

SELMA AT 50 STILL MARCHING



DON'T MISS THE 'SELMA AT 50: STILL MARCHING' DOCUMENTARY!

The Greater Chicago Broadcast Ministries program, Sanctuary, will air a 30-minute documentary on the CTS Spring Conference on Chicago's ABC-TV Channel 7 on June 28th, 11:30 to noon. For those outside the viewing area, please visit the CTS Website for a link!

Lee Ann Norman, Staff

The following students and alumni/æ bravely stood up for justice in Selma 50 years ago. We salute them and are thankful for their example.

- Mr. David M. Ackerman (CTS 1965-68)
- Mrs. Satoko I. Ackerman (M.A. 1965)
- The Rev. John B. Bell III (B.D. 1966)
- The Rev. James W. Burford (B.D. 1968)
- Ms. Virginia R. Griffith (B.D. 1967)
- Dr. James W. Ingersoll (B.D. 1967)
- The Rev. Dr. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. (M.Div. 2000; Litt.D. 1969)
- The Rev. Gary F. Massoni (M.Div. 1971)
- The Rev. Roswell C. Blount (B.D. 1967)
- Mr. James A. Aull (B.D. 1965)
- Mr. Alfred R. Benton (B.D. 1970)
- The Rev. Dr. William M. Briggs (B.D. 1965)
- Mr. Bruce D. Christie (B.D. 1967)
- Mr. Jenoye R. Cole (B.D. 1965)
- The Rev. Stephen J. Davidson (B.D. 1967)
- Mr. Thomas H. Evans (B.D. 1968)
- Mr. Lloyd D. Griffith (B.D. 1966)
- The Rev. Robinson G. Lapp, Jr. (D.Min.; B.D. 1957)
- The Rev. Farley R. Maxwell (B.D. 1964)
- The Rev. Thomas L. Moller (B.D. 1965)
- Mr. Barry Morris (B.D. 1979)
- Mr. James W. Paton (B.D. 1967)
- Mr. Robert G. Schwartz (B.D. 1965)
- Mr. Tommy L. Timm (M.Div. 1971; B.D. 1969)
- Mr. David M. Wallace (CTS Student, 1963-66)
- Dr. Newton L. Wesley (D.Min. 1982)
- The Rev. David E. Williams (B.D. 1967)

March 7, 2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the day 600 civil rights workers gathered at the Brown Chapel AME Church in Selma, Alabama to begin a 54-mile walk to the state capital in Montgomery. Inquiries into the suspicious officer-involved death of their friend and colleague in Marion, Deacon Jimmy Lee Jackson, lead to stonewalling and dead ends. Black Americans were still disenfranchised and denied the right to vote through all manner of tactics from



The 1965 iconic photo of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King wearing a lei sent by CTS Alumnus, Rev. Abraham Akaka.

random and arbitrary testing to threats and intimidation. The people wanted answers.

In the build-up to the event, that would soon become known as Bloody Sunday, people around the country heeded the call of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to be "people of goodwill" and join protesters in Selma to fight for justice. Among those who were so moved included 27 CTS students.



Young Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr., Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, and Rev. O.T. Vivian outside Brown Chapel, 1965.

This past March, CTS honored this legacy in the midst of eerily familiar events. CTS President the Rev. Alice Hunt, Ph.D., Rabbi Rachel Mikva, Ph.D., and alumnus the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr. among others traveled to Alabama to mark the 50th anniversary of the Selma marches just as names like Freddie Gray, Michael Brown,

Jr., and more became rallying cries for justice in our time. To focus our spring conference on the Selma story seemed to resonate now more than ever. The impulse to march for justice was compelling then and remains urgent today.

As we reflect on the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday and the historic Voting Rights Act it prompted later that year, we know that there is still work to do. Today every 28 hours an unarmed black American is killed by law enforcement. And following the 2013 nullification of the 1965 Voting Rights Act many states and municipalities are seeking to re-draw districts and rescind voter protections to suppress votes by persons of color. The fight for freedom has yet to be won.

presented by



Thank you to our Conference Partners:

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| Community Renewal Society | University Community Service Center, University of Chicago |
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ACTIVISM TODAY

Selma at 50: Conference Overview

Lee Ann Norman, Staff

Each year, Chicago Theological Seminary hosts a Spring Conference as a way of gathering together current students, faculty, alumni/æ, and the surrounding community to reflect on a relevant social theme, situating it at the place where public life, theology, and scholarship meet. This year, we focused on the 50th anniversary of the civil rights actions in Selma, Alabama because of the seminary's important connections to the event. "Selma at 50: Still Marching" was held on campus April 24th and 25th,

and welcomed more than 360 attendees, more than 40% of whom had never attended a CTS event previously.

