Wallace was a political survivor and it is highly doubtful that he changed his actual opinions on race. Historian Dan Carter says, "but no one who knew Wallace well ever took seriously his earnest profession – uttered a thousand times after 1963 – that he [had been] a segregationist, not a racist. … Wallace, like most white southerners of his generation, [had] genuinely believed blacks to be a separate, inferior race."[3] His apology should thus be viewed as a political move.

In 1996, Congress created the Selma- Montgomery National Voting Rights Trail along the marching terrain between Selma and Montgomery. Historians gathered oral histories and published books. Local activists began museums and commemorative parks where the bridge touched either side of the Alabama River. One example of these local heritage initiatives is Rose Sanders' National Voting Rights Museum.[4] In July 1996, the Olympic torch also crossed over the Edmund Pettus bridge on its way to Atlanta. "We couldn't have gone to Atlanta with the Olympic Games if we hadn't come through Selma a long time ago," SCLC-leader Andrew Young said at the AME Brown Chapel, where he spoke as part of the Olympic torch ceremony. [5]

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[3] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 236-237

[4] "VOTING RIGHTS ACT | National Voting Rights Museum and Institute," accessed February 18, 2017, http://nvrmi.com/?page_id=41.

[5] Thomas Heath, "After Three Decades, Selma Sees the Light," *Washington Post,* July 1, 1996, regional edition

Every year, people from around the country flocked to Selma to participate in the bridge-crossing reenactments. Bill Clinton became the first sitting president to participate in 2000.[6] In 2007, Democratic presidential candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton put politics aside to participate in the march. The *New York Times* wrote of the event, "it was an extraordinary sight: the Clintons and Mr. Obama, two of them competitors for the Democratic presidential nomination, walking — with two black congressman, and sometimes others, in between them — down Martin Luther King, Jr. Street to commemorate the footsteps of black demonstrators who were met with violence as they tried to march to Montgomery to demand civil rights in 1965."[7] Even Arizona Senator and Republican presidential nominee John McCain marched across the bridge in 2008 in a symbolic gesture to be a "president of the people."[8] In 2015, in addition to Barack Obama and his family, former President George W. Bush and his wife, also marched. Other participating Republicans included Alabama Governor Robert Bentley, Senators Tim Scott, Jeff Sessions, Susan Collins, as well as Rep. Kevin McCarthy, RNC chair Reince Priebus, and a number of others.[9]

The sheer number of politicians and civil rights leaders that participated in the bridge crossing reenactments shows just how deeply the Civil Rights narrative

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[6] "Jubilee Performers Announced," *Selma Times -Journal,* Februry 23, 2003, accessed December 31, 2016, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2003/02/26/jubilee-performers-announced/.
[7] Patrick Healy and Jeff Zeleny, "Clinton and Obama Unite in Pleas to Blacks," *New York Times*, March 5, 2007, regional edition.
[8] Elisabeth Bumiller, "McCain in Selma," *New York Times*, April 21, 2008, http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/04/21/mccain-in-selma/.
[9] "White House, NYT Really Annoyed George W. Bush Was in Selma," *The American Spectator*, March 9, 2015, https://spectator.org/61996_white-house-nyt-really-annoyed-george-w-bush-was-selma/.

had become rooted in the American mindset. Similar to the sacred ground of Gettysburg, Pearl Harbor, Concord and Lexington, among others, Selma has become a symbolic space of justice for the American people.[10] In Kenneth Foote's book *Shadowed Ground*, Foote explores why Americans chose to commemorate violence at some places, like Selma, but ignore others. He argues that these sites are deeply influenced by how groups choose to view and represent the past. He says, "sites themselves seemed to play an active role in their own interpretation… the evidence of violence left behind often pressures people, almost involuntarily, to begin debate over meaning the sites, stained by blood of violence and covered by the ashes of tragedy, force people to face squarely he meaning of an event."[11]

But some of these politicians and leaders that participated in commemorations at Selma had a voting record indicating they did not agree with the result of the VRA of 1965. Their participation implied that Selma has become pliable as folks from all political perspectives are attracted to the sacred American heritage site, not because the agree with the legislation that came out of Selma, but because of its symbolic meaning to Americans. By embracing the Civil Rights narrative of Selma, politicians attempted to affirm their commitments to African American constituents.

While Selma continued to symbolize racial equality to followers of the national narrative, cracks in the Civil Rights narrative within Selma became apparent by both black and white voices. When Tony Horwitz visited Selma in

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[10] Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*.

[11] Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, Revised edition (University of Texas Press, 2003), 5.

1997 to do research for his Pulitzer Prize winning book *Confederates in the Attic,* he observed a number of startling problems. The first thing was a petition going around to change the name of a decrepit public housing development named after Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest. The official at the Voting Rights Museum told Horwitz, "Most folks don't know their history enough to be insulted. They've never heard of Forrest unless it's Forrest Gump so they take it. The whites make heroes of killers like Forrest and because of our own ignorance or internalized oppression, we let it happen."[12] Though officially the name of the complex has been changed, it is still referred to as NBF, proving that even the last-resort housing in the community serves as a reminder about who holds the power of collective memory in the community.[13]

But what troubled Horwitz the most was his visit to Rose Sanders' classroom. Sanders, started an alternative school for black teenagers that had dropped out of regular public school due to disciplinary and/or learning problems. Horwitz asked the students what the American Civil War was and what it meant to them. "'It's his-tory,' a teenager named Percy said. 'As in his story, the white man's, not mine.'"[14] Horwitz reflects, "I listened silently. My history and his-story. You Wear Your X, I'll Wear Mine. Both races sealing themselves off from each other."[15] Despite the NPS Selma to Montgomery National Trail,

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[12] Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010), 364.

[13] Greg Jaffe, "Decayed, Uninhabitable Homes Will Be Obama's First View of Selma," *The Washington Post*, March 7, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/decayed-uninhabitable-homes-will-be-obamas-first-view-of-selma/2015/03/07/6d412282-c489-11e4-9271-610273846239_story.html.

[14] Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*, 367.

[15] Ibid., 368.

symbolic use of Selma for politicians, among many other leaps forward for the proponents of the Civil Rights narrative, people within Selma demonstrated that things still ran divided along racial lines. The quote demonstrates another feature of Selma's competing narratives: that the segregationist/white counter-narrative lost the battle for moral high ground of the Civil Rights movement but succeeded in claiming the legacy of the Civil War. Even though African Americans should claim the Civil War as a major victory with the Emancipation Proclamation and the defeat of Confederate troops within Selma, local African Americans continue to not see the war as something that does not belong to them.

As demonstrated in the years leading up to the 25th, many Selma whites were not content to be known as the capital of the voting rights movement. Those that opposed this Civil Rights label changed their tactics to push for the counter-narrative and different legacy of Selma. No longer would the white counter-narrative decry the demonstrations as depraved and troublesome. As the alternative white counter-narrative lost out on gaining the national narrative, proponents of it began to shift their own narrative. If Selma had become embraced by the rest of the country as the stage for voting rights equality, former white counter-narrative refocus on their white Southern heritage through the memorialization of the American Civil War. Two main groups of white Southern heritage promoters attempted to highlight the city's Civil War history as a means to overshadow Bloody Sunday. The first group consisted of the seemingly innocuous Battle of Selma reenactors who celebrated Selma's minor role in the Civil War. The second and more sinister group was a band of neo-Confederates

who formed under the name Friends of Forrest, in honor of revered Confederate cavalry commander and KKK organizer General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

While these groups had different approaches in tactics at reclamation of Selma's legacy, they did have one major theme in common with their claim that Southern heritage and culture was being targeted by outside forces. The reenactors used coded language to insinuate that their Southern heritage was being overrun by the Civil Rights commemorators, while Friends of Forrest never shied away from using heated rhetoric and pointing out "reverse racism" by African Americans.

