



IMPACT REPORT 2025



**STEP BY STEP, BUILDING
POWER AND RESILIENCE.**



Table of Contents

Letter from CEO and Board Chair 3

Who We Are 4

In Memory of Jo Ann Bland..... 5

Our Impact..... 6

Historic Preservation7

Civil Rights in Action14

Youth Engagement22

Building Wealth27

Whole Self Health 32

Art as Activism Efforts 33

Events Honoring Our History37

Foot Soldiers Park Staff Highlights40

Gratitude & Appreciation42

Foot Soldiers Park Future Community Hub45

Letter from CEO and Board Chair

To our Foot Soldiers Park community, partners, and supporters,

Selma is at a critical moment. In 2025, families faced deepening poverty, failing infrastructure, and reduced access to essential benefits like SNAP. At the same time, increased threats to Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act put hard-won civil rights protections in grave jeopardy.

But Selma has never backed down from a challenge.

As our co-founder Jo Ann Bland and the foot soldiers of Bloody Sunday taught us — **adversity strengthens resolve**. Progress is never inevitable. It demands commitment, resilience, and bold action. At Foot Soldiers Park, we know community engagement, education, and participation are essential to self-determination and lasting positive change.

In the face of these challenges, 2025 marked meaningful growth. We expanded our five impact areas, launched new programs, and deepened our investment in Selma's residents, youth, and civic future. As a community-led and people-first organization, we continue to build trusted partnerships and create pathways for sustainable impact.

Throughout these pages, you'll learn how we are keeping Selma's history alive, investing in residents and youth, and building an engaged community ready to determine its own future.

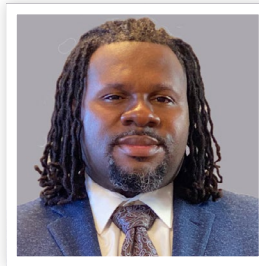
This work is only possible because of you. Every dollar helps preserve Selma's history, equip residents with knowledge and tools, and build a stronger, more just future.

Now is the time to act! Thank you for standing with us.

Ever Marching Forward,



Kimberly Smitherman,
Founding Partner and CEO



Donovan Duncan,
Board Chair

Who We Are

OUR VISION

We envision Selma as a bridge to legacy, liberation and life full of wealth and opportunities.

OUR MISSION

Foot Soldiers Park is on a mission to preserve the Civil Rights history of Selma, create opportunities for the Black community to heal, learn and build wealth, and to embolden youth to claim and use their power for change.

OUR VALUES

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| JUSTICE | HEALING |
| EDUCATION | CREATIVITY |
| LEGACY | LIBERATION |
| STORYTELLING | COMMUNITY |

OUR KEY AREAS OF IMPACT



In memory of Jo Ann Bland

Our beloved founder Jo Ann Bland passed away in February 2026, shortly before the 61st anniversary of Bloody Sunday. Our grief is matched only by our gratitude for her [lifelong dedication](#) to telling the story of how ordinary people in Selma changed the course of this nation's history.

Born and raised in Selma, Ms. Bland was among the more than 600 marchers met with billy clubs, tear gas, and brutality on Bloody Sunday at the age of eleven — and still she kept going. She went on to integrate Selma's A.G. Parrish School, serve in the U.S. Army, co-found the National Voting Museum, and launch Journeys for the Soul, guiding visitors from around the world through the streets where history was made.

In 2021, she and CEO Kimberly Smitherman founded Foot Soldiers Park, ensuring the programs reflected everything she cared about most and securing land for a future memorial and education center she believed would make Selma the mecca of civil rights it deserves to be. Many will remember her as feisty, visionary, and absolutely no-nonsense – a woman who loved young people without reservation and believed with everything she had that they held the key to progress.

"Movements for social change are like a jigsaw puzzle. Everyone represents a piece. Without your piece, the picture is not complete."

Ms. Bland was a foot soldier, a founder, and a force for change. Now it is our turn to carry the torch forward and preserve her legacy in all of our actions.



Our impact

In 2025, following four years of growth, **we refined our strategic goals and expanded our efforts** by launching a more comprehensive set of programs under each one of our core impact areas.

As a community-led, people-centered organization, our approach goes beyond traditional programming. We build foundational knowledge and create the conditions for positive change by equipping residents with resources, skills, and hands-on experiences that build pathways to economic mobility, wealth, leadership, and civic participation.





Historic Preservation Impact Area

We envision a future where Selma’s civil rights heroes are honored and celebrated by everyone who believes in the power of equality and justice.





The past as power

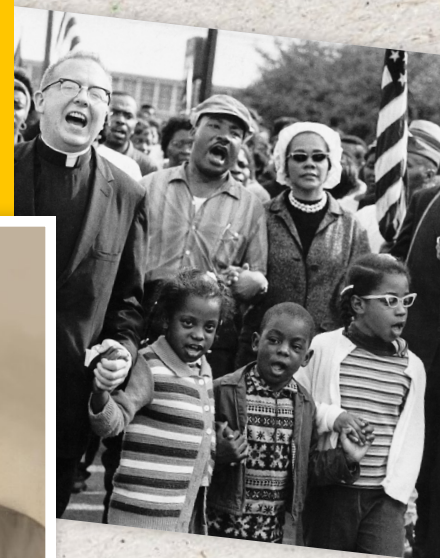
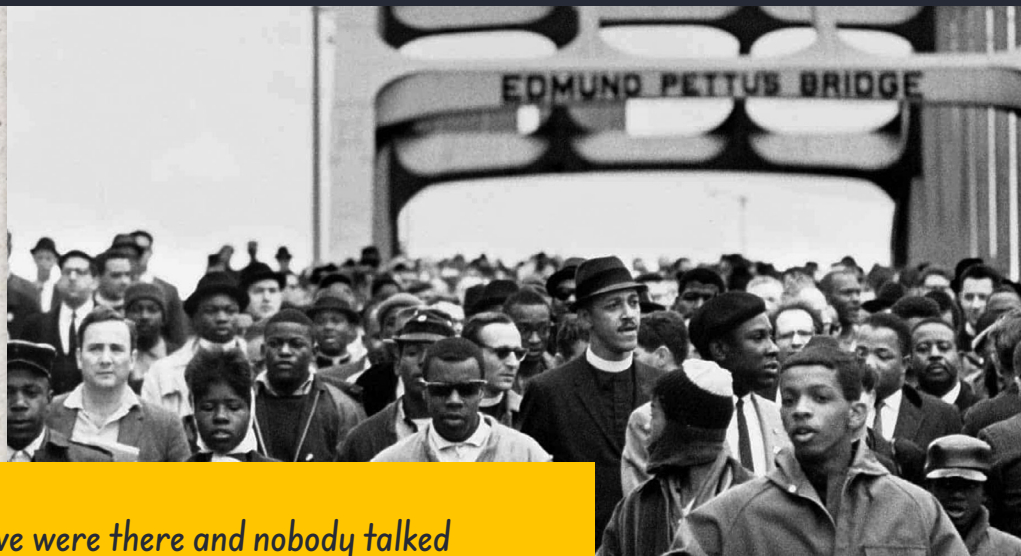
Preserving the [history of Selma's Civil Rights Movement](#) and the lived stories of the Foot Soldiers of 1965 is at the heart of our work. These stories carry the courage, sacrifice, and collective determination that made voting rights possible, reminding us what can be achieved when ordinary people stand together to do extraordinary things.

