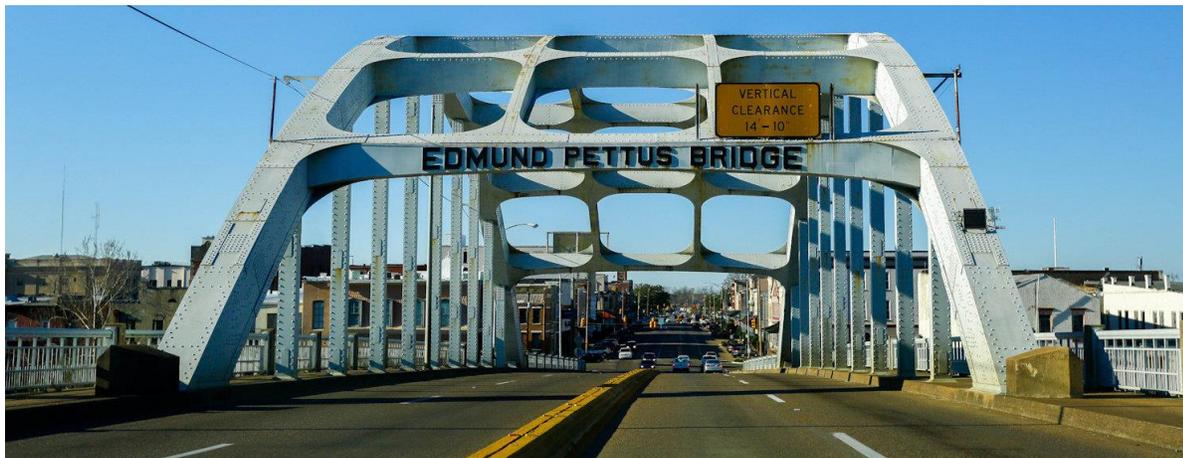


Employee recalls marching in Selma 51 years ago



(Editor's note: Cookie Moore, Georgia Power's senior receptionist for corporate communication, was a young girl growing up in Selma, Alabama, during the civil rights era. In this article, she shares her memories about her involvement in the Selma to Montgomery march in March 1965 that ultimately led Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act that prohibited racial discrimination in voting.)

By Cookie Moore

Sunday, March 6, 2016 – As an African-American, 13-year-old eighth grader growing up in segregated Selma, Alabama, I knew it wasn't right that people of my color did not have a legal right to vote. That's why when the Freedom Fighters came to town to focus their efforts on registering black voters in the South, I wanted to join the movement to protest with them. At the time, I lived with my grandparents, who raised me. My grandmother was very scared for me to do this because I was probably only about 4-feet tall at the time, but she finally agreed to it. This period was probably the worst of times, but also the best of times for me. African Americans were not treated equal because of the color of our skin. We didn't have the right to eat in restaurants we wanted to eat in; schools were segregated; we had to use separate restrooms; and we had to use backdoors to enter anywhere. During the movement though, black people came together as one because we all had the same common goal.

'We didn't know what would happen to us'

Participating in protests was very scary because we didn't know what would happen to us. When we protested, the men marched in the front and back while the women and children were more protected in the middle. While I was never hurt while protesting, I saw the police using billie clubs to hit people and cattle prods to shock people with electricity to make them move. Every day for many days, I would go to school to get marked present and then leave to protest in front of the courthouse, or march with the group to the courthouse. Because it was

typical for protestors to be jailed for protesting, I was once jailed for a few hours and my parents had to come and get me out.

I would also walk five or six blocks to church every night in the dark to attend very motivating mass meetings for protestors. It was at these meetings where I got to hear various civil rights leaders, including Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph David Abernathy, speak and learn more about this nonviolent movement. I'm grateful the movement was mostly nonviolent. If we had fought back, a lot more lives would have been lost.



March 7, 1965, was 'a very cloudy, cold and bad day'

On the day of the planned Selma to Montgomery march on March 7, 1965, it was a very cloudy, cold and bad day. My grandmother didn't want me to participate because she felt there would be trouble, but she told me I could wait at the church. There was tear gas and beatings there, and a lot of people got hurt. To be 13 and see all that happening around me was just not good.

Even though we had all these negative things happening, I didn't have a bad life. My parents loved me; I had great teachers and good friends. We just didn't have the rights we should have had.

While the protests and march were 51 years ago this month, I can remember what happened in Selma as clear today as if it happened yesterday. While I knew then it was important to have the right to vote, I really know now how important that right is.

I remember this anniversary because it was a very significant time in my life. If we had not protested and rallied together during this time, we might not have the right to vote and maybe the Civil Rights bill would not have passed. It was the right time and place. I feel blessed to have been a part of it. All that happened has gone down in history.