These claims of war being waged on fundamental American values and history reflected a larger claim made by American conservatives. A *Wall Street Journal* article titled, "The End of History," by Lynne Cheney, maintained that a culture war against American sacred heritage was being carried out by proponents of 'political correctness.' Cheney also alleged that national history standard ignored American heroes like the founding fathers and Robert E. Lee, while exalting obscure figures, like Harriet Tubman. She also claimed that these standards focused too much on embarrassing events in American history like the KKK and McCarthyism. Only proponents of conservatism were defenders of this sacred and noble past, while everyone else was a "politically correct" revisionist.[16] The concept of a war against sacred American heritage and values is important for analyzing the rhetoric of Selma's Civil War heritage groups. Both these groups

[16] Lynne V. Cheney, "The End of History," *The Historian* 57, no. 2 (1995): 454–56.

of people saw themselves as defenders of this sacred Southern history through their commemoration of the Confederacy and the Civil War.

Selma is an excellent case study that connects to larger studies concerning with the American Civil War's central role in national memory. The most definitive study of this memory is David W Blight's synthesis, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, which was published in 2001. *Race and Reunion* concentrates on two tropes of race and reunion in an effort to remember and give meaning to the violent conflict. Blight demonstrates that while seeking reunion of the nation, a majority of white Americans chose to observe the reconcilationist memory of the war over competing and equally important "memories" of the war. By embracing a reconciliationist view of the war, the competing memory of emancipationist, which drew the greater meaning of the war in emancipation for the slaves, was obscured and even obliterated from national history. Even the unionist vision of the war, which focused on preserving the compact of the union, was replaced by reconciliation sentiments.

Blight also defines a fourth approach to memory, which he refers to as "white supremacist." This form of memory flourished, though not to the extent that reconciliation did. These memories of conflict vied for supremacy so that by 1915, Blight argues that the memory of the war was "a quarrel forgotten."[17] Both "reconcilationist" and "white supremacy" forms of memory believed in the doctrine of the Lost Cause of the Confederacy, which is the name commonly given to the intellectual movement that sought to reconcile the traditional Southern

[17] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, Revised ed. edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2002), 384.

white society to defeat in the war. White Southerners sought consolation in attributing their "Lost Cause" to factors beyond control and to betrayals of their heroes and cause. One of the leading tenets of the Lost Cause is that the Confederacy was defeated by Union armies not through superior military skill, but by overwhelming force. The Lost Cause is notorious for obscuring slavery as a cause of the war.[1819] Selma, on the eve of the 50th anniversary, had traces of reconciliationist memory in the annual re-enactment of the Battle of Selma, and strong undertones of white supremacist memory in the Nathan Bedford Forrest controversy discussed below.

In 1987, Selma began hosting an annual Battle of Selma reenactment. The April 1865 battle decimated the city and was one of many Confederate setbacks in that spring that resulted in the Confederacy's surrender. General Nathan Bedford Forrest fought his last engagement here and suffered a loss to Union General James Wilson.[20] Selma, one of the last industrial communities in the Confederate States of America, consequently fell into the hands of Union forces.[21] Despite what can be argued as a humiliating loss, propped up only by Lost Cause claims that Forrest's defeat had more to do with his inferior numbers than his talents as a commander, the battle is fondly remembered within Selma because of the town's "contribution."

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[18] Karen L. Cox.. *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003.
[19] Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
[20] Noah Andre Trudeau, *Out of the Storm: The End of the Civil War, April-June 1865* (Boston: Little Brown & Co, 1994), 167.
[21] David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2004).

The first group of Southern heritage and white counter-narrative participants put together the Battle of Selma reenactment. The reenactment peaked in popularity around 1999 with as many as 1,500 reenactors coming to Selma. After 2000, numbers began to dwindle. The low point came when only 300 people came to participate the festivities 2008. Due to the lack of interest and manpower, the event was cancelled indefinitely in late 2008.[22] However, in January 2009, local re-enactor, James H. Hammond "took the event under his wing."[23] The first event under Hammond was smaller in scale, but the overarching plan was to return the event to its former glory by the 150th anniversary of the battle in 2015, a year coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the Selma Civil Rights demonstrations.[24]

Leading up to the first revival reenactment event, controversy in the community prompted Hammond and his supporters to take up a defensive position. Just before the reenactment, the Selma City Council decided to support the upcoming 50th anniversary of the bridge crossing but "turned their noses up at the Battle of Selma. Just like old days, the differences of opinion about these two events held every spring in Selma run along racial lines."[25] The city council did not want to support an event that had historically failed. Without using the

[22] "Guns of War No Longer Blast in Selma," *Selma Times -Journal*, accessed December 18, 2016, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2008/12/19/guns-of-war-no-longer-blast-in-selma/.
[23] Katie Nichols, "Battle of Selma to Return 1/21/09," *Battle of Selma*, January 21, 2009, accessed December 18, 2016, http://battleofselma.com/?page_id=1087.
[24] Ibid.
[25] James Hammond, "Contrasting Events Should Not Divide Us 4/17/09," *Battle of Selma*, April 17, 2009, accessed December 18, 2016, http://battleofselma.com/?page_id=1074.

term “reverse racism,” Hammonds cried discrimination against white heritage of Selma. In a letter posted on the Battle of Selma website, Hammond wrote:

> …. The other night, Mayor George Evans rightfully told the council and the public that the old-style thinking should quit. Evans, an African-American, certainly does not celebrate the portion of history during which the South attempted to maintain chattel slavery. Nobody in their right mind would…. But the Battle of Selma is not a celebration of the struggle to maintain slavery in the South, it’s recognition of an event that led to the fall of another Southern city — one with an arsenal and a foundry and with a prison camp not too far away in Cahawba [sic.].
>
> To recognize battles from the Civil War is to acknowledge history in a different way — to understand the development of warfare during that time. Some historians call the Civil War the first modern war…. But those who are offended by the Jubilee are just as at fault for being ignorant. After all, the civil rights era was more than just a black and white struggle. In some Southern states, because access granted African-Americans the rights to sit on juries, women finally received those rights as well.
>
> So, Evans is correct. This is all our history. Our two major events in the spring bring many people into Selma to spend money on food, lodging and other goods. We have the opportunity to show how good we are as a city and as individuals.
>
> And in doing so, we continue to make history.[26]

Hammonds’ passionate plea for Selma to commemorate both the Battle of Selma and the Selma to Montgomery March tries to strike a balance. He calls people that are offended by the Civil War battle reenactment “ignorant,” but fails to recognize that one cannot separate the issues of the defense of slavery from any commemoration of the Civil War. Since slavery was a central issue to the Civil War, it should be central to any war commemorations. It would be one thing if the event stuck with its educational program, including the effect of slavery on the Civil War, and two days of battlefield reenactment. But the entire

[26] Ibid.

reenactment culminates into a “Grand Military” ball, which requires 19th century period attire. The Grand Military Ball is very similar to an Old South Ball.

Honoring a battle of the Civil War, one of the darkest times in American history, with an Old South Ball is troubling. Old South Balls celebrate this “Southern heritage” by elevating the memory of elite whites who used a cruel and coercive system of black slavery to build their wealth. These balls ignore the plight of slaves who were invisible during such events. Participants often see these balls as harmless and merely an effort to celebrate heritage, unfortunately these celebrations might insult their community’s African American citizens who likely see any celebration of the Old South through the lens of slavery. The organizers likely had good intentions, but these intentions do not give enough thought to the variety of residents in Selma.