Through our [Historic Preservation](#) efforts, we work to transform Selma's legacy into a living, community-driven asset: educating residents and global visitors about Selma's pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement, while creating pathways for civic engagement, leadership, and economic opportunity.

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about our [historic tours](#), training programs, and oral history preservation and digital archives.

"We were young, but we were there and nobody talked about it... We were the people in the streets, on the ground fighting every day. Young people didn't have any idea that they had power... I want [youth today] to see that they have self-worth, they're self-powered, and they have the ability to think and come up with ways to make the world better."

Jo Ann Bland, Founder, In Memoriam (1953-2026)





SELMA HISTORIC TOURS

A transformative experience

Our Historic Tours of Selma offer first-hand accounts of Bloody Sunday through the voices of those who lived it. These immersive experiences move visitors beyond observation to reflection, challenging each person to consider their role in protecting the fragile state of our democracy.

Beginning as Journeys for the Soul, a small tour operation started by Ms. Bland nearly 20 years ago, to a nationally recognized tour operation, in 2025 the Foot Soldiers Park historic tours welcomed 4,143 visitors.

"You realize when you're here that's what our freedom is, not a given, and that we have to work for it every single day. And the way that we do that is to learn our history. Otherwise history repeats itself. Everybody needs to come here and experience this."

Katy Cooper, Teacher at Graland Country Day School and Tour Guest



100 federal judges



28 community & nonprofit organizations



53 faith-based groups



19 corporate groups



41 schools

4,143
visitors





TOUR GUIDE TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

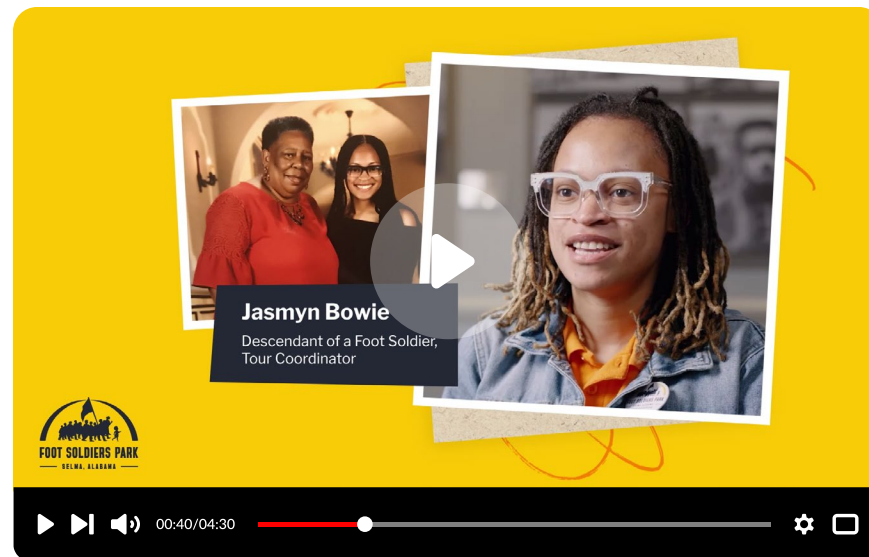
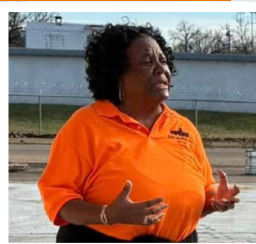
Learning firsthand from foot soldiers and descendants

Building on Ms. Bland's decades of leadership, we expanded our tour guide team to include foot soldier [Ms. Barbara Barge](#) and Ms. Bland's granddaughter, [Jasmyn Bowie](#).

In 2026, we plan to scale this effort by training additional guides and support staff, and launching a **Tour Guide Training & Certification program** rooted in Selma's history.

"Being a tour guide also awakened my quest for knowledge, because even though I'm a Selmian born and bred, I really didn't know a lot of the local history until I started being a tour guide. The most surprising thing for me is the connection between the Civil War and the voters' rights demonstrations [in the 1960s]. The history of both of these events collide today."

Barbara Barge, 1965 foot soldier and new tour guide



Jasmyn's powerful journey as a descendant of a foot soldier and young leader

Hear Jasmyn's commitment to preserving Selma's civil rights history and educating youth about the movement that changed America.





ORAL HISTORIES

Preserving 1965's untold stories

In 2025, with the support of our funders and donors, we continued capturing foot soldiers' stories to grow our digital archive, preserving lived history and filling gaps in the public narrative.

Voices from the Bridge

"Foot Soldiers Park is bringing that unity that we need, that education that we need about our own history... Having been a foot soldier, I would tell young people today... I want to lift my brother up. He is not heavy. If I don't lift him up, I will fall down. That's community."

Lynda Blackmon Lowery,
In Memoriam, 1965 foot soldier

"I was 16 years old when Bloody Sunday began. We were marching because we were dealing with colored bathrooms, and colored water fountains and all that. So we had to start marching and protesting about that. I ended up going to prison every day."

