

Where Are You “Walking” and Why?

The Civil Rights Movement

Discovering
American
Jewish History
Through
Objects

01 WHO WILL I BE?

He [Rabbi Hillel] used to say: If I am not for me, who will be for me? And when I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, then when?

הוא היה אומר, אם אין אני לי, מי לי. וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני.
ואם לא עכשיו, אימתי.

Mishnah, Pirkei Avot 1:14

02 NOW IS THE TIME

Why do you think King says that “now is the time?”

Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “I Have a Dream” speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963

03 AN APPEAL

I appeal to all of you to get into this great revolution that is sweeping this nation. Get in and stay in the streets of every city, every village and hamlet of this nation until true freedom comes, until the revolution of 1776 is complete.

John Lewis, national chairman, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963

04 SHAMEFUL SILENCE

Who do you think attended the March on Washington? Who do you think chose not to attend?

When I was the rabbi of the Jewish community in Berlin under the Hitler regime, I learned many things. The most important thing that I learned under those tragic circumstances was that bigotry and hatred are not the most urgent problem. The most urgent, the most disgraceful, the most shameful and the most tragic problem is silence.

Rabbi Dr. Joachim Prinz, speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963

MONUMENTS 09

This was like the struggle of all these generations of black people to dismantle white supremacy. That’s what it felt like and that’s what I symbolized in that moment.

Bree Newsome, speaking about climbing a flagpole outside the South Carolina Capitol and removing the Confederate flag on June 25, 2015

RIDING FOR FREEDOM 08

On June 2, 1961, I got on a bus in New York bound for Jackson. The bus went to Nashville, where we wrote our wills. When we arrived in Jackson, on June 7, I went into the bus station waiting room marked “Colored.” I took three steps and was arrested and transported to the city jail.

Carol Silver, Freedom Rider and civil rights activist, in a April 14, 2011, *SF Gate* interview

STRONG PEOPLE DON'T NEED STRONG LEADERS 07

You didn’t see me on television, you didn’t read news stories about me.... The kind of role I tried to play was to pick up the pieces or put together pieces out of which I hoped organization might come. My theory is, strong people don’t need strong leaders.

Ella Baker, civil rights leader, in a December 17, 1986, *New York Times* interview

MY LEGS WERE PRAYING 06

For many of us the march from Selma to Montgomery was about protest and prayer. Legs are not lips and

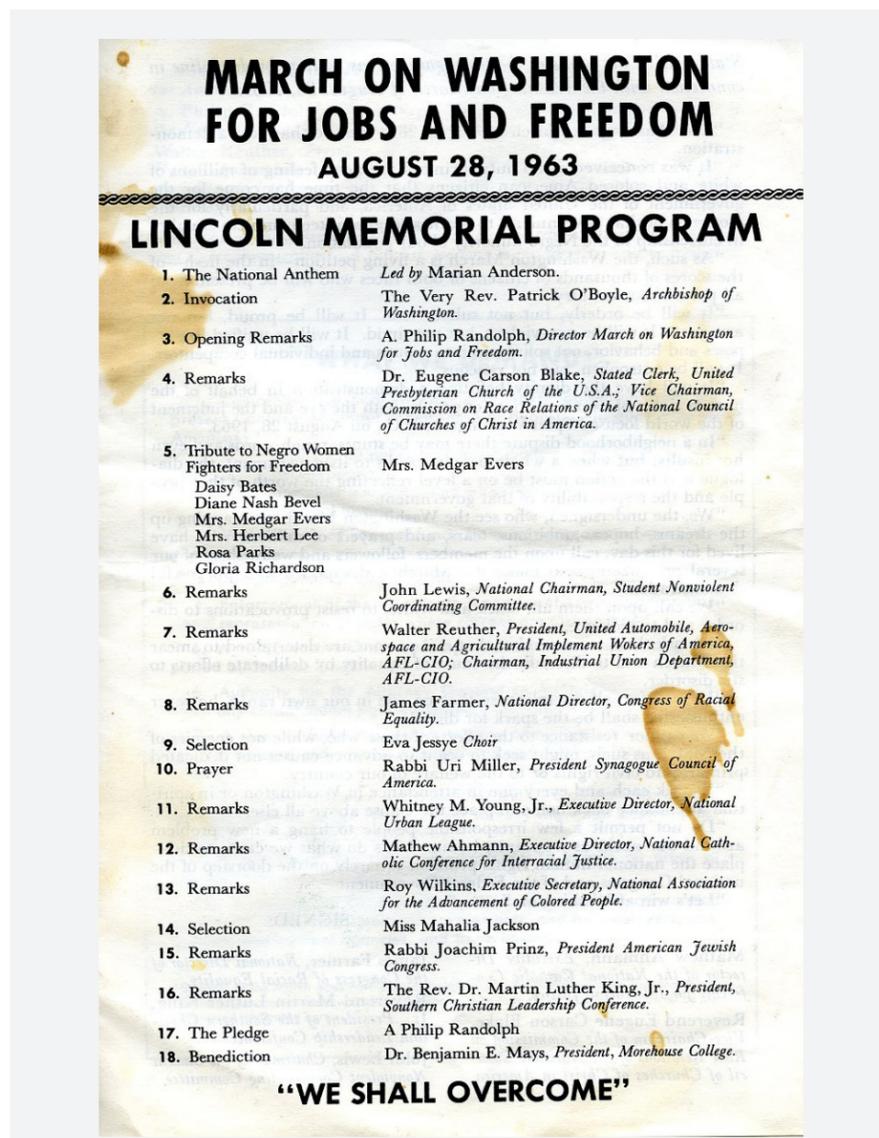
walking is not kneeling. And yet our legs uttered songs. Even without words, our march was worship. I felt my legs were praying.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, on the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, March 21, 1965

THE PITFALLS OF COMPROMISE 05

It’s just like when you’ve got some coffee that’s too black, which means it’s too strong. What you do? You integrate it with cream; you make it weak. If you pour too much cream in, you won’t even know you ever had coffee. It used to be hot, it becomes cool. It used to be strong, it becomes weak. It used to wake you up, now it’ll put you to sleep. This is what they did with the March on Washington.

Malcolm X, “Message to the Grass Roots,” November 10, 1963



Program, March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963
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