In 2010, Hammonds founded the April 1965 Society, a charitable 501 c-3 foundation that solicits donations for the Selma reenactment and promotes the city’s Civil War heritage. Leading up to the Battle of Selma’s 150th anniversary event, the April 1865 Society funded several wayside exhibits to denote important spots of the battle. “Before we started putting up these markers, people could ride by and see a couple of the buildings,” Hammonds said. “But if [people] can ride by, see and hear the narratives from these markers and see the buildings that were here during the Civil War … then that starts giving somebody a complete

picture."[27] The signs stick closely to a military history interpretation and was written and funded by the April 1865 society.

The revival of the reenactment event was extremely successful. The 150th anniversary of the Battle of Selma, which took place just days after the 50th anniversary of the bridge crossing demonstrations, had 1,300 individuals, 100 horses, four horse-drawn cannons and 100 cannons registered, a force that likely outnumbered Forrest's defenders at Selma.[28] Participants wrote that a major highlight was the Saturday night Battle of Selma Grand Military Ball, which one re-enactors described, "There is no ball in the Southeast as extravagant and as formal as Sturdivant Hall. Sturdivant Hall is second to none. It is a beautiful, beautiful plantation."[29] Despite Hammonds attempt to make the re-enactments more living history and less political, observers questioned the group's motives. According to the *Sunday Independent,* an Irish newspaper that covered the months surrounding the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights era demonstrations, "Blacks lead the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration; whites lead an annual reenactment of the 1865 Battle of Selma to attract Civil War re-enactors."[30]

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[27] Blake Deshazo, "Eighth Battle Marker to Be Installed Thursday," *Selma Times-Journal*, accessed December 19, 2016, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2015/04/08/eighth-battle-marker-to-be-installed-thursday/.

[28] Alaina Denean Deshazo, "Final Plans Being Made for Battle of Selma," *Selma Times-Journal*, accessed December 19, 2016, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2015/04/15/final-plans-being-made-for-battle-of-selma/.

[29] Alaina Denean Deshazo, "Union Wins Battle — Again," *Selma Times-Journal*, accessed December 19, 2016, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2015/04/27/union-wins-battle-again/.

[30] Jay Reeves, "Thousands descend on Selma to honour marchers in Alabama's Bloody Sunday; 50th anniversary of event that helped fast-track landmark Voting Rights Act," *Sunday Independent*. March 8, 2015, regional edition.

When analyzing the impact of the reenactment, it is important to fit it into Blight's memory of the Civil War. Blight would describe the Battle of Selma reenactment as a reconcilationist approach to the understanding of the Civil War, which embraced reconciliation of the Union by obscuring the plight of enslaved people. But in many regards, this reconcilationist approach in Selma is different than Blights definition of reconciliation. This is because Selma is unique with its "dual heritage" of Civil War and Civil Rights events.[31] Focusing solely on the Civil War narrative not only obscures the experience of slaves but also distorts or distracts from the experiences of Civil Rights demonstrators, fitting in nicely with white counter-narrative efforts. The planners of the Battle of Selma reenactment failed to see the connection between the problems of the past that they chose to glorify and the underlying reasons why those demonstrators came to Selma to secure civil liberties in the first place. This is evidenced in Hammonds letter, when he tries to make a passionate please for his history.

The re-enactment, while problematic, is merely a splinter of the white counter-narrative presence in Selma in the late-1990s and early 2000s. In 2000, after Mayor Joe Smitherman approved the initial proposal, Selma's local Confederate heritage groups, the Friends of Forrest, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, and other Southern heritage groups erected a 7-foot-tall monument of General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Almost immediately after it the new monument was unveiled in 2000, it created outrage within the African American community of Selma. The event's timing might seem insignificant as it was not a

[31] Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said: Race, Uplift, and Monument Building in the Contemporary South* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

commemorative year of Nathan Bedford Forrest's achievements or any related event, but the approval of this new statue had everything to do with changes in city politics as African American voters successfully took Selma's mayoral position. In 2000, James Perkins, Jr., a candidate who had run against Smitherman twice before, finally defeated Smitherman in the mayoral race. Allegedly, in retaliation Mayor Smitherman approved the Forrest statue.

Although no solid evidence exists proving that Smitherman approved the Forrest statue as retaliation for his defeat, Dell Upton makes a compelling argument that at least African Americans citizens read the event this way. In his book, *What Can and Can't Be Said: Race, Uplift, and Monument Building,* Upton argues that Smitherman blamed his defeat on Rose Sanders. He told a reporter, "You can always say something about Rose Sanders – whenever she uses her influence the town does down."[32] Upton goes on to say that while the monument was probably not a direct reaction to defeat, but it was a direct reaction to "ongoing tensions in Selma politics between blacks and whites and between the Smitherman-Williamson and Chestnut-Sanders factions… As the city's population became more African American in the post-civil rights years, the Citizens Council's grip loosened, but city politics remained so divisive, as J. Mills Thornton III has noted, virtually all political change in the city has come as a result of court orders."[33] The same observation would hold true throughout the saga over the Forrest monument.

[32] Ibid., 39.
[33] Ibid., 40.

The 2000 mayoral campaign was extremely heated. At age 70, Smitherman, sought his tenth term. Though he resigned in 1979, he was reelected mayor in 1980, and thus had served almost consistently for 36 years at the mayor of Selma. After years of allowing internal divisions lead to split black votes and Smitherman re-elections, blacks finally mobilized behind one candidate in 2000. By 2000, Selma's electorate was almost 65 percent black, up from 56 percent in 1996.[34] Like the mayoral elections of the 1980s, blacks were mobilized by the Sanders', while whites were mobilized by none other than Cecil Williamson, founder of Project SAVE. Both characters were loathsome to opposite sides. White Selmians believed that Rose and Hank wanted to eradicate all white involvement from local government. Smitherman repeated and reified this claim throughout the 2000 election.[35] He also told the *New York Times*, "everywhere that you've gone all black, the town has gone down."[36]

The campaign also saw its share of chicanery. *The Nation* reported that on August 27, a truck owned by an employee of Selma's Sander's law firm, which had been the headquarters of the "Joe Gotta Go" campaign, was torched in the firm's parking lot. State fire marshals suspected foul play and launched an investigation. Smitherman's top campaign aide told the Selma *Times-Journal* that he thought the torching might have been a publicity stunt by the mayor's opponents.[37]

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[34] Thornton, *Dividing Lines*, 524.
[35] Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said,"* 38.
[36] David Firestone, "Old Southern Strategy Faces Test in Selma Vote," *New York Times*, September 10, 2000, regional edition.
[37] Amy Bach, "Selma Is Still Selma," *The Nation*, September 7, 2000, accessed December 28, 2016, https://www.thenation.com/article/selma-still-selma/.