Richard Smiley, 1965 foot soldier

"[Foot Soldiers Park's efforts to preserve history] means the world to me because I don't feel like the 1965 foot soldiers got the recognition that they deserve... At least someone can see this and say 'wow' this is what they did to get to where I am today."

Margaret Howard, 1965 foot soldier

"[Bloody Sunday] happened for a reason – if you are a [young] female of color, it behooves you to research and know that you are where you are today because of all that sacrifice that people made like myself."

Jeannette Howard, 1965 foot soldier

"Foot Soldiers Park is being built to remember and honor and educate the next generation. The fact that there will be a place in Selma where this history is remembered – that means a lot to me because there were a lot of people on the bridge that day... It means a lot because we did get the right to vote."

Florence Richardson, 1965 foot soldier



BLOODY SUNDAY 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Remembering the Selma marches

In 2025, we marked the 60th anniversary of Bloody Sunday—not only as a commemoration, but as a call to action. Thousands gathered in Selma for a weekend of storytelling, screenings, and the historic bridge crossing, bringing together foot soldiers, visitors, and youth leaders connecting past sacrifice to present-day leadership.

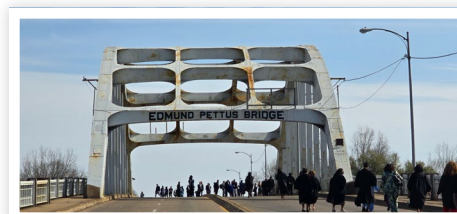
Dozens of Black women judges from across Alabama, including Vernetta Perkins, the first female district court judge in Dallas County, joined us and retraced the foot soldiers' steps across the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

During the 60th Anniversary, we honored both legacy and lineage by uplifting the next generation entrusted to carry this work forward. We welcomed a new class of Youth Advisory Board members and proudly introduced our first alumni cohort, returning as mentors to guide and inspire those who follow.

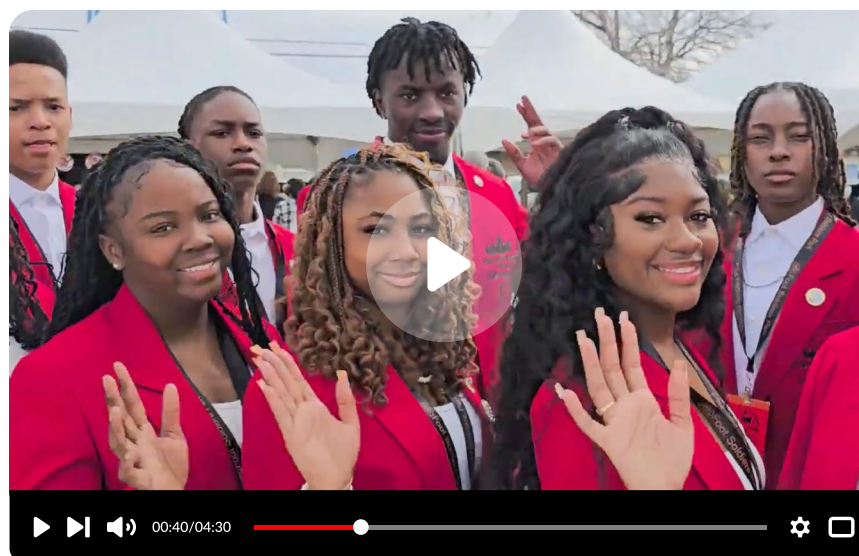
[Read more about the anniversary.](#)

"What excites me most is seeing future generations of YAB build on this foundation, reaching even greater heights and achieving things we've only dreamed of. The work continues and the potential is limitless,"

Sydney Pritchett, departing YAB President and new alumni



Enjoy highlights from the weekend.



SPOTLIGHT: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Amplifying Selma's legacy nationally

Every generation is called to march. In 2025, Foot Soldiers Park took the stage at the Association of African American Museum's annual conference.

Our panel, "Selma: The Next 60," brought together an intergenerational conversation between Co-Founder Jo Ann Bland, CEO Kimberly Smitherman, Board Chair Donovan Duncan, and Youth Advisory Board member Micah Thomas, Jr. Together, they explored the enduring impact of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the responsibility of this generation to continue the work.

The discussion underscored a defining truth: the work of the foot soldiers is not finished. Today, just like in 1965, ordinary people, moving together with courage and conviction, still have the power to shape history.





Civil Rights in Action Impact Area

At Foot Soldiers Park, we envision a Selma where every resident is informed, empowered, and confident in their voting rights and civil rights and able to fully participate in democracy at every level from the ballot box to community decision-making.



**LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT**

**CIVIC
EDUCATION**

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**

**SELF
DETERMINATION**

**NARRATIVE
CHANGE**



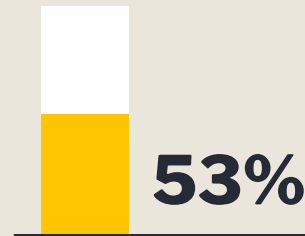


At a time of adversity, urgent efforts are needed to reignite Selma's civic pride.

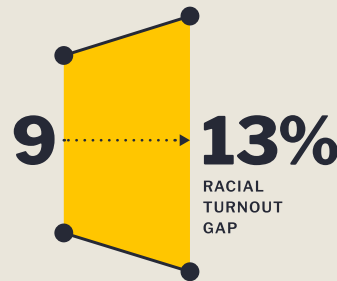
Selma is globally recognized as the birthplace of voting rights, yet civic participation remains critically low, and trust in government continues to erode.

These challenges make one thing clear: **democracy requires sustained efforts, resilience, and investment.**

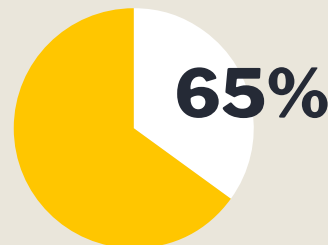
In 2025, we reimagined our [civic education and engagement strategy](#), strengthening our programs to build civic knowledge, restore trust, and activate community leadership. We expanded the Civic Engagement Corps (CEC), Footprints (K–12 civic education), and Voter Education & Registration programs for adults.



