

opinion

WE MUST REMEMBER BLOODY SUNDAY



DICK WEILAND

Hyde Park resident Dick Weiland is a longtime activist and lobbyist.

At age 85, I have been fortunate to have had some great friends and amazing memories. Frequently, my dearest friends and fondest memories come together, as they did in August 1965. I marched in Selma, Alabama, with my dear friend and civil rights icon, the late Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, to demand equal voting rights for all Americans, regardless of skin color. It was just months after the Bloody Sunday march in that same city.

Having asked some young Cincinnatians what they know about Bloody Sunday, I was dismayed to find that most associate it with a U2 song and not the brutality of that infamous Sunday in Selma when 600 civil rights activists were savagely beaten by Alabama state troopers and local police.

As the recent movie "Selma" shows, the bravery exhibited on Bloody Sunday resulted in the passage of the Voting Rights Act the following year.

That Bloody Sunday in Selma had a profound influence on all of us there, and press coverage of the march spurred civil rights activism throughout the country.

In spite of the great sacrifices made by the civil rights activists, including many who sacrificed their lives in pursuit of a better nation for all Americans, the struggle for civil rights persists today – the most pressing issue being underemployment and unemployment for African Americans.

Just as Bloody Sunday rings hollow in the ears of many Americans, many do not know that the official name of the 1963 March on Washington was "the March on



Civil rights activist the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth got a hand from then-Sen. Barack Obama in March 2007 as they crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, to commemorate the 1965 Bloody Sunday march.

Washington for Jobs and Freedom." This historic event saw activists flock to our nation's capital in support of civil rights legislation and to call attention to the economic chal-

lenges confronting the African-American community.

In addition to economic issues, which, 52 years later, still deny equality to all Americans, the police

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brutality meted out against civil rights activists in Selma continues to manifest itself today on America's streets. While Cincinnati is in better shape than many other cities, due to the tireless work of local activists on the collaborative agreement, plenty of work remains, locally and nationally.

Years later, I continued this commitment to equality rights for all Americans in the early 1980s when I served three years as executive board chair for the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission, where I now serve on the executive committee.

Today, I am still committed and proud to announce the creation of the Dick Weiland Community Relations Award to honor Cincinnatians exemplifying the spirit of Selma. Four individuals who epitomize the ability to promote inclusion and collaboration to address issues facing Cincinnati will be recognized at the annual meeting of the Jewish Community Relations Council in June.

In the words of my dear friend Fred Shuttlesworth, "All we've got to do is to keep marching. Do tomorrow what we did today, and do it the next day, and then the next day we won't have to do it at all."

We must keep up the fight for equal rights for all people – regardless of race, gender and religion – in America.

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