Ultimately, Perkins claimed victory over Smitherman after the success of the "Joe Gotta Go" campaign.[38] But the victory was not quite as glorious as it first appeared. Perkins relationship to the Sander's aroused suspicion by whites in the community, most of whom strongly disliked the activism of Rose Sanders. Selma's white minority also maintained control of the city council. As Thornton writes in *Divided Lines*, "The advent of Selma's first black municipal administration consequently left the little city's citizens still groping as desperately as ever to comprehend a world in effect created by their nightmares."[39]

Almost as soon as Perkins assumed office, the Nathan Bedford Forrest statue appeared in Selma. Unsurprisingly, the new mayor was not invited to the Forrest monument unveiling celebration.[40] The Forrest bust was placed on the property of the community-run Joseph T. Smitherman Historic Building, named after Selma's long-serving mayor. The placement was extremely controversial placement because of its public space. It was placed on a literal pedestal sitting atop a five-ton granite base inscribed with what Friends of Forrest considered to be milestones of his career, including the Battle of Fort Pillow. Fort Pillow is especially controversial because it is the battle in which Confederate soldiers under Forrest's command murdered black Union soldiers following the latter's surrender. The massacre is one of the most controversial events in Civil War

[38] Ibid.

[39] Thornton, *Dividing Lines*, 562.

[40] Robbie Brown, "Fight Rages in Selma, Ala., Over a Civil War Monument," *New York Times*, August 24, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/25/us/fight-rages-in-selma-ala-over-a-civil-war-monument.html.

history and has tarnished Forrest's legacy among scholars. Friends of Forrest also hosted an unveiling event of the $25,000 statue.[41] The wording of the monument adds to the admiration for Forrest: "This monument stands as a testament of our perpetual devotion and respect for Lt. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest CSA 1821-1877, one of the South's finest heroes."[42] Even though Nathan Bedford Forrest was born and raised in Tennessee and returned home at the conclusion of the war, people in Selma claim his memory.

The Friends of Forrest group was very different from the April 1865 Battle of Selma reenactment group and so is their approach to Civil War memory. Friends of Forrest had unapologetic ties to white nationalist allegiances and did not try to mask racist language. Both Pat Godwin, founder of Friends of Forrest, and Cecil Williamson, among others, had been members of the League of the South, which the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, has identified as a neo-Confederate hate group.[43] The League advocates Southern secession from the United States, as well as "the cultural, social, economic, and political well-being of the Southern people." Yet, the founder of the League, Michael Hill, notes that Southerners refer to those descendants of "Anglo-Celtic peoples. [who] gave [the South] its dominate culture and civilization [sic.] Should this core be

[41] Jeffrey Gettleman, "To Mayor, It's Selma's Statue of Limitations," *Los Angeles Times*, October 22, 2000, http://articles.latimes.com/2000/oct/22/news/mn-40286.
[42] Daniel Evans, "Forrest Bust Back at Old Live Oak" *Selma Times-Journal*, accessed September 26, 2015, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2015/05/23/forrest-bust-back-at-old-live-oak/.
[43] "League of the South," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, accessed December 21, 2016, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/league-south.

destroyed or displaced the South would be made over in an alien image."[44] The League's imagining of Southern culture excludes African American contributions to its formation. The League of the South is notorious for crying racial discrimination against what it sees as discrimination towards these Anglo-Celtic descendants, or white people. Although Godwin eventually left the League of the South, much of her rhetoric paralleled the League's purpose and claims, especially regarding reverse racism.

According to David Blight, a key characteristic of the Lost Cause is "its use of white supremacy as both means and ends."[45] The myth of Nathan Bedford Forrest does just that and it exemplified the interactions of citizens in their counter-narrative of Selma. According to Paul Ashdown and Edward Caudill in *The Myth of Nathan Bedford Forrest*, it is impossible to deny the fact that everything known about Forrest has been used to fit some political or intellectual agenda, either to promote him as a great hero of the Confederate cause or a murderous racist. To Civil War heritage groups, like Friends of Forrest, his name has become synonymous with manhood and bravery. Forrest was an untutored genius and known as the "wizard of the saddle." People perpetually asked the 'What if?' question regarding whether the South might have been victorious if the Richmond government viewed "the real importance of the West in the Civil War…

[44] "DixieNet.Org :: Official Website of the League of the South!," accessed December 29, 2016, http://dixienet.org/rights/2013/faq_frequently_asked_questions.php.
[45] Blight, *Race and Reunion,* 259.

that it would take a man like Forrest to defeat the Yankees – not as a raider, not as a mere cavalry general, but as the Heracles of the Hinderlands."[46]

Selma's Friend of Forrest Southern heritage group uses the memory and image of Nathan Bedford Forrest to symbolize heroism and white dominance. Forrest's new shrine solidified this heroic status by declaring him the "defender of Selma, wizard of the saddle, untutored genius, the first with the most." These words echo the Lost Cause view of the Civil War, viewing Forrest as heroic in his last stand for the town, despite the great odds stacked against him and his crushing defeat. Yet calling him the "defender of Selma" is repugnant to African Americans who celebrate Selma as the epicenter of the Voting Rights Movement. According to Ashdown and Caudill, Forrest's name is unacceptable to African-Americans for three reasons: "he was a slave trader; his troops massacred black Union soldiers at Fort Pillow; and he was allegedly the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Any one of these acts or activities would have tarnished the man in the eyes of modern black Americans; all three of them make him insufferable."[47]

Almost immediately after Forrest's statue arrived in Selma, vandals littered it with trash, pelted it with cinder blocks, and tried to pull it down with ropes. The monument continued to spark outrage among black citizens, including Rose Sanders. Sanders would change her name to Faya Ora Rose Toure in 2003 to embrace her West African heritage, but Friends of Forrest would continue to refer to her as Rose Sanders in their slanderous accusations against her. Of the

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[46] Paul Ashdown and Edward Caudill, *The Myth of Nathan Bedford Forrest* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), Xii.
[47] Ibid., Xiv.

Forrest monument, Toure said, "Jews would not tolerate a statue of Hitler in their neighborhood and what they put up in our neighborhood back then was pretty much the same thing… Descendants of those who enslaved us insist on honoring someone with Klan connections."[48] Southern heritage groups strongly disliked Toure because of her activism in Selma. Seeking to raise money for a new Forrest monument, the Prattville Draggoons, another Alabama-based neo-Confederate group described her, "As you all are aware, we, the Friends of Forrest, are in a full blown war with our local domestic terrorist, Rose Sanders, her husband Senator Hank Sanders and now they have brought in the national organizations that have been waging war on our heritage & culture for years."[49]

Because of the backlash associated with the bust's location on town property, Mayor Perkins ordered the Friends of Forrest to relocate the statue. The group ultimately removed the monument from the city park and placed in the Confederate Memorial Circle at the Old Live Oaks private cemetery.[50] But in May 2001, Friends of Forrest brought a lawsuit against the city of Selma for the monument removal.[51] The neo-Confederate group argued that the city of Selma had breached a contract by forcing the removal of the Forrest statue, while also

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[48] "Selma Can't See the Forrest for the Thieves," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, accessed September 27, 2015, http://archive.montgomeryadvertiser.com/article/20120325/NEWS02/303250029/Selma-can-t-see-Forrest-thieves.

[49] Sons Of Confederate Veterans, "The Prattville Dragoons SCV Camp Blog: UDC Friends of Forrest Pavers to Support Selma Live Oak Cemetery Confederate Circle Renovations," *The Prattville Dragoons SCV Camp Blog*, September 23, 2012, http://theprattvilledragoons.blogspot.com/2012/09/udc-friends-of-forrest-pavers-to.html.

[50] "Selma Delays Moving Rebel Statue." *The Washington Post*. February 14, 2001. Date Accessed: 2016/12/17. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.