53% voter turnout in the 2024 election in Selma's Dallas County, **11% below the national rate**



Alabama's racial turnout gap grew **from 9% in 2022 to 13% in 2024 (the widest in 16-years)**



of Black Belt residents report **little to no trust in elected officials**



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CORPS (CEC)

Building grassroots infrastructure to ignite change

The Civic Engagement Corps (CEC) turns disengagement into sustained action. CEC members are paid Selma residents trained in civic education, local history, grassroots organizing, and digital advocacy. As trusted community members (not outside organizers) they lead voter outreach, host town halls and public forums, teach in schools, and engage residents who have been excluded from civic life.

While gains from the Civil Rights Movement and the Voting Rights Act have been weakened over time, **the CEC programmatic model is built for long-term impact:** activating disengaged residents, developing a deep bench of local civic leaders, and building transferable skills and leadership confidence. The CEC also serves as the implementation arm of Foot Soldiers Park's civic education programs, including the Footprints Program for K–12 youth and the Voter Education and Registration Program for adults 18 and older.



Impact by the Numbers

In 2025, the CEC delivered measurable results that demonstrate how sustained investment builds durable civic infrastructure.

10,000

voter registration cards distributed

4,290

voter outreach calls completed

3,665

hours of canvassing, phone banking, events, and training

100%

of local elementary and high schools reached with civic education

4

Get Out the Vote events hosted

20%

increase in voter turnout among the target population

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: MEET FRANCES CLEVELAND

Building power by investing in local leaders

A native of Selma who absorbed her community's history through stories from her mother and aunt, both 1960s foot soldiers, she spent years disconnected from that legacy, too busy surviving as a young mother and factory worker. Frances joined the CEC as a team captain and quickly emerged as a leader, eventually managing all four CEC teams. With support from Foot Soldiers Park and mentorship from CEO Kimberly Smitherman, she strengthened her digital literacy, earned certifications, and grew into a confident civic leader. **Through her growth and experience, Frances discovered that leadership isn't about having all the answers. It's about caring enough to keep learning and showing up.**

"Frances is the embodiment of showing up—even in uncertainty—with a caring heart and a genuine willingness to learn, grow, and lead."

— Kimberly Smitherman, Co-founder and CEO

Under Frances' leadership, the CEC increased voter turnout among its target audience by 20%. She views her role through the lens of someone who lives in Selma and can relate deeply to people's disillusionment with the political system.

Frances's story demonstrates a core truth: when you invest in people, communities transform.

Read more of [Frances' Story](#)



"[The CEC team is] making a difference. We're really doing something that matters, and we are successful because everybody in the community knows us. We stand out everywhere we go... Everybody on the team wants to do [this work] well. They love it, and that's what makes me feel so proud."

Frances Cleveland,
Civic Education Corps Manager





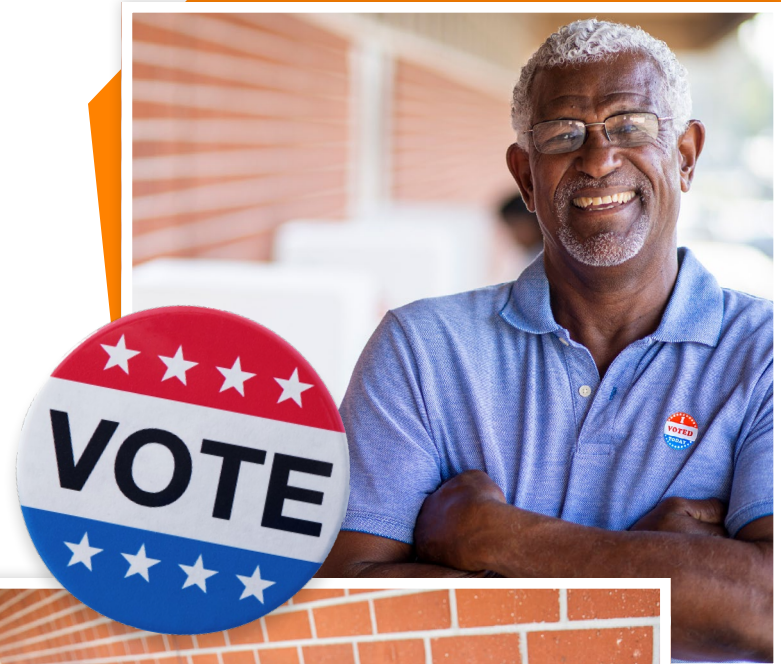
VOTER EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT (ADULTS 18+)

Rebuilding trust & restoring power

Our Voter Education & Engagement program centers on trust, healing, and community-led action. Through culturally relevant programming, dialogue, and healing justice practices, we expand access to accurate voting information while increasing participation.

In 2025, Foot Soldiers Park's Civic Education Corps members worked to remove barriers by providing voter registration support, transportation to the polls, and assistance for formerly incarcerated individuals on their journey to restore their voting rights.

This work goes beyond access or logistics. Through storytelling circles, vision boards, and community dialogue, we transform civic education into a shared process of healing and empowerment. We reached people in their local churches, barbershops, and community spaces with a clear goal: **transform civic engagement and participation into a shared journey toward collective power.**





FOOTPRINTS (K-12 YOUTH EDUCATION)

Building a civic identity starts early

Foot Soldiers Park Footprints K-12 youth education program **prepares the next generation of Selma's youth to lead and build their own civic identity.** Unlike traditional civics instruction which often focuses on memorization, this immersive program uses storytelling, experiential learning, mock elections, debates, and civic projects, allowing students to engage directly in democratic practice. Living history presentations from foot soldiers connect past to present, helping young people understand their role in shaping the future.

By connecting classroom learning to lived history and present-day issues, **Footprints ensures students don't just pass their mandated civics test, but that they build the confidence, skills, and sense of belonging** that strengthens their desire to participate as voters and decision-makers.



SPOTLIGHT: VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Protecting our voting rights in the face of adversity

In October 2025, the Supreme Court heard [*Callais v. Landry*](#), a case that could dismantle Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act – the last major protection against voter discrimination and gerrymandering of electoral maps. The anticipated SCOTUS ruling could strip political power from communities of color, significantly weaken majority-minority districts, block legal challenges to discriminatory practices, and accelerate voter suppression.