CTS was involved in a number of efforts to advance the cause of civil rights. In 1957, the seminary became the first in America to award The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther

King, Jr. an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree for his activism in the movement, and, in 1965, our support of the cause deepened. CTS president Howard Schomer, along with faculty and students—including The Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr. (M.Div. 2000 and D.Min. *honoris causa* 1969) and The Rev. Gary Massoni (M.Div. 1971) —marched alongside Dr. King in Selma. President Schomer, the students, Dr. King, and several other march leaders wore leis sent by alumnus Kahu Abraham Akaka (B.D. 1943), who served as pastor of the historic Kawaiaha'o Church (United Church of Christ) in Hawai'i from 1957 to 1984. The leis, symbols of peace and unity in Hawaiian culture, served as reminders to the march leaders and observers of the purpose of the event.

Using activism and movement organizing theory as a lens, "Selma at 50: Still Marching" broadened conversations around what it means to be an activist, a scholar, and a person of faith. Attendees gained knowledge and forged bonds that helped them make connections between the legacy of civil rights activism and emerging contemporary activist movements. The event also provided diverse perspectives on a range of social issues like systemic causes of oppression and violence, the prison industrial complex, racism, and income inequality and their relationship to each other. In their plenary addresses, alumnus The Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr. and Professor Michelle Alexander challenged attendees to consider theological responses to social ills as well as to take courage, knowing that each person can make a difference in his

or her unique way.

Workshops emphasized a solution-oriented mindset and encouraged participants to turn theory into action. "Show Me the Money" occurred in two sections, one focusing on worker justice and the other on strategies for garnering financial support for activism work. Experts speaking in these workshops agreed that all faith traditions have similar beliefs regarding care, compassion, and support for the oppressed and those who fight for greater justice. The discussions also emphasized that, at the heart of the matter, people are people, and appealing to potential supporters and allies on a heart level is important.

"Hashtag Activism" and "Make it Mobile" explored the emerging and powerful use of social media in movement building. From Cairo to Ferguson, digital activism continues to play a central role in uniting young people in action and continues to do so despite misperceptions that youth are apathetic and unengaged in activist movements. Workshop speakers discussed critical moments in their activism when they discovered the power of communities built online. They also spoke about how they harnessed that energy to get people away from their screens and devices and into the street.

"Stop the Lockup" examined root causes and possible solutions to the growing incarceration epidemic in the United States. Panelists spoke eloquently to help audience members understand the interconnectedness of systems that create a false narrative of pathology about the poor and oppressed who disproportionately represent people who are incarcerated. Conversations also dispelled prevailing myths about "black on black crime" and explored the causes of antagonistic relationships between communities and the officers who police them.

Crossroads/Chicago ROAR provided an interactive workshop for all participants on organizing, helping people gain insight into how to mobilize community resources and work with community organizations and institutions toward social change. Performances from Chicago humanitarian rapper and activist Jessica Disu (aka FM Supreme) and Chicago-born and Pittsburgh-based emcee and community activist Jasiri X energized the crowd, as did the time attendees took to talk, think, and reflect on what had been presented during the event.

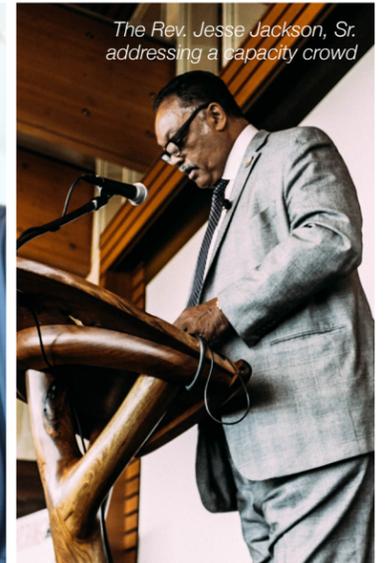
The conference hashtag #CTSelma trended in the top ten nationally on Twitter on April 25th, affirming what we already knew: This work is meaningful and relevant. We are grateful to the Henry Luce Foundation, the Illinois Humanities Council, and The Brown Endowment for their support of this momentous event, and look forward to another engaging and inspiring spring gathering next year; April 15-16, 2016.



