

BRIDGE CROSSING JUBILEE

SELMA ALABAMA MARCH 6 - 9, 2015

To Oakridge travelers and parents,

March 7, 2015 is the 50th anniversary of a pivotal event in United States History. On that day in 1965, 575 Americans led by Reverend Hosea Williams and now Representative John Lewis, walked silently in pairs from Brown Chapel in Selma, Alabama, across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, and over the Alabama River. On the other side, deployed by order of Governor George Wallace, waited Alabama State Troopers and mounted sheriff deputies. The marchers were protesting nonviolently for the right to vote, exercising their rights protected under the first amendment to the Constitution. They walked to the troopers and stopped. They were told to return to their churches. And then they were attacked. It was brutal. Troopers shot tear gas into the marchers then fell upon them with drawn clubs. Mounted sheriff deputies galloped onto the street and beat unarmed men, woman, and children. On the sidelines onlookers whooped and hollered and egged the police on. When it was over, broken and beaten bodies, mostly of young black men and women, littered the street a quarter of a mile back to the Bridge. This event became known as “Bloody Sunday”. It led to a series of two more marches across the Bridge, the second a 54 mile trek to Montgomery Alabama, and passage of a National Voting Rights Bill. Every year, these events are remembered with the Bridge Crossing Jubilee. The event honors the heroes and martyrs, who struggled in Selma in 1965 for the right to vote.

Since 2003 I’ve spent the first weekend in March in Selma, Alabama at the Bridge Crossing Jubilee. Oakridge students traveled with me in 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2013. This year we will go again. In addition to Selma, we will visit Birmingham (Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Kelly Ingram Park) and Montgomery (Dexter Church and the Rosa Parks Museum.) These three Alabama towns serve as the axis of the Civil Rights movement. The learning opportunity for an Oakridge student to participate is tremendous.

This letter will outline expectations for students and document the trip itinerary. Parents and student travelers should check Mr. Wood’s blog thebuddhasaidiamawake.com for regular updates on this event. Hopefully, this letter will clear up any questions you might have about this trip. If it doesn’t, please contact me at (616) 402-8668 or bobwoodmsu@charter.net.

Thanks for joining me on this wonderful learning opportunity.

Mr. Wood

ITINERARY TO TRAVEL TO SELMA, ALABAMA MARCH 6 to 9, 2015

Friday, March 6 - Fly to Birmingham, Alabama

We will fly (early) from Detroit to Birmingham International Airport. We will rent a van (s) at the airport. Tour the National Civil Rights Museum in downtown Birmingham. Visit Kelly Ingram Park, site of civil rights demonstrations of the 1960's. Go to the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church which was bombed in the Fall of 63. We'll head up to Alabama Birmingham College area and eat dinner. Then drive to Montgomery - spend the night.

Saturday, March 7 - Montgomery to Selma

Selma is about an hour from Montgomery. We'll get up and go in the AM. The Bridge Crossing Jubilee is more than just a walk through history. There's all sorts of stuff planned for the weekend. There's music and street fair, good food and African arts and clothes vendors. We'll spend the day in Selma roaming town. I'll for sure introduce you all to Joanne Bland, and I will do my best to have her take us around town...she's a pretty busy lady this time of year. And hopefully, sometime that weekend we will meet with John Lewis. The Voting Rights museum has all sorts of activities planned. I will take the students on a tour of the events of 1965. For most of the day students will be able to roam on their own in Selma. Saturday night we will head back to our Hotel in Montgomery.

Sunday, March 8 - Montgomery to Selma

The morning begins with ministers of the Civil Rights movement speaking at local churches - Rev CT Vivian, Rev James Webb, Rev Jesse Jackson and more. Everybody is welcomed to attend. At noon hundreds, sometimes thousands of people meet at the Brown Chapel. There are speeches and prayers, and people together head off to the Bridge. They retrace the march from Brown across the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday. Adults, kids, high school students, grannies and grandkids - black, white, and brown people all walk together. Some people sing, some walk quietly and reminisce - some walk together, some alone. Across the Bridge there are speeches and prayers. And the Jubilee is over, even though the street fair continues on til sundown. We'll get into the vans and drive up to Marion where Jimmie Lee Jackson was murdered. We'll visit his gravesite and then drive back to Montgomery and spend the night.

Monday, March 9 - Selma to Montgomery to Birmingham to Detroit

In Montgomery we will visit the Rosa Parks Museum and go to the Dexter Street Church where King was minister during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. We will go to the Civil Rights memorial designed by Maya Lin - the same person who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. We will then continue on to Birmingham and fly back to GR. You must be in school on Tuesday morning no matter the time we get in. The absence will be school related only if you attend a full day of school on Tuesday March 10.

Mandatory Evening Classes

We will have three mandatory evening classes before we go, in which we will review and talk about the events of 1965 in Selma, Alabama. We will also discuss the events of Birmingham of 1963. These meetings will occur in January and February and will be scheduled around extra curricular activities. . Students will also be encouraged to read their own copy of Let the Trumpet Sound by Stephen B. Oates. I have purchased several copies that you may borrow. The goal with these classes is to enrich the trip. No way do you just run off to Alabama and join in a celebration of the events of the Civil Rights Movement without first taking an intellectual trip back to the day.

Fundraising Opportunities

I will include Selma fundraising banks with Close Up banks. Students may piggy back Close Up Fundraisers. We'll do candy sales. We can do a Selma only Buffalo Wild Wings fundraiser. Students may use the blog to organize individual fundraisers from monthly cafeteria cookie sales to pop bottle pickups to individual flyers. All travelers are encouraged to make an individual flyer to help them to raise moneys. I will be glad to help put the flyers together. A couple are enclosed with this letter In the end, fundraising is up to YOUR efforts. Not mine or mom's.

For more information on the final cost of this trip please see attached final cost page.

This trip is open to all Oakridge seniors and juniors who adhere to the Participant Guideline form that accompanies this handout.

**ANY QUESTIONS - bobwoodmsu@gmail.com
/ (616) 402-8668 / <http://www.thebuddhasaidiamawake.com/>**