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# Dean Logan's Blog

## Day 2: The Heart of the Civil Rights Movement: Our Day in Montgomery-Blog

Posted by David Logan on 03/14/2013 at 12:53 PM

Day 2 was spent in the Alabama capital of Montgomery, in many ways the most significant place in the Civil Rights Movement. This is where a courageous seamstress Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of a public bus that kicked off the year-long Montgomery Bus Boycott, in which tens of thousands of ordinary citizens protest continuing segregation in public life.

<http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/press-pahttp://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/27/us-usa-rosaparks-idUSBRE91Q18L20130227st/2013/02/04/remembering-rosa-parks-on-her-100th-birthday>

It was in Montgomery where a young minister from Georgia, Martin Luther King, finished his PhD dissertation and rose to prominence as a leader, and where he honed his vision for the post-racial America he would so eloquently describe in his "I Have a Dream" speech in August 1963.

[http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc\\_montgomery\\_bus\\_boycott\\_1955\\_1956/](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_montgomery_bus_boycott_1955_1956/)

Our first stop was the parsonage for Dr. King's church, Dexter Avenue Baptist, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/al7.htm> when current members of the congregation lead us through the tiny house, still containing original furniture (including the bed he slept on, the dining room table where he formed the Southern Christian Leadership Coalition), and the kitchen table where he had an epiphany that despite dire danger to him and his family, he knew his life's work was to confront injustice nonviolently.

<http://americandetours.com/2010/01/18/martin-luther-king%E2%80%99s-defining-moment-a-kitchen-in-montgomery-alabama-past-midnight/comment-page-1/>



The front porch where a bomb landed



With Nicole Austin-Hillery from the Brennan Center for Justice

After a “church lunch” of fried chicken, ribs, greens, and soda, we gathered at the First Baptist Church, where Pastor Ralph Abernathy preached and where mass meetings were held during the boycott year. It was here that one of the most amazing events occurred: because at the last

minute the mayor of Montgomery could not attend, we were welcomed by the Chief of Police, who not only apologized for the conduct of his department in 1963 (allowing the Klan to attack and beat a bus full of Freedom Riders that included John Lewis), he said that he wanted to make a more personal gesture, and he walked over to Rep. Lewis and gave him his badge. This was completely surprising (remember the chief wasn't even scheduled to speak) and even a stoic man like John Lewis was moved to tears.

<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/article/20130302/NEWS/303020033/MPD-chief-apologizes-lack-action-by-police-during-61-attack-Freedom-Riders-new-video->

After that incredibly moving moment we headed back to the buses, but not before the members of congress posed for a group picture on the church steps.



The Congressional Delegation

We then headed nearby to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the legendary Civil Rights organization headed by Morris Dees (who, btw will be the Commencement Speaker at RWU Law this year!), to lay a wreath at the Civil Rights Memorial.

<http://www.splcenter.org/civil-rights-memorial>

The final event of that emotional day was dinner at the Alabama State Capitol, where we saw the room in which the Confederate States of America first met,





Room with confederate flag

and then we heard from “The Daughters of the Movement:” LBJ’s daughter, Rev. Abernathy’s daughter, Gov. Wallace’s daughter, and Robert Kennedy’s daughter. What amazing stories they told about what it was like to be young and in the maelstrom of history.

Back at the hotel, I got to hang out with two of my bus buddies, actor Richard Gant (who you may remember from his role in *The Big Lebowski*) and Betty Mae Fikes, now a gospel and blues recording artist, who as a Alabama teenager was “a voice of SNCC;” every day, sometimes on a bus, sometimes in a crowd, would lead us in song along our way.

[http://www.winonadailynews.com/news/local/article\\_e2dc0768-3ff9-11e1-8a79-001871e3ce6c.html](http://www.winonadailynews.com/news/local/article_e2dc0768-3ff9-11e1-8a79-001871e3ce6c.html)



Richard Gant



Betty Mae Fikes