[51] "Forrest Not out of Woods yet," *Selma Times -Journal*, accessed September 27, 2015, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2003/05/30/forrest-not-out-of-woods-yet/.

claiming that the city was discriminating against the group based on race. In Selma, the Forrest bust case was thrown out of Federal court, but was later appealed to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals.[52] On August 7, 2003, U.S. Senior District Judge Brevard Hand dismissed one federal claim and three state claims against the city on August 7. The monument would remain in Old Live Oaks Cemetery, though the controversy was far from over.

Friends of Forrest group was not finished causing controversy in Selma. Between 2004 through 2006, Friends of Forrest sponsored two billboard welcoming tourists to Selma and inviting them to visit Civil War sites. The backdrop of the billboard was a Confederate flag, featuring a picture of Nathan Bedford Forrest on his horse, King Phillip, with the quote, "Keep the skeer on 'em."[53] "Skeer" is a southern colloquial word for "scare," thus the billboard essentially says "keep them afraid." Forrest allegedly first used the quote about Union troops at the Battle of Brice's Crossroads. Forrest was referring to keeping Union troops scared of Confederate might, which begs the question about who and what it is referring to on a 2006 billboard in the epicenter of the voting rights movement. The billboard, using clear examples of dog whistle language, was a disguised threat against local African Americans and outside visitors coming to the city to learn more about the Civil Rights narrative.

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[52] "Forrest Monument Suit Dismissed" *Selma Times -Journal,* accessed September 27, 2015, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2003/08/08/forrest-monument-suit-dismissed/.

[53] Mia Graff and Sophie Jane Evans, "KKK Founder Remembered in Billboard at the Foot of Selma Bridge," *Mail Online*, March 7, 2015 accessed September 27, 2015, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2984137/Ku-Klux-Klan-s-Grand-Wizard-commemorated-billboard-erected-foot-Selma-bridge-thousands-flock-mark-50-year-anniversary-bloody-march.html.

The Friends of Forrest erected these two billboards along the Selma-to-Montgomery National Scenic Route. One of the billboards, which greeted visitors eight miles outside of town, had a faded Confederate flag in the background and invited visitors to see these 19th century sites. While the second billboard that overlooked the site of the 1965 Bloody Sunday confrontation featured a large Confederate flag thanked visitors for coming. Pat Godwin addressed the backlash in an email to the League of the South, declaring, "THINGS ARE CERTAINLY LOOKIN' BETTER IN ZIMBABWE ON THE ALABAMY!"[54] The signs were removed in 2006, but returned to Selma in 2015 on the 50th anniversary of the civil rights demonstrations and 150th anniversary of the Battle of Selma.

Figure 6Friends of Forrest Billboard in 2015

These billboards also represent the disagreements that Confederate heritage groups have with academic scholars. The billboard refers to the Civil War by its Lost Cause name: "Visit Selma's *War Between the States* Historic

[54] Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said*, 47.

Sites." The war between the years of 1861 and 1865 is known as the American Civil War, not the War Between the States. The billboard offers another challenge to memory in Selma: the memory of the Civil War is placed on a higher priority than the Voting Rights Movement. Pat Godwin responded to questions about the intent of the billboard by saying, "That billboard was put there with positive intent to ask people who come to Selma to explore and enjoy our 19th century history… Does it say anything in the Constitution where a certain faction of people cannot be offended?"[55] She later insisted that the billboard had nothing to do with the founding of the KKK. Though removed in 2006, the billboard reappeared in 2015, suggesting a reactionary action taken against the 50th anniversary of the demonstrations, as well as the strategically planned return of the Forrest statue. Ironically, the other side of the 2015 billboard says, "selmapostherald.com Welcomes President Barack Obama and You to Selma!"[56]

In March of 2012, the statue mysteriously vanished from its pedestal at the cemetery. Friends of Forrest immediately placed the blame on Toure. She denied these claims, but also said she would represent the Forrest bust thief, "free of charge" in a court battle as a show of support.[57] Outraged by the robbery, Friends of Forrest next offered a $20,000 reward for its return, and vowed to replace it

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[55] Rich Schapiro, "Billboard Honors KKK Founder near Historic Selma Bridge," *NY Daily News*, March 6, 2015, accessed October 17, 2015, http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/billboard-honors-kkk-founder-historic-selma-bridge-article-1.2140326.

[56] Ibid.

[57] "Selma Can't See the Forrest for the Thieves", *Montgomery Advertiser*.

with a new bust on a taller pedestal, guarded by an iron fence and a surveillance camera.[58]

Later that summer with no leads on the whereabouts of the bust, Friends of Forrest proposed to build an even bigger monument as symbolic retaliation at the Old Live Oaks cemetery. The fight against a new monument began "as about 20 protesters tried to block construction of the new monument by lying in the path of a concrete truck as crews tried to pour a ramp… [Mayor] George Patrick Evans, decided to halt the work until the city attorney could review the plans."[59] Further questions of who actually owned the land where the new bust would be placed, plagued construction attempts for the Friends of Forrest. The land had been granted to members of the CMA in 1877, but no formal deed or titled had been documented or handed over to the group.[60] The CMA's predecessor, the UDC, did not have any land deed to this land, but still claimed ownership. In September, the city council voted to sell the land to the UDC for $60,000. Godwin told the *Selma-Times Journal,* ""I see no reason why the UDC should purchase the property when we already own it."[61] Meanwhile, an online petition at Change.org asked the Selma City Council to ban the monument for good. The

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[58] "$20K Reward Offered for Bust," *Selma Times-Journal*, accessed December 27, 2016, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2012/03/28/20k-reward-offered-for-bust/.
[59] Robbie Brown,"Bust of Civil War General Stirs Anger in Alabama," *New York Times*. August 25, 2012, regional edition.
[60] "Confusion Surrounds Cemetery Land Deed," *Selma Times-Journal,* accessed December 27, 2016, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2012/08/10/confusion-surrounds-cemetery-land-deed/.
[61] "Council Moves Forward with Plans to Sell Confederate Circle," S*elma Times-Journa*l, accessed December 27, 2016, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2013/09/11/selma-council-moves-forward-with-plans-to-sell-confederate-circle/.

online petition closed with more than 333,000 signatures, showing that outreach and support against the monument reached far outside the community.[62]

Halting the construction of the larger monument resulted in a lawsuit against the city of Selma by the construction company KTK Mining, owned and operated by Todd Kiscaden.[63] Kiscaden, a member of Friends of Forrest, had been commissioned by the organization to build a larger memorial to Forrest. A city council vote ended the lawsuit that KTK Mining filed against the city after leaders revoked a building permit for a larger memorial to Forrest.[64] They city was required to pay $100,000 to the company in the settlement and grant a 1-acre tract of land to the UDC in the Old Live Oaks Cemetery.[65]

Even though the larger monument to Forrest was effectively shut down, Friends of Forrest saw victory in receiving the deed of the cemetery land.[66] Almost immediately, Pat Godwin and the Friends of Forrest began fundraising for a replacement Forrest statue. By 2015, in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Selma-Montgomery March, the 70th anniversary of the

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[62] Malika Fortier, "Selma City Council: No More Monuments to KKK Hate!," *Change.org*, accessed September 27, 2015, https://www.change.org/p/selma-city-council-no-more-monuments-to-kkk-hate.

[63] "Monument Case Rolls toward Federal Court Trial," *Selma Times-Journa*l, accessed December 27, 2016, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2013/10/12/monument-case-rolls-toward-federal-court-trial/.

[64] "Selma Leaders Give Up Land In Monument Lawsuit," Alabama Public Radio, January 15, 2014, accessed October 17, 2015, http://apr.org/post/selma-leaders-give-land-monument-lawsuit.