We followed the SCOTUS case and advocated for Alabama to pass its own Voting Rights Act ([SB7/HB60](#)). If passed, this legislation would expand voter access, strengthen protections, and increase transparency in our state.

To raise awareness, we developed content to inform our community about these developments.

Click on the links to learn more about:

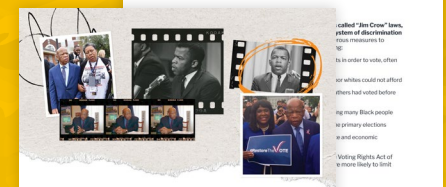
- [What is Gerrymandering](#) – and How it Affects Voters
- [Supreme Court Case Threatens the Heart of the Voting Rights Act](#) – Alabama Must Step Up



Our strategy: Education is the best form of defense

We knew time was limited and we needed to mobilize. Our team:

- Hosted voter education and registration events in George Washington Carver Homes
- Convened a community town hall and connected residents with 19 elected officials across political lines
- Organized “Voter Gras,” a civic education event on voting rights history where we were joined by 21 elected officials and 75 attendees



John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act

Originally introduced in 2019

Did you know?

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act reintroduced by our own Representative Terri Sewell in 2023, would restore and update protections against voter discrimination that were originally provided by the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA).

Under the VRA, certain states (like Alabama) that have a history of discriminating against voters had to get approval from the federal government before making any changes to their voting laws. This process was designed to prevent states from passing laws that purposely made it harder for people of color to vote. However, in 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down this requirement.

What does this mean for you?

Because states are no longer required to get pre-approval for changing their voting laws, today many states, including Alabama, are passing more laws that would have previously been considered discriminatory. Some examples are:

- Requiring people to have a photo ID to vote, but not accepting employer or student IDs
- Not offering online voter registration
- Ending annual voter registration drives

The Voting Rights Advancement Act would restore the “pre-approval” process, and be an important check and deterrent on jurisdictions attempting to pass harmful laws.



Youth Engagement Impact Area

At Foot Soldiers Park, we believe young people are the leaders of tomorrow who will carry forward Selma’s legacy and shape its future.

**LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT**

**IMMERSIVE
PARTICIPATION**

**BOARD
GOVERNANCE**



NATIONAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

Supporting young people to step into their power

The [National Youth Advisory Board](#) (YAB) is designed to harness the energy, passion, and innovative thinking of young leaders. In 2025, the Board grew and immediately got to work. From working with young students in local schools to organizing public discussions, these young leaders took on real responsibility. They engaged in community service, explored how the government works, and created space for honest conversations about youth's mental health and wellness. The future of Selma is in good hands.

"What I'm actively taking out from being in YAB is my public speaking skills and what I gained from participating in mock trial. I've been able to join my college's mock trial team and use my skills as a leader to stand out."

Sydney Pritchett, departing YAB President and freshman at HBCU Spelman College

"Foot Soldiers Park helped me sharpen my skills and take them to another level. I've grown even stronger in my communication, leadership, and ability to manage projects. YAB has pushed me into new spaces and responsibilities that expanded what I thought I was capable of."

Jaden Kim, 14-year-old
National Youth Advisory Board member





NATIONAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

2025 YAB key highlights

Young Voices, Global Stages

YAB members presented to mayors from around the world at the Alabama Black Mayors Conference and the World Conference of Mayors held in Selma.



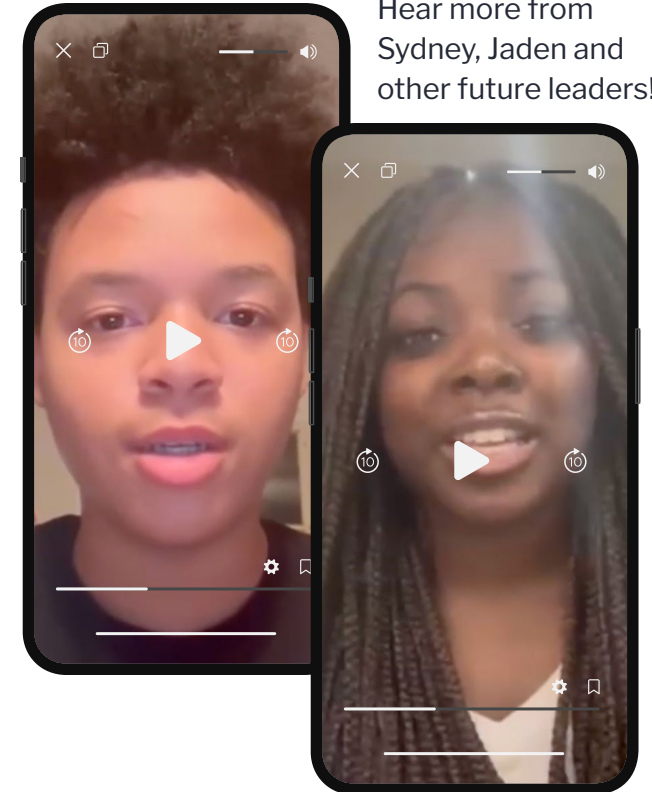
Civics Up Close

Members served as shadow representatives on the Selma City Council, gaining firsthand insight into the day-to-day responsibilities of elected officials.



Finding Their Voice

YAB members competed in Foot Soldiers Park's annual oratorical contest, where middle and high school students compete for a traveling trophy. Winners were celebrated during FSP's Juneteenth celebration.



Hear more from Sydney, Jaden and other future leaders!

All Rise: YAB Takes Over the Courtroom

During Selma's 2025 Bloody Sunday commemoration, YAB members took center stage at the city's annual mock trial which examined Project 2025. The young leaders took on the roles of judge, jury, prosecution, and defense.



YOUTH LEADERS PROGRAM

Investing in young leaders

Building on the success of YAB, in 2025 we designed the **Foot Soldiers Park Youth Leaders program to expand learning and leadership training opportunities for emerging young talent.** Rooted in Selma's civil rights legacy, the program connects young people to past movements while preparing them to lead today's fight for civil rights and justice.

Launching in 2026, this year-long program will engage a cohort of about 20 high school students (grades 9–12) through rigorous hands-on learning and immersive experiences in Selma. The cohort will gain new skills, work with mentors, go through financial literacy training, complete a capstone project, and participate in transformative, real-world experiences.

