Headline: 50 Years Ago We Marched

Sub: What began on the grounds of Lincoln University, ended on the steps of the Alabama State Capitol.

By Katherine Black and Trinita Birch, along with fellow Lincoln Univ. JOU 383 students Christian Thompson, Blake Ralling, Lauren Howard, Mark Gunnels

Published April 16, 2015 at [www.myclarionnews.com](http://www.myclarionnews.com)

Video at: <https://vimeo.com/125925573>

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY - On March 25, 1965, a bus loaded with Lincoln University students and staff arrived in Montgomery, Ala. to join the Selma march for racial and voting equality. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was in force, African-Americans continued to feel the effects of segregation.

The 1960s was a decade of social unrest and change. In the Deep South, specifically Alabama, racial segregation was a cultural norm resistant to change. Governor George Wallace never concealed his personal viewpoints and political stance of the white majority, declaring “Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.” The march was aimed at obtaining African-Americans their constitutionally protected right to vote.

However, Alabama’s deep-rooted culture of racial bias began to be challenged by a shift in American attitudes towards equality. Both black and whites wanted to end discrimination by using passive resistance, a movement utilized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. That passive resistance was often met with violence, sometimes at the hands of law enforcement and local citizens.

The Selma to Montgomery march was a result of a protest for voting equality. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Christian Leadership Counsel (SCLC) among other students marched along the streets to bring awareness to the voter registration campaign, which was organized to end discrimination in voting based on race. Violent acts of police officers and others were some of the everyday challenges protesters were facing.

Forty-one participants from Lincoln University arrived in Montgomery to take part in the 1965 march for equality. Students from Lincoln University’s Journalism 383 class spent part of their 2015 spring semester researching the historical event. Here are their stories:

**Peter Kellogg**

 “We’ve been watching the television, reading about it in the newspapers,” said Peter Kellogg during a February 2015 telephone interview. “Everyone knew the civil rights movement was going on, and it was important that we give him (Robert Newton) some assistance … and Newton said we needed to get involve and do something,”

Kellogg, a lecturer in the 1960s at Lincoln University, discussed how the bus trip originated. “That’s why the bus happened,” Kellogg said. “Because of what he (Newton) did - that’s why Lincoln students went and participated.”

 “People were excited and the people along the sidewalk were supportive,” Kellogg said.  However, the mood flipped from excited to scared and feeling intimidated.  “It seems though every office building there was a guy in a blue uniform with binoculars standing in the crowd with troops and police. And if looks could kill me, we could have all been dead.” He says the hatred and intimidation was intense.

Kellogg, being white, was an immediate target among many white people. He didn’t realize how dangerous the event in Alabama was until he and the others in the bus heard about the death of Viola Liuzzo. The married mother of five from Detroit was shot and killed by members of the Ku Klux Klan while shuttling activists to the Montgomery airport.

“We found out about her death on the ride back,” Kellogg recalled. “Because it was a loss of life, and it shows the violence … we could have been exposed to that danger!”

After returning to LU, Kellogg’s outlook on life took a dramatic turn. Kellogg noted King’s belief that a person should be willing to die for important causes. “The idea is that life is about something larger and more important than your own immediate gratification, and career success or personal achievements,” Kellogg said. “The civil rights movement … it made me, it made my life more significant because it was about something important.”

The civil rights movement influenced Kellogg to change his career path and to become a black history lecturer.  Until this day, he has no regrets and believes that his choices made him as a better individual. The bus ride to Alabama, he says, began with the actions of just one student.

**Robert Newton**

Robert Newton was the initiator, recruiter and leader of the Lincoln University movement to join Dr. Martin Luther King’s march in Selma. “In the 60s much of the civil rights activists came out of college,” said Newton during a recent phone interview. Many of the events that involved segregation compelled college students to fight for equality.

“We had selected boycotts of merchants, when blacks were not allowed to try on clothes,” Newton said. “You could buy clothes at department stores, but no blacks could work at the department stores as sales people. If you bought clothes there you couldn’t try them on, you had to buy them first and take them home and try them on.”