[65] "One Final Step Remains for Council in KTK Mining Lawsuit," *Selma Times-Journal*, accessed September 27, 2015, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2013/12/10/one-final-step-remains-for-council-in-ktk-mining-lawsuit/.

[66] "City Council Approves Settlement," *Selma Times-Journal,* accessed December 27, 2016, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2013/11/26/selma-city-council-approves-settlement/.

Edmund Pettus bridge, and the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Selma, Nathan Bedford Forrest would be returned to his pedestal.

Considering the turbulent history associated with the statue, it is unsurprising that during the 50th commemoration of the Selma-Montgomery March, the Friends of Forrest sent members Todd Kiscaden and Pat Godwin to guard the Confederate Memorial Circle at the Old Live Oaks Cemetery. The cemetery, a city-owned Spanish-moss draped pocket of history, currently sits among predominantly African-American neighborhoods in Selma. The cemetery, like many cemeteries situated in the American South, houses a Confederate Memorial Circle, to honor those who fought and died in the American Civil War.[67] "There Is Glory In The Graves," reads the inscription on the Confederate Monument in the middle of the circle.

On March 9, 2015, the day of the 50th anniversary commemorations, Paul Lewis, a British reporter from *The Guardian,* visited the cemetery to observe and film a short-clip about the "Selma Confederates." At the Old Live Oaks cemetery, the reporter observed that the Confederate circle was closed off with a rope draped around it adorned with the text: "Confederate Memorial Circles, Closed for Maintenance Today, Please Do Not Trespass!" Lewis was greeted by Todd Kiscaden, introducing himself as "a member of the Friends of Forrest," who claimed that the group was protecting the memorial circle because they had received threats from people associated with the commemoration march. In the

[67] Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause*, Reprint edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

closed-off memorial, Kiscaden explained to Lewis that "we [Friends of Forrest] are doing construction work to revitalize Confederate Memorial Circle in Selma, Alabama in the Live Oaks Cemetery." He did not mention that the construction entailed the return of a controversial Nathan Bedford Forrest bust statue to the memorial circle, but when asked by the reporter why he was not attending the 50th commemoration of the Selma to Montgomery marches, he indifferently replied, "It's not my history."[68] In one sentence, Kiscaden summed up the status of Selma's heritage commemorations: separate, based on race, and not belonging to the other group.

For Kiscaden and Pat Godwin, the president of both the local chapter of the UDC and the Friends of Forrest group in Selma, "my history" involves the dead memorialized at the cemetery, which is inextricably tied to Forrest, the Confederate cavalry leader. For these heritage groups, the choice to not attend Selma's commemoration of its national heritage as the epicenter of grassroots movements in Civil Rights memory, is replaced with memorialization of Nathan Bedford Forrest and his role as the "defender of Selma" and the "wizard of the saddle." White supremacy has become cloaked in armor of heritage not hate, military valor, and veneration of ancestors. Over the course of 50 years, the white counter-narrative of the march has evolved from besmirching the high moral crusade of the march to memorializing the impact of the Confederacy in Selma.

[68] Mae Ryan and Paul Lewis, "The Selma Confederates: 'I Want to Protect, Defend and Preserve My White Race," *The Guardian*, March 10, 2015, accessed March 27, 2017, http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2015/mar/10/the-selma-confederates-video.

When asked about the Forrest statue controversy, Kiscaden admitted to Paul Lewis that he did think the KKK's "Grand Wizard" title came from Forrest's *nom-de-guerre* as "Wizard of the Saddle." However, when pressed about whether Nathan Bedford Forrest was a founding member of the KKK, Kiscaden remarked, "I have no way to verify that, and I don't think I believe it."[69] Choosing not to embrace historical facts is troubling, though it is unclear whether Kiscaden and the Friends of Forrest are just not truthful with the reporter or ignorant of historical fact. Forrest is recognized favorably by Southern heritage groups of Selma, but he is also used as an element of white power and white supremacy. Even if Friends of Forrest refuse to accept this historical fact, other members of the community do acknowledge that Forrest was a founding member of the KKK. In Selma on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights demonstrations, there are many examples of the use of Forrest as a symbol of white power. These monuments also illustrate the continued vitality of the "white supremacist" interpretation of the Civil War, as well as how the white counter-narrative has evolved in Selma.

Paul Lewis also witnessed another troubling detail of the Friends of security team. Troubled be the presence of the German Shepard attack dog, recalling the Birmingham race protest of 1963, the reporter noted the symbolic use of the dog as a reminder of the power of memory and the struggle against the Civil Rights narrative. Lewis next asked Pat Godwin, who is famous for signing her emails with "Wizardess" in honor of Forrest's *nom-de-guerre* and possible

[69] Ibid.

KKK connections, if she considered herself a racist. Godwin replied, "I'm a racist in the sense that I'm white, I was born white, I'm proud to be white, I believe in my race, I want to see it perpetuated, I want to see it survive on this planet, I want to protect, defend, and preserve my white race."[70] This is not the first time that Godwin has said something blatantly racist or defaming. In a letter to *Selma-Times Journal* in 2006, she wrote, reflecting on the early inflammatory segregationist counter-narrative of 1965: "The 1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights march was nothing more than a five day orgy of sex, drunken orgies and public defecation."[71] She uses this opinion in a similar vein as Kiscaden claiming, "It's not my history." For Godwin, Kiscaden, and these neo-Confederate heritage groups, the collective history of Selma is either Civil War or Civil Rights, not both at the same time. Furthermore, neither side of the narrative is entitled to the others version of history.

Shortly after the nation turned its eyes toward Selma to witness the 50th commemoration of the march and the subsequent Voting Rights Act, the Friends of Forrest attempted to take the collective memory of the town back from Civil Rights to Civil War. Three years after it originally disappeared, and coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Selma, Forrest returned to his pedestal at the Old Live Oak Cemetery in May, amidst an unusual amount of fanfare. Though the Friends of Forrest organization does not have a website, Pat Godwin, invited contacts with connection to the memorial to partake in the celebration of

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[70] Ryan and Lewis, "The Selma Confederates."

[71] "Waffling Politicians," *Selma Times -Journal*, accessed October 28, 2015, http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2006/07/22/waffling-politicians/.

its return. Below is the invitation sent to various Southern heritage groups, portraying the heated rhetoric of the Friends of Forrest:

> We hope you ALL will make plans to attend this historic & monumental event!
> We Won! We have the deed to Confederate Memorial Circle!
> It's time to Celebrate, Commemorate & Re-Dedicate!
>
> The Friends of Forrest and Selma Chapter 53, UDC Cordially Invite You to Attend & Share The Celebration of our Historical & Monumental Victory!!!
>
> Saturday, May 23, 2015 1:00 PM
>
> Confederate Memorial Circle
> Historic Live Oak Cemetery
> Selma, Alabama
>
> A Guided Tour of Live Oak Cemetery 9:30am
>
> Reception to follow program at the Smitherman Building Museum
> (The Original Site of the NB Forrest Monument)
> 109 Union Street
>
> Confederate Memorial Circle was originally dedicated 137 years ago on 26 April 1878. It's time to celebrate, commemorate & re-dedicate Confederate Memorial Circle where we will re-dedicate the Nathan Bedford Forrest Monument by unveiling the REPLACEMENT bronze bust of Lt. General Nathan Bedford Forrest. We will re-dedicate the Confederate Soldiers' Memorial and also the new Battle of Selma Memorial. This will be a HUGE MONUMENTAL HISTORICAL event- the most paramount Confederate accomplishment throughout the South in recent times because we beat the enemy in their own territory, the Civil Rights hotpot of the world! We have won our case against the City of Selma. Selma Chapter 53, UDC has been awarded the deed to the one acre Memorial Circle plus the Pigeoneers House! Our Security & Beautification Enhancement of Confederate Memorial Circle project has been quite a test of patience, endurance, perseverance and faithful dedication of all our supporters. We are very GRATEFUL for ALL our supporters and contributors toward our efforts to defend, protect and preserve our noble Southern history and heritage here in Selma. Even though we are having the dedication on May 23, this project is not quite finished. We still have LOTS to pay for and also erect 19 bronze historical interpretive markers throughout the Circle. .....