Students will be selected through a competitive application process and receive stipends and scholarship opportunities to ensure accessible, sustainable youth leadership development.

Going forward, the cohort will elect members of the Youth Advisory Board, strengthening its role as a true advisory body. These young leaders will help shape Foot Soldiers Park's strategy and how we engage and support youth.

**NEW
PROGRAM**





NEXT GEN FOOT SOLDIERS

Jo Ann Bland Civil Rights Legacy Scholarship

The Jo Ann Bland Civil Rights Legacy Scholarship **recognizes descendants of foot soldiers who embody civic commitment, academic excellence, and FSP mission-aligned leadership.** The scholarship serves as a powerful bridge between those who marched in 1965 and the next generation of community leaders.

In its inaugural year, two Selma-area students were awarded scholarships: Jo'Darius (JD) Hamilton and Rachel Curtis. Each recipient received \$2,000, presented by FSP's CEO Kimberly Smitherman and our Co-Founder Ms. Bland.

JD, a graduate of Southside High School and grandson of foot soldier Albert Southall Sr., will attend Auburn University to study Construction Management.

Rachel, a Selma High School graduate, is the granddaughter of foot soldiers who marched in 1965; her grandmother, Rachel West Milhouse, co-authored *Selma, Lord, Selma*, and her great-grandmother, Alice Martin West, helped more than 300 Black residents register to vote. She will attend Tuskegee University.

Foot Soldiers Park is committed to growing this fund, carrying Ms. Bland's legacy, and investing in students across Dallas County and beyond.

[Learn more about the scholarship](#)





Building Wealth Impact Area

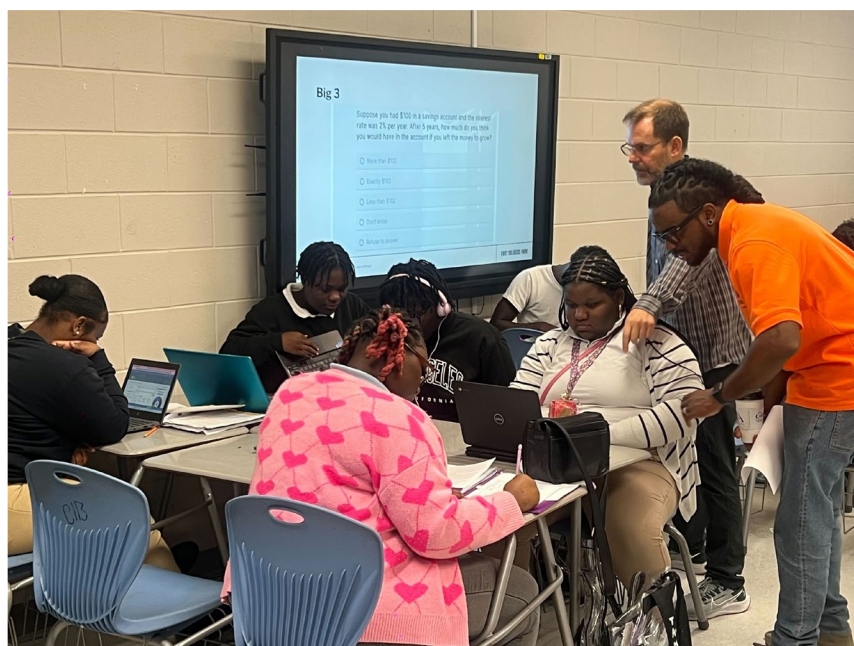
At Foot Soldiers Park, we envision a Selma where individuals and families move successfully from survival to stability to prosperity.

Through our re-envisioned Building Wealth impact area, we are expanding access to financial knowledge, growing Black-owned businesses, and strengthening pathways to home ownership. This work directly addresses systemic structural barriers that have historically locked Black families out of prosperity.



**BUILD UP****Financial skills for life**

Research shows that financial literacy at a young age leads to higher savings, stronger credit, and greater lifetime wealth. In 2025, we piloted **BUILD UP**, a **K–12 financial education and economic empowerment program engaging 111 high school students in just three weeks**. Students learned practical, real-world skills related to banking, budgeting, credit, loans, investing, and the racial wealth gap – giving them the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make informed financial decisions.



"Our goal with BUILD UP is to build financial knowledge, healthy habits and access to support so students can grow into adults who make informed decisions about earning, saving and investment – preparing the next generation to build generational wealth and fuel Selma's long-term prosperity,"

Carey Fountain, Director of Programs at Foot Soldiers Park.

The pilot was developed in partnership with Joshua Pierce, Professor of Finance and Associate Head of Economics, Finance and Legal Studies at the University of Alabama Culverhouse College of Business.

BUILD UP is designed to complement Alabama's new financial literacy requirement (HB164) by combining classroom instruction with simulations, hands-on learning, guest professionals, and teacher support, ensuring students have consistent, high-quality access regardless of school resources.

A highlight of the program was a real-money stock simulation. Each student team received \$50 to invest with ninth grader Chandler Wesley winning first place, earning a \$250 prize for his sound investment reasoning and performance. As a result of this experience, Chandler now plans to pursue a career in investing. [Read more](#)

"My favorite part was really tapping into random companies," said Chandler after initially investing in the larger, more well-known companies. "I learned eventually that investing in some of the big companies would actually mess me up. It actually taught me something. I invested into the smaller companies that nobody else was investing in, and that built up the money that I got from investing."



SPOTLIGHT: PROF. JOSHUA PIERCE

The professor who bet on Selma and won

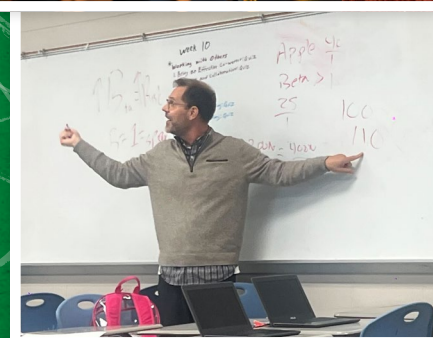
Professor Joshua Pierce “got chills” watching Selma High School students complete the BUILD UP pilot. The University of Alabama professor partnered with Foot Soldiers Park to develop the curriculum, but even he did not anticipate its transformative impact.