Conference attendees enjoy a Plenary session



The Rev. Traci Blackmon, panelist



The Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr. addressing a capacity crowd



Wearing authentic leis, hand carried from Hawaii by Pulani Akaka and Fenner-Marie Akaka Shupe on behalf of the Akaka Foundation, are our 2015 CTS Distinguished Alums, James Buford, John Bell, David Ackerman, Sakoto Ackerman, Jesse Jackson, Sr., Virginia Griffith, James Ingersoll, and Gary Massoni



The Ink Factory artists' wall in the CTS lobby



Abner J. Mikva served as a presenter



CTS staff and students welcoming attendees

Michelle Johns is an M.A.R.L. student with an interest in social transformation. She lives in Palatine, IL with her husband Charles and their three teenage children.

THE REV. WALTRINA MIDDLETON

Michelle Johns, M.A.R.L. Student

It is easy for some to disparage today's Millennials as disconnected, passionless, and apathetic given that they are the first generation to grow up in a fully digital and socially networked world. The youth leadership track during the "Selma at 50: Still Marching" conference, however, revealed thoughtful, passionate, and engaged young people, eager to help shape the world into a better place. The Rev. Waltrina Middleton (M.Div. 2009) participated in the event as a speaker on the panel "Justice, Justice Shall you Pursue: The Community, the Police, the Courts," the workshop "Get on the Bus," and as a leader of the Youth Power Lunch. In all of those roles, Middleton demonstrated gifts and provided insights for empowering and affirming the voices of young people in creating a more just and peaceful world.

Middleton currently serves as National Minister for Youth Advocacy and Leadership for Formation with the United Church of Christ in Cleveland, Ohio. When I asked Rev. Middleton how she inspires young leaders, she quickly reframed my assumption by saying, "At the end of the day, they inspire me. My role is to be present, listen, and help them channel creativity that transforms the world toward justice," she said. Her ultimate desire is to help young people respond to social injustice with faith. She often encourages youth to contextualize injustice by asking the question: "What does God have to say about this?" She hopes that young people will take the answer to the streets.

Assuming there is a formula or a curriculum that is going to speak to youth is a false notion, according to Middleton. Part of her job, she explained, is to recognize the uniqueness of each young person. "Inspiration comes in different forms," she said. "When young people are missing from the pews, congregants assume that they are disconnected from God or rejecting the church, but I hope the pews are empty," she said. "For me, this means that young people are being called where they are needed, whether it is in the streets, in their apartment complexes, schools, or wherever God is calling them." They are being disciples, she explained. For Middleton, young people connecting outside the doors of the church are creating a bigger sanctuary.



Waltrina Middleton (M.Div. 2009)

THE REV. GARY MASSONI

Michelle Johns, M.A.R.L. Student

The Rev. Gary Massoni's (M.Div. 1971) journey to social activism wasn't always a linear one. A chance meeting in the parking lot of McGiffert Hall with The Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr. (M.Div. 2000; D.Min. *honoris causa* 1969) more than 50 years ago sparked a friendship and revealed a shared vision for a better world that has shaped the ministry of Massoni ever since.

Before that pivotal trip to Selma, Massoni never really thought of himself as an activist, describing his advocacy work only as personal. He briefly considered joining the U.S. Marine Corps, but soon realized that staying in the United States and attending seminary would allow him to be a more effective fighter for truth and justice. Massoni remembers that just a few nights before he was scheduled to leave for basic training, he talked to his wife about the decision, knowing in his heart he couldn't leave. Seeing images of beaten civil rights protestors and hearing Dr. King's call for "people of goodwill" to come to Selma in solidarity, moved him deeply. Massoni felt compelled to act.



Gary Massoni with classmates in Selma, AL 1965

While he knew joining the protestors in Selma was the right thing to do, Massoni admitted that he still struggled with the decision. He did not agree to go until Jackson convinced him by using a tactic that Massoni called (in jest) "divine manipulation." Once Massoni decided to go

to Selma, Jackson approached their friends, persuading each to go with them. Filled with excitement, enthusiasm, and faith Massoni, Jackson, and the other students headed to Selma in a VW bus and a Chevy Corvair.