Keepin' the skeer on'em!
DEO VINDICE!
Patricia S. Godwin[72]

Godwin's letter is distressing in its elation toward what she and the Friends of Forrest saw as "historical & monumental victory." This rhetoric takes the alleged culture war on Southern heritage and adds the language of victory and defeat to perpetuate the imagery of a constant struggle. Godwin rejects any sharing between the Civil War and Civil Right heritage. The letter reminds readers of the various struggles that Friends of Forrest endured to get the monument dedicated, including her reference to site of the original Forrest bust placement at the Smitherman building. She references two major victories with "We WON!" against the City of Selma and the Civil Rights Movement. She also makes the claim that returning Forrest to his pedestal is "the most paramount Confederate accomplishment throughout the South in recent times." Her reference to the 1-acre of land deed granted to the UDC also suggests victory over the town of Selma, furthered by, "won our case against the City of Selma."

But perhaps the most chilling element of Godwin's letter declares the ultimate victory to be the defeat of the Civil Rights Movement in "their own territory." By associating "noble Southern history and heritage" with Confederate memory and "beat the enemy… Civil Rights hotpot in the world!" Godwin admits that Selma is seen as a Civil Rights heritage site, but has embarked on her own Lost Cause crusade to defame this memory in favor of the Civil War. To conclude, her letter states that the work of these heritage organizations is not finished.

[72] George Purvais,"Friends Of Forrest," *Cold Southern Steel*, March 11, 2015, accessed October 10, 2015, https://coldsouthernsteel.wordpress.com/2015/03/11/friends-of-forrest/.

Friends of Forrest plans to put nineteen historical bronze markers at Old Live Oaks Cemetery to "keep the skeer on 'em!" She concludes her letter with Forrest's racist "skeer" epithet, as well as "Deo Vindice," which was the Confederate motto.

The timeline of events in Selma in the spring an early summer of 2015 is an imperative factor in the struggle between these two competing memories. In March, the community celebrated the jubilee of the Selma to Montgomery march, which was the first and last commemoration of Civil Rights heritage in Selma that year. April saw the sesquicentennial of the Battle of Selma with the reenactment and Grand Ball. Finally, Forrest returned to his pedestal in May. Almost as soon as President Obama departed from Selma, Civil War heritage groups made plans to restore the Civil War memory to Selma.

On the eve of Forrest's return to the cemetery, the *LA Times* declared that "dispute over the missing Forrest's head has lasted longer than the Civil War itself."[73] On May 23, 2015, a second ceremony was held Saturday by the UDC and the Friends of Forrest to honor the cavalry leader. When the red curtain covering the new monument was removed, cannons were fired and cheers erupted from the crowd of 100 or more. "Ladies and gentlemen, the general is back," exclaimed Pat Godwin.[74] Godwin also made sure to remind those at the memorial that the city of Selma had lost and that the land at Old Live Oaks Cemetery belonged to the UDC, "Now 137 years later, the city of Selma has reaffirmed its promise that

[73] Matthew Teague, "Selma, 50 Years after March, Remains a City Divided," *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 2015, accessed September 27, 2015, http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-selma-20150307-story.html.
[74] Daniel Evans. "Forrest Bust Back at Old Live Oak," *Selma Times-Journal*, May 23, 2015. http://www.selmatimesjournal.com/2015/05/23/forrest-bust-back-at-old-live-oak/.

this land will continue to be dedicated to these honored dead and to memorialize their sacrifices for the cause for which they died."[75] The continued rhetoric about victory and defeat against the community, furthers the observation that the Friends of Forrest groups see their mission as a conflict between two competing memories and two different races.

Now that Nathan Bedford Forrest has become a permanent fixture on the sacred space of the Old Live Oaks Cemetery, the question becomes whether this is a good thing or a bad thing for the collective memory of the community. According to Sanford Levinson, professor of law at the University of Texas in Austin and author of *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*, it matters very much. Statues, he says, "are an effort [by regimes in power] to project legitimacy into the future."[76] If nothing else, he says, controversies like these call on us to ask ourselves exactly what we are honoring, and why.

While the Friends of Forrest want people to remember Forrest as "defender of Selma… wizard of the Saddle," it is unmistakable that Forrest is remembered for his massacre at Fort Pillow and his involvement in the founding of the KKK, especially in a pre-dominantly African-American community like Selma. The message that the Forrest bust sends in terms of legitimacy is that: racism and dehumanization, even if it was in the past, is acceptable and admirable. In Godwin's own words, "This will be a HUGE MONTUMENTAL HISTORICAL recent – the most paramount Confederate accomplishment

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*, 1St Edition edition (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 1998), 12.

throughout the South in recent times because we beat the enemy in their own territory. The Civil Rights hotpot of the world!" Forrest's statue is a victory for the Confederate heritage advocates, a regime whose ancestors fought to keep African-Americans enslaved. Godwin makes it very clear that she and her group mourn the Old South's passing, but that the Forrest statues return is a victory for the Civil War memory of the white counter-narrative.

Another fact regarding the collective memory associated with the Forrest billboard and statue is its placement of both pieces. A sacred space is defined as a public cemetery, state, and national capital grounds, and other ground that is invested with special meaning within the stricture of the civil religion that helps to constitute a given special order. The Old Live Oaks Cemetery and a billboard that welcomes outsiders into the community are also sacred spaces in the community that send a similar message. Levinson says, "Sacred grounds characteristically serve as venues for public art, including moments to social heroes. Yet a sometimes bitter reality about life within truly multicultural societies is that the very notion of a unified public is up for grabs. As already suggested, one aspect of multiculturalism is precisely that different cultures are likely to have disparate – and even conflicting – notions of who counts as heroes or villains."[77] The placement of the bust in a public cemetery and welcoming billboard means that Selma has embraced Nathan Bedford Forrest as a hero of the community. At the very least, Nathan Bedford Forrest is a hero of the white counter-narrative of Selma.

[77] Ibid., 37.

Conclusion:
"Is This the Second Redemption?"

At the conclusion of the American Civil War, Reconstruction attempted a complete transformation of the Southern United States from 1863 to 1877. Reconstruction was significant to civil rights in the United States, but many historians consider it a failure. After Reconstruction ended, white Southerners succeeded in re-establishing legal and political dominance over African Americans through a combination of violence and legal segregation. The early interracial political goals of Reconstruction and overt optimism of emancipation of former slaves was shattered. This era would become known as Redemption. As soon as Reconstruction ended, the twin issues of states' rights and race were placed back in the hands of white Southerners. Redemption meant that blacks were gradually removed from office, stripped of hard-fought constitutional rights, and placed under subjugation that was reminiscent of slavery.