What made BUILD UP effective was its partnership model: a cornerstone of Foot Soldiers Park’s approach to building multigenerational wealth. Professor Pierce brought academic rigor and deep financial expertise, while Carey Fountain, FSP’s Director of Programs, ensured the pilot was grounded in the realities of Selma’s youth. Together, they created a model neither could have built alone.

By the end of the program, students were not only familiar with basic financial concepts, they were applying them. They analyzed investments, talked about compound interest, weighed risk, and put that knowledge into practice.

“The ability to actually see results and see changes with [young people’s] relationships with money is evident, and it’s quicker than I would have thought,” said Professor Pierce. “I would say there is a return on investment in this program.”

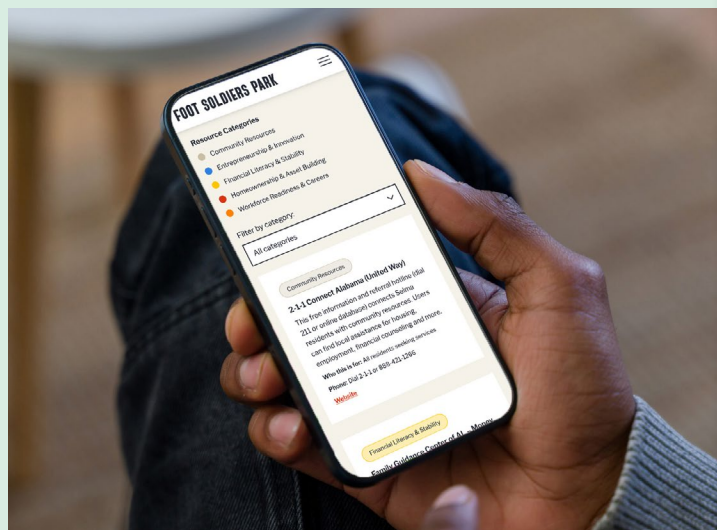
Professor Pierce not only volunteered his time, but also made his own investment with **a personal donation to Foot Soldiers Park.** His reason to donate? He wanted to ensure that the program has enough funding to award cash prizes to the stock simulation winners.



ACCESS IS POWER

Launching an Online Community Resource Center

In the summer of 2025, we launched Foot Soldiers Park’s [Community Resource Center](#), a free online hub designed to advance financial stability and economic mobility. More than a directory, the platform connects Selma residents to trusted local resources in financial literacy, workforce readiness, entrepreneurship, and homeownership. It is a growing tool that helps residents take actionable steps toward achieving their goals.



[Resource Center](#) | [Gift Shop](#) | [Sign Up](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[About](#) | [Our Impact](#) | [Future Hub](#) | [Tours](#) | [Events](#) | [Updates](#) | [Donate](#)

Community Resource Center

Your path to economic stability and growth

Welcome to Selma residents who are looking to build financial stability, benefit from professional development opportunities and improve their economic situations! This resource center provides quick access to educational and support programs and services offered in the area – from job training and placements, workshops on budgeting, credit repair, preparation for buying a home to starting and growing a business.

Just select the category below that best fits your needs and find out what is available.

Are you an organization offering similar services in Selma? Contact carey@footsoldierspark.org if you are interested in being added to this resource tool!

Filter by category:

All categories

Community Resources

2-1-1 Connect Alabama (United Way)

This free information and referral hotline (dial 211 or online database) connects Selma residents with community resources. Users can find local assistance for housing, employment, financial counseling and more.

Who this is for: All residents seeking services

Phone: Dial 2-1-1 or 888-421-1266

[Website](#)

Financial Literacy & Stability

Family Guidance Center of AL – Money Management Classes

The Selma community can access regular financial classes using the FDIC’s Money Smart curriculum that teaches adults and teens how to stretch dollars, budget wisely, avoid debt, and build savings.

Who this is for: Low-income teens and adults

Phone: (334) 874-1409

Location: 3716 12th Ave, Selma, AL

Region: Selma & Dallas County

[Website](#)

Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Arsenal Place Accelerator

This non-profit business incubator and co-working space supports entrepreneurs and startups through access to mentoring, workshops and business coaching, and their programs provide resources for local innovators.

Who this is for: Early-stage entrepreneurs and innovators

Email: info@arsenalplace.com

Location: 22 Church St., Selma, AL

Region: Selma & Dallas County

[Website](#)

Financial Literacy & Stability

Alabama Cooperative Extension –

Community Resources

Dallas County Family Resource

Financial Literacy & Stability

Alabama Cooperative Extension –



Whole Self Health Impact Area

At Foot Soldiers Park, we believe the fight for civil rights is inseparable from the fight for human dignity. And dignity requires more than political freedom. It requires wholeness. This belief drives our newest impact area, Whole Self Health, currently in development.

Practicing healing as liberation

In 2025, we began developing the blueprint for this work which recognizes that the Black community has endured deep-seated trauma compounded over centuries. It's grounded in the painful reality that generations of systemic harm, from slavery and Jim Crow segregation to present-day racial and economic oppression, continue to shape the health and well-being of Black communities.

Research shows these impacts are far-reaching, affecting mental health, self-worth, economic stability, maternal health, bodily autonomy, and personal safety.

Whole Self Health is designed to meet this moment. As we expand our capacity, we will address the full spectrum of well-being through mental and physical health support, trauma-informed care, environmental justice, access to food, and holistic healing—delivered through advocacy, education, and community engagement.

Liberation has always meant more than the right to march. It means the right to be well, to be whole, and to thrive.





ART AS ACTIVISM EFFORTS

Engaging community through shared culture

At Foot Soldiers Park, we forge deeper bonds between generations and cultivate new expressions of freedom, pride, and identity in Selma. Through arts and cultural programming, we transform history into powerful experiences that remove borders and foster connection, creativity, and community renewal.





SELMA CINEMA FESTIVAL

The screen is our bridge

In 2025, the historic Walton Theatre in Selma, built in 1914, became **a gathering place for storytelling, healing, and possibility.** The inaugural Selma Cinema Festival brought together filmmakers from across the U.S. and around the world, including Iran and Spain, and young people from Selma to Appalachia. Two hundred films were submitted by emerging and award-winning directors, including creators with work on Showtime and Apple TV.