As the students journeyed south, Massoni remembered how rattled and frightened they were. A carload of young people of different races traveling through the south was certainly a sight. So much so, that they were followed for several miles by a pick-up truck with a sizeable gun rack. The anxiety the students felt was quickly relieved by the friendship and delightful welcome they received when they arrived at Brown Chapel.

The trip to Selma was transformational for Massoni, inspiring him to continue his work in social activism. His efforts, focused on education equality, parenting and infant care, fair housing, and community development, only deepened as he went on to collaborate with Dr. King and The Rev. Jackson on various projects, including Operation Breadbasket, the National Rainbow Coalition, and Operation PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity). Massoni served as a campus minister, a community minister, and as Field Secretary and Director of Programs for the Pacific Northwest Region of the American Friends Service Committee. He also served as National Director of Scheduling for Jackson's 1984 presidential campaign.

Massoni credits CTS for not only building his biblical framework, but also for creating a culture that reinforced his beliefs around advocacy and service. He is grateful to have experienced Selma with his classmates, an event that changed him in lasting ways. When asked what he would tell students with a call to social activism, Massoni said, "Wrap your theology around the work that you want to do," advice Massoni has been following for the last 50 years.



Gary Massoni participating in Selma At 50: Still Marching, April 2015



Visualized by Ink Factory - inkfactorystudio.com

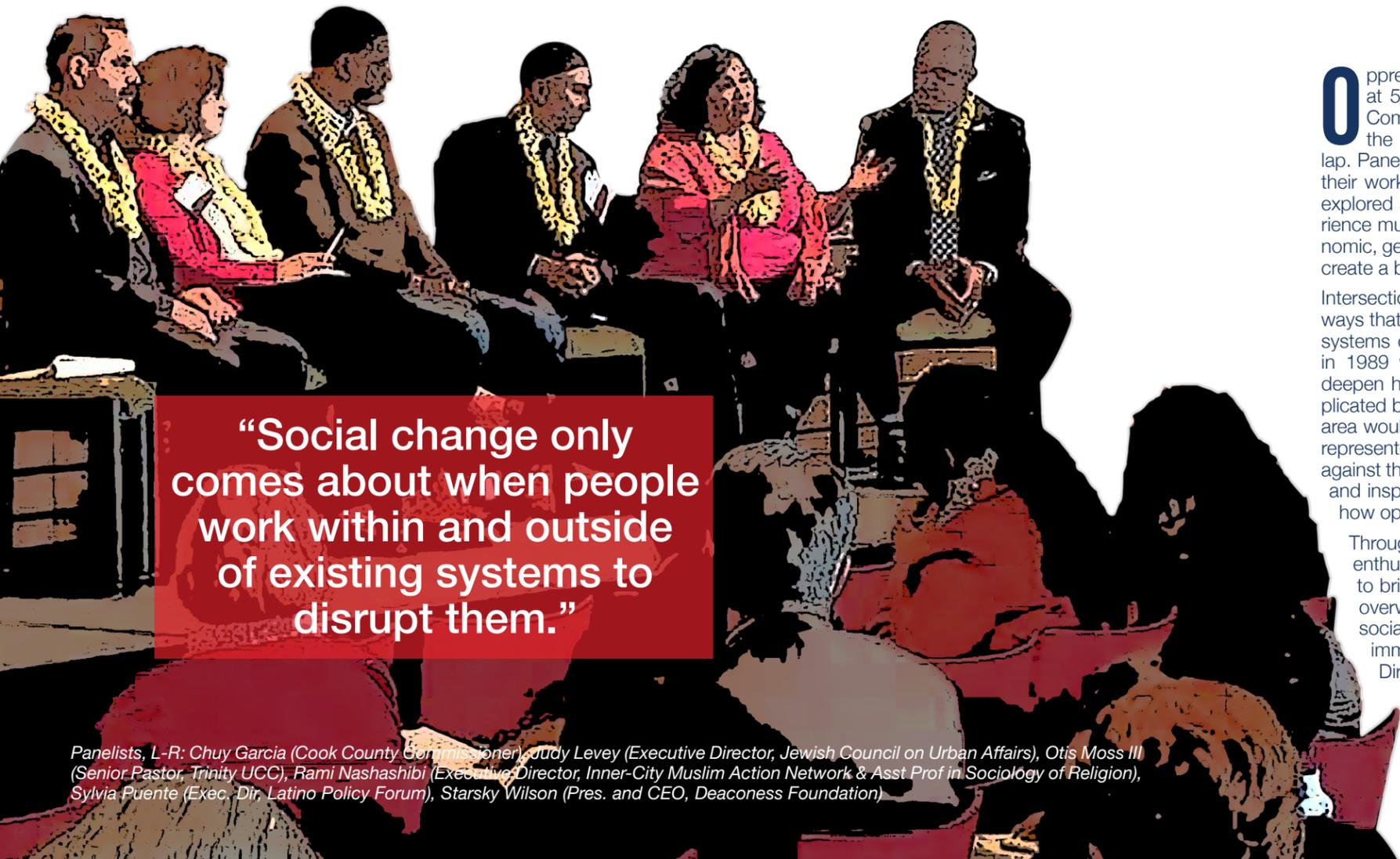
A need for a deep connection is common among the youth Middleton meets. For many, the church is not meeting this need. According to Middleton, the young people want to feel their humanity. "It is in the streets, where many young people feel most connected. It is where they find their voice, their truth, and where they can create change. They want to be in Baltimore, Ferguson, Cleveland, and beyond," she said.