The term "Second Reconstruction" has since been applied to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. The term first appeared in "The Political Legacy of Reconstruction," a 1957 journal article by the historian C. Vann Woodward. Two years earlier, Woodward had published the book *The Strange Book of Jim Crow*, which argued that racial segregation was not an eternal feature of Southern cultural traditions and that the Jim Crow laws that characterized Southern society in the 1950s were a relatively recent development that dated

back to the 1890s.[1] The Second Reconstruction emerged out of the booming economy of the 1950's, had as its goals, integration, the end of Jim Crow and the more unstructured goal of making America a biracial democracy. Although the Civil Rights movement agenda certainly did not end in 1965, very little was accomplished in subsequent years. Many historians see the Selma demonstrations as the high-water mark of the Civil Rights movement, or Second Reconstruction.[2] Finding patterns in history, the recent argument that Americans has since entered a second Redemption has become prevalent.

In a 2015 *Slate* article published on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Selma demonstrations, Jamelle Bouie, analyzed how Selma's waning legacy is symbolic of a second Redemption. Bouie wrote, "If the 1960s were a Second Reconstruction—a second attempt to fulfill the promise of emancipation—then our present period is a second *Redemption*, where a powerful movement attempts to reverse gains and dismantle our fragile efforts at racial equality."[3] Bouie's article looked specifically at 2015 Selma, in which the struggle between the Civil Rights national narrative and white counter-narrative, raged on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the demonstrations.

In 1883, during the first Redemption, the Supreme Court overturned the Civil Rights Act of 1875. Supreme Court justices declared that 14th Amendment

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[1] C. Vann Woodward and William S. McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, Commemorative edition (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[2] Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-68*, Reprint edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007).

[3] Jamelle Bouie and Jamelle Bouie, "Losing Selma's Legacy," *Slate*, March 6, 2015, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2015/03/losing_selma_s_civil_rights_legacy_in_the_cycle_of_american_history_black.html.

prohibited private discrimination in public accommodations and asserting that "there must be some stage" where blacks cease "to be the special favorite of the laws." While this language is understandable during the time of first Redemption, the 21st century federal court system is becoming increasingly hostile to race legislation in the 21st century. According to Bouie's finding in "Selma's Waning Legacy:"

> In 2007, with Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1, the Supreme Court struck down voluntary integration efforts in an opinion punctuated by Chief Justice John Roberts' declaration that "the way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race." In 2013, with Shelby County v. Holder, the same court struck down the preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act, which required federal supervision in states with a history of voting discrimination.
>
> Most recently, with Schuette v. BAMN, the court allowed voters to block affirmative action through a state constitutional amendment. And this year, following its judgment on these cases, it is expected to strike down "disparate impact," a way of addressing stark racial disparities without the burden of proving explicit discrimination. It's a vital piece of the civil rights arsenal—a weapon against housing discrimination and police abuse. [4]

The rights and gains made by the Civil Rights demonstrators in the 1950s and 1960s are slowly being chipped away at by the Supreme Court and state laws.

In another more recent 2016 article by *The Atlantic*, "Is This the Second Redemption?" Adam Serwer looks at the recent election of Donald J. Trump for evidence. Serwer opens the article with the statement, "The accomplishments of the first black president will be erased by a man who rose to power on the slander that Barack Obama was not born in America." Trump's campaign slogan alone "make American great again," suggests that something has gone horribly wrong

[4] Ibid.

in society and needs to be fixed so that American can be redeemed. Serwer writes, "The notion that Trump's victory, and the perception that society must be "redeemed" has nothing to do with a racist backlash might be comforting, but it flies in the face of available statistical evidence."[5]

Donald J. Trump's ascendance into office, in conjunction with the dominance of the Republican party, is poised to push back most racial progress that the Obama administration provided. Serwer writes, "The entire civil-rights enforcement apparatus of the federal government will be under the control of a candidate who campaigned on using the power of the state against religious and ethnic minorities, proposing to ban Muslim immigration, establish a 'deportation force' to purge the country of America's largely Latino population of undocumented immigrants, and establish 'national stop and frisk,' a policy that has targeted black communities."[6] The results of the first Redemption, which created a mass migration of African Americans out of the South, the system of Jim Crow, which was a legal code for segregation and intimidation, among other things suggest at least some of what we can expect.

Selma is an excellent case study for the argument of a second Redemption period. In the subsequent months after the final 1965 march to, Selma became ground zero in an epic tug-of-war battle for the legacy and heritage of the town. Conflicting narratives about the demonstrations emerged, framed between an account of bravery in the face of adversity, a moral crusade for equality or the

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[5] Adam Serwer, "Is This the Second Redemption?," *The Atlantic*, November 10, 2016, accessed March 18, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/11/welcome-to-the-second-redemption/507317/.
[6] Ibid.

segregationist counter-narrative of depraved debauchery. With the passage of the VRA, the Civil Rights narrative was validated as the national narrative. With increased integration in the public sphere, segregationist counter-narrative became white counter-narrative as it evolved in an effort to challenge the national narrative of moral high ground.

White counter-narrative capitalized on disagreements in the African American community, keeping whites firmly entrenched in local government. Schools were kept segregated through a system of tracking, which eventually led the education demonstrations of 1990 on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the demonstrations. Finally, white counter-narrative grasped hold of Selma's minor role in the Civil War in an effort to change the narrative of Selma from the epicenter of the Voting Rights movement, to the last stand of General Nathan Bedford Forrest and the Lost Cause of the Confederacy. White massive resistance in the form of a white counter-narrative has always been prevalent in Selma, but it was not until 2015 that it truly began to win out on the national Civil Rights narrative.

The desire for a "our story" is deeply human. People look to the past to legitimize their own experiences and understanding of the present and to find clues for the future. For the people of Selma, their origin story is also directly tied to cultural heritage. Unfortunately, this origin story embodies different meanings for differ groups of people based on race. For example, the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma is the sacred site of Bloody Sunday for the Civil Rights Narrative followers. However, it is also named a known KKK leader and because of its sacred importance to the Civil Rights narrative, the white counter-narrative has

used the surrounding space to put a billboard up portraying a deplorable figure to African Americans. Just as public historians are increasingly called to interpret these complex meanings of spaces, so, too, has history evolved to include competing narratives. The white counter-narrative, despite its gross inaccuracies in 1965, will not be ignored. This reactionary form of memory is also an element of the legacy of Selma.

Despite that, the overarching meaning of Selma, Alabama is larger than two competing narratives. Evoking the Civil Rights national narrative in his 2015 speech at Selma, President Obama stated, utilizing the same language of Lyndon B. Johnson by evoking America's sacred heritage:

> …there are places and moments in America where this nation's destiny has been decided. Many are sites of war -- Concord and Lexington, Appomattox, Gettysburg. Others are sites that symbolize the daring of America's character -- Independence Hall and Seneca Falls, Kitty Hawk and Cape Canaveral.
>
> Selma is such a place. In one afternoon 50 years ago, so much of our turbulent history -- the stain of slavery and anguish of civil war; the yoke of segregation and tyranny of Jim Crow; the death of four little girls in Birmingham; and the dream of a Baptist preacher -- all that history met on this bridge.
>
> It was not a clash of armies, but a clash of wills; a contest to determine the true meaning of America… the idea of a just America and a fair America, an inclusive America, and a generous America -- that idea ultimately triumphed.[7]

Despite Selma's "clash of wills" and ongoing "contest to determine the true meaning" between competing narratives, for Obama and most Americans, the national narrative of a high moral crusade for equality is the most important

[7] "Remarks by the President at the 50th Anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery Marches," *Whitehouse.gov*, accessed October 28, 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/07/remarks-president-50th-anniversary-selma-montgomery-marches.

takeaway form Bloody Sunday and the demonstrations.

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