Newton said the students risked their lives to be a part of history and influence change.  He not only recognized the historic event of his fellow Lincolnites, but also recognized other college students and historical black colleges and universities who played a vital role in history.

“You had the S.N.C.C organization, in terms of voting rights and other things, including a lot of participation and working off the bureau,” Newton said. Other schools and places such as UNT, Greenville and Howard University and other historically black schools had groups that came out as leaders. Newton believes that much has changed from 50 years ago.

 “I think we’ve certainly come a long way from what I’ve seen from the standpoint of growing up outside of Birmingham, Alabama,” Newton said. He believes that college campuses today are more organized in their approach to social causes. “The campus appears to be some more integrated amongst students in terms of organizations and friendships.”

**Barbara Flint**

    Dr. Barbara Flint grew up in the southern part of Arkansas and came to Lincoln University in 1961. She describes her experience at Lincoln as “being at Lincoln when the world was changing.“ She was an active member of Lincoln’s History Club, which focused on current events and issues and influenced her decision to join the Selma march.

“The first idea was to raise some money and then we started talking about ‘why can’t we go?’ I very much wanted to be a living witness in history.”

    Reflecting on the march and journey to Montgomery, Flint describes it as being filled with tension. “We were very conscious of the fact that once we got on the road past Tennessee we didn’t know what was going to happen,” said Flint during a February 2015 phone interview. “Many of the students had not been beyond Missouri, so they didn’t have that sense of what happens in the South. Having lived there you knew the balance as well as what is likely to happen and what is not likely to happen. As my father use to say, ‘you have to know how to stay on that line of balance.’”

    Upon arriving in Alabama she remembers the feeling of excitement and relief from everyone on the bus. “We were tired and very happy to be there and we were trying to figure out where we were going to join and get into the march,” Flint said. “There were so many people coming in and then we were also trying to stay together; that was one of the things that really stuck out for me, not just for us but the people who were coming in. You didn’t want to lose sight of the people you came with.” Flint says she was keenly aware of her surroundings.

For her, it was more than just marching forward. “I can still hear those helicopters now,” Flint recalled. “Every time the helicopters would come over the sound would make people jump and look up - I think that demonstrated the extent of the tenseness that was there at the time because the helicopters kept coming over every few minutes.” She said that the marchers sang “we are not afraid,” but that fear remained with every step.

“Just having been there and being a witness and marching you realize that I’m one of those drops that’s going to make up this flood and with this flood things will move,” said Flint.

    As a student at Lincoln in 1965, Flint says the Selma experience undoubtedly changed her life. “You can’t expect to do exactly what you came to Lincoln to do,” Flint says. “That march - along with all the other marchers and the action that was taking place - directly changed the paths that I and many other people at Lincoln would take.” She says current students and new generations need to reflect on their personal role in society.

“Decide what needs to be done and ask yourself ‘how can I best contribute to it?’” Flint said. She notes technology and social media can be used to reach audiences in ways unavailable to her generation in 1965. “So you don’t always have to wait for someone else to step out there and say ‘let’s march,’ you can express your vision and your views and you have the means to do so (so) others can follow you.

**Jaci Newsom**

    Jaci Newsom came to Lincoln in 1965 from Atlanta. She came to Lincoln to major in sociology and being in Jefferson City was largely different from what she had grown up with.

“To be able to come into a restaurant, sit down and be served a nice meal was eye-opening to me,” said Newsom during a recent interview. She eventually became accustomed to the relaxed attitude of Missouri and was shocked by the situation she encountered on an out-of-town trip. “I took a bus trip from Atlanta to Pensacola and I encountered the worse racism that I have ever seen. I was at bus stop, I went in to be served and they would not serve me. There was a policeman sitting there at the table and he told me that privately owned places could select not to serve you.”

    Newsom describes her experience of marching in Montgomery as being one with a purpose. “We felt as though we achieved something - we felt a sense of unity,” Newsom said. “We were very excited (because) we were going to hear from Martin Luther King. To actually be in the presence of him and the other civil rights workers there was just such enthusiasm and excitement yet there was also some apprehension of what we might encounter.”

Many of the marchers showed their inspiration and determination while pressing forward towards the grounds of the Alabama Capitol building. Newsom recalled that the marchers were singing the lyrics “ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around” and “we shall overcome.”