Middleton raised the question of how well our youth are prepared to be global servants, as the longing for connection extends beyond physical borders. Our young people need to be ready, Middleton explained, to go wherever God needs them.

EFFECTING CHANGE *in our* COMMUNITIES

ADDRESSING INCOME INEQUALITY, IMMIGRATION REFORM & RACIAL INEQUITIES

Lee Ann Norman, Staff



“Social change only comes about when people work within and outside of existing systems to disrupt them.”

Panelists, L-R: Chuy Garcia (Cook County Commissioner), Judy Levey (Executive Director, Jewish Council on Urban Affairs), Otis Moss III (Senior Pastor, Trinity UCC), Rami Nashashibi (Executive Director, Inner-City Muslim Action Network & Asst Prof in Sociology of Religion), Sylvia Puente (Exec. Dir, Latino Policy Forum), Starsky Wilson (Pres. and CEO, Deaconess Foundation)

Oppressions don't exist in isolation, and the “Selma at 50” panel discussion “Effecting Change in Our Communities” helped audience members consider the ways in which methods of persecution overlap. Panelists spoke about challenges they encounter in their work to foster vibrant community living. They also explored strategies on different ways people who experience multiple forms of oppression whether racial, economic, gender- or language-based, can work together to create a better world.

Intersectionality, a sociological theory that examines the ways that multiple forms of oppression overlap to create systems of domination, became popularized as a term in 1989 when scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw sought to deepen her understanding of how gender bias is complicated by racial discrimination. Crenshaw's work in this area would later earn her a place on the legal team that represented Anita Hill during her sexual harassment case against then-Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, and inspire future generations of academics to explore how oppressive systems converge.

Throughout the conference, attendees expressed enthusiasm about change and enacting strategies to bring it about. Many panelists admitted to feeling overwhelmed, though, about how to approach large social problems like economic inequality, racism, immigration, and violence. Judy Levey, Executive Director of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, explained that a big challenge for the Council is to convince people who attend synagogue and other supporters that service and activism doesn't have to look one way. She talked about helping people expand their

definition of activism beyond giving money or donating goods and services to become active collaborators and advocates.

Throughout the conference, attendees expressed enthusiasm about change and enacting strategies to bring about such change. Some panelists admitted that despite enthusiasm for the cause, they sometimes struggle when approaching large social problems like economic inequality, racism, immigration, and violence. Judy Levey, Executive Director of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, explained that a challenge for the Council is to convince people who attend synagogue and other supporters that service and activism don't have to look one particular way. She spoke about helping people expand their definition of activism beyond giving money or donating goods and services to becoming active collaborators and advocates. Levey went on to say that she struggled to address some issues that related to police violence and racism with members of her community, feeling that such conversations might alienate some people. Fellow panelists responded by encouraging her and others to increase their capacity for empathy, and noted that changes in attitude occur through small acts that accumulate into big endeavors.

The Rev. Otis Moss III, Ph.D. (D.Min. 2012) emphasized that a critical step in creating a sense of unity among marginalized peoples involves understanding that capitalism, as a system, is not inherently moral. Dr. Rami Nashashibi, CTS Visiting Assistant Professor in Sociology of Religion and Muslim Studies, underscored this idea when he said that people of faith must be courageous enough to stand for justice even if it means standing in opposition to your brothers and sisters