

Bloody sunday, selma  
was forever changed



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Bloody Sunday, Selma was Forever Changed Author Lisa Marostica in her article, "Bloody Sunday, Women and the Collective" stresses the importance of memorializing the women, who dedicated their lives to the civil rights struggle. She does an adequate job in supporting her claim, by summarizing the lives of two incredible women, all the while illustrating the event that took place during the peak of the civil rights movement. "Bloody Sunday" on March 7, 1965, goes down in history as one of the most significant events of the civil rights movement. What was supposed to be a peaceful march from Selma to

Montgomery protesting the recent shooting death of Jimmy Lee Jackson during a voter registration march in a nearby city, and the exclusion of African Americans from the voting process turned into blood and carnage. This event received media coverage from across the country. Images of women and young girls attacked for no reason could be seen across the country, on television and in written print. This day goes down in history as being one of the most significant events within the history of the civil rights movement; however, this day also portrays the impact that women and their lifelong contributions to the civil rights movement.

There were several women who worked behind the scenes, ensuring the freedom of all Americans. As emphasized by Marostica in her article, their dedication to the civil rights movement has often been overlooked. Two such women that dedicated their lives to the cause are Amelia Boynton Robinson, and Viola Liuzzo. This paper will illustrate the pivotal role that these two women played within the fight for civil rights as civil rights extended far

beyond just black and white. It was more than a battle for the right to vote. It was also a battle to stop gender and racial discrimination.

As portrayed in Marostica's article, Amelia Boynton Robinson was one such woman who dedicated her life to the civil rights movement. In fact, she is still active in the movement to this day. Amelia Boynton Robinson, born on August 11, 1911 in Savannah, Georgia, was a crucial figure in the fight for the civil rights of African Americans. She became involved in campaigning for women's suffrage at a very young age<sup>2</sup>. Her desire to further her support of women's suffrage, and get involved in human and civil rights was realized through her husband, Bill Boynton in the 1930's.

After his untimely death in 1963, the Boynton home became the office and central hub for Selma's civil rights. Doctor Martin Luther King, James Bevel, among others frequented the office to plan demonstrations, and events. In fact, Robinson was instrumental in planning the non-violent march that became known as "Bloody Sunday." It was she who reached out to Doctor King directly; requesting his presence, and that of his supporters in the march; where she was severely beaten, gassed, and left for dead.

Images portrayed of Robinson in Marostica's article, and similar ones of other non-violent protestors attacked appealed to the conscience of Americans and generated widespread support from all over the country. The support generated by the events in Selma was evident, as eight days after Selma, President Johnson addressed congress on March 15, 1965 identifying with the protestors in Selma. "Even if we pass this bill the battle

will not be over. What happened in Selma is part of a far larger movement which reaches into every section and state of America.

It is the effort of American Negroes to secure for them the full blessings of American life. Their cause must be our cause too. Because it's not just Negroes, but really it's all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice, and we shall overcome. " 3 His words provided the fuel to ignite the fire of what became the civil rights movement. President Johnson signed the voting rights bill on August 6th, 1965. On March 9, 1965, later known as " Turnaround Tuesday," Doctor King led what would have been the second march.

Protestors gathered from all over the country in support of the movement, disgraced by the violence they had seen on television, and in the newspapers. One such person was Viola Liuzzo, a 39 year old white housewife from Michigan. Liuzzo's friendship with an African American woman named Sarah Evans is what eventually led her to join the civil rights movement. Sarah taught Liuzzo about the racial discrimination and segregation she had dealt with throughout her life, and encouraged Liuzzo to join the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Liuzzo willingly joined.

This involvement sparked Liuzzo's interest in furthering her education, and learning about politics. Liuzzo quit high school to help support her family, who was struggling financially. Having regrets of dropping out of school, Liuzzo decided to pursue her education. She enrolled at Wayne State University after attending technical school; which introduced her to political

ideas, including debates and discussions about civil rights<sup>4</sup>. On March 12, 1965 while attending Wayne State University; Liuzzo participated in a demonstration protesting the events of bloody Sunday.

She and 250 others marched towards the federal building in Detroit, all the while chanting " we shall overcome. " It was at this moment that Liuzzo became actively involved in the civil rights movement. Like so many others, the images of " Bloody Sunday' disgraced Liuzzo. Her drive to help others led her to Selma. Her family pleaded with her not to go, assuming the worst. Liuzzo, with determination and passion in her heart insisted that she must. Armed with only a grocery bag full of clothes, she reached Selma on March 21, 1965. Sadly, her contribution to the civil rights movement was short lived.

On March 25, 1965 while traveling back to Montgomery from Selma, Liuzzo was seen driving with an African American man. Because of segregation in the South, blacks and whites were rarely together, and those that were seen together were often ridiculed or killed. On this fateful night, four members of the Ku Klux Klan pulled up alongside her vehicle, immediately opened fire, and shot Liuzzo in the head. She died instantly. But, Liuzzo's murder was not in vain. It was her murder, and the events of bloody Sunday that spearheaded the passage of the voting rights bill.