“ I started seeing people just like me,” Newsom said. “I don’t recall any of the scowling, the hitting, the things I would see on TV later. I just saw a sea of humanity marching towards the Capitol. I don’t remember what Martin Luther King said but it was always the same message: keep the faith; we’re going to get where we’re going and let us remember what our purpose is.”

    Newsom offers advice on what individuals can do to make their society a more productive and peaceful place. “We have come a long way and we have ways to change things that we did not have before,” Newsom said. “You need to work in positive ways to change.” Referencing the recent unrest in Ferguson, Mo., she believes that people become destructive as a way to show and vent anger. Her generation, she says, was raised to react in lawful ways – and believe in hope.

“We have faith to do things in a way that was lawful and it makes me sad what people do when they feel without hope, and there is hope,” Newsom says. “Non-violence does work - we need to include everyone to make this world a better place.”

    Newsom graduated from Lincoln in 1969 and describes her experience at Lincoln as, “I grew up and did more growing at Lincoln than I think I did for the rest of my life.”

(Newsom, Kellogg, Newton, and Flint shared their experience as Lincolnites with the hope that students will initiate change through education and non-violence. The LU Journalism 383 spring 2015 class would like to thank everyone involved in researching the LU March to Montgomery project, including LU Page Library archivist Mark Schleer.)

  
  
On page 3 April 2, 1965 Clarion newspaper photo of Lincoln University students participating in the March 25, 1965   
Selma to Montgomery march

  
.  
Peter Kellogg, Robert Newton, and Barbara Flint in a photo from a 1965 Lincoln University yearbook.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| C:\Users\hqian510\Desktop\LibraryFolder\Flint1964aRVE.jpg | C:\Users\hqian510\Desktop\LibraryFolder\RecentPhotoBarbaraFlint2015aREV.jpg |
| Barbara Flint from a 1964  Lincoln University yearbook photo. | Recent photo of Barbara Flint.  (submitted February 2015) |
| C:\Users\hqian510\Desktop\LibraryFolder\Newton1965aREV.jpg | C:\Users\hqian510\Desktop\LibraryFolder\RobertNewton.JPG |
| Robert Newton from a 1965 Lincoln University yearbook photo. | A recent photo of Robert Newton. (submitted Feb. 2015) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| C:\Users\hqian510\Desktop\LibraryFolder\Newsom1965aREV.jpg | C:\Users\hqian510\Desktop\LibraryFolder\RecentPhotoJaciNewsom2015aREV.jpg |
| Jaci Newsom from a 1965  Lincoln University yearbook photo. | A recent photo of Jaci Newsom  (submitted Feb. 2015) |
| C:\Users\hqian510\Desktop\LibraryFolder\Kellogg1965aREV.jpg | C:\Users\hqian510\Desktop\LibraryFolder\RecentPhotoPeterKellogg2015aREV.jpg |
| Peter Kellogg from the 1966 Lincoln University yearbook. | Recent photo of Peter Kellogg.  (submitted Feb. 2015) |

  
Lincoln University journalism students peruse college yearbooks from the 1960s during a research project. Left to right: Lauren Howard, Katherine Black, Blake Ralling, and Trinita Birch. Feb. 27, 2015.



LU journalism student Katherine Black adjusts photos in the MLK Hall media lab. April 15, 2015.

  
Lincoln University archivist Mark Schleer assists LU journalism student Lauren Howard during a search   
through a 1965 LU yearbook. Feb. 27, 2015.



Students from Lincoln University's Issues Reporting class (JOU 383) use Page Library's archive resources to  
study yearbooks from the 1960s. From the left: Katherine Black, Black Ralling, and Trinita Birch. Feb. 27, 2015.



Prof. Will Sites (standing) assists journalism students Trinita Birch, left, Lauren Howard, center, and   
Katherine Black with research in the university's archive room inside Page Library. Feb. 27, 2015.



Lincoln University journalism students (l-r) Christian Thompson, Trinita Birch, and Katherine Black work on  
 images for the JOU 383 "March To Montgomery" article. April 15, 2015.