The festival's impact was defined not only by the caliber of submissions, but by the audience who filled the seats. For many attendees, especially students, it was their first time in a movie theater. As one student shared after a screening, “Even though [the characters] had financial problems, they still pushed forward and followed their dreams. That really spoke to me.”

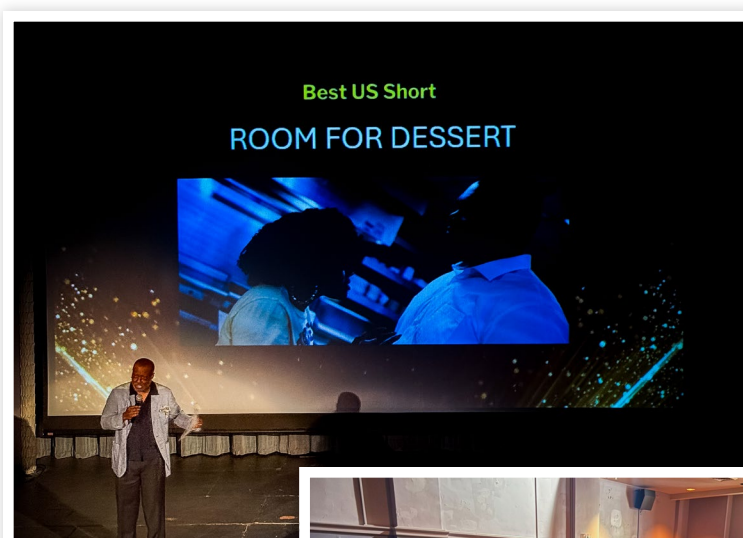




Pamela Davis-Noland's award-winning short film *Room for Dessert* won Best U.S. Short. The film follows a professional Black man who has been pushed to his breaking point. After a police officer charged with killing a Black person is acquitted, the man seeks revenge in a diner, trying to get his "just desserts." Davis-Noland told the audience, "My husband and I were both born in 1965, right when all the things in *Selma* were going on. Sixty years later, we're still fighting. This is how we fight—with our stories."

The festival's reach extended beyond Selma. **Actress Whoopi Goldberg** sent encouragement through juror and producer **B.K. Fulton**, underscoring its growing cultural relevance.

"Keep going. Art heals!"





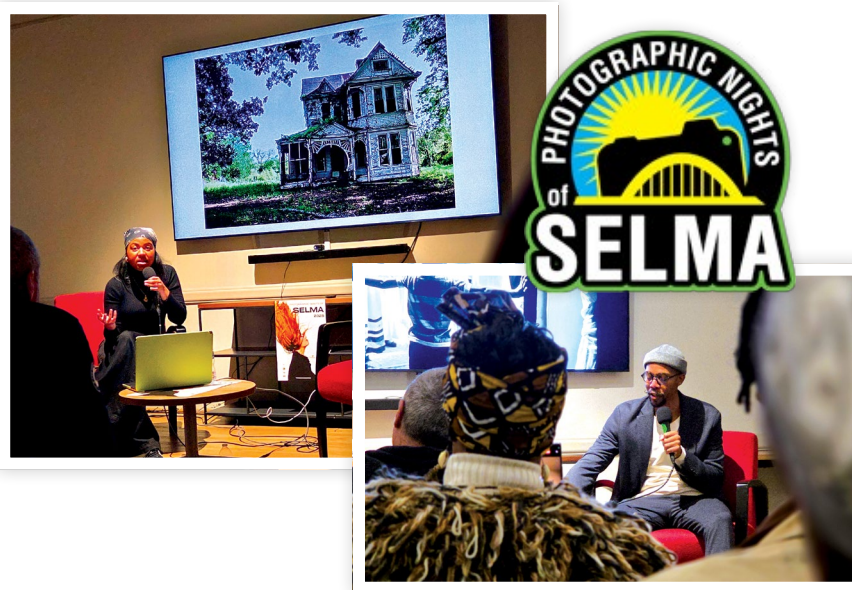
PHOTOGRAPHIC NIGHTS

A weekend of images, exchange & connection

There is something powerful about gathering people from around the world in a small Alabama town to share stories through images. That is the gift that Photographic Nights of Selma offers every year, and in its 6th edition, that gift was more expansive than ever.

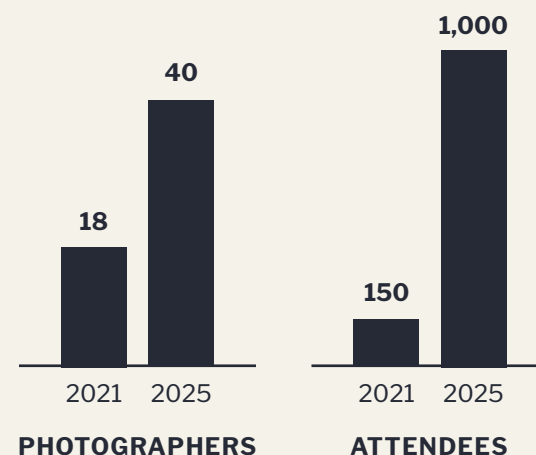
More than 30 photographers from France, Switzerland, and across the U.S. brought their work to Selma. Each evening, images were projected at ArtsRevive alongside live music, creating an immersive, shared experience. Audiences participated by voting for People's Choice winners, engaging with artists, and joining roundtable talks and discussions that fostered dialogue across cultures, languages, and perspectives.

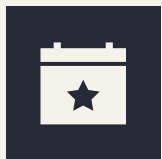
Photographic Nights is emerging as a cultural anchor in Selma—demonstrating that the city is not only historically significant, but a vibrant and evolving center for creative expression.



The festival is free and open to the public, ensuring broad community reach and participation.

The growth reflects increasing momentum.





EVENTS HONORING OUR HISTORY

4th Annual Juneteenth Commemorations

At Foot Soldiers Park, **we intentionally celebrate pivotal moments in civil rights history** not only to honor the individuals and communities who were instrumental in societal progress and to ensure that their struggles are not forgotten.

In 2025, our **Still We Rise Juneteenth celebration brought together a powerful cross-section of Selma and Alabama**, including residents, youth, 1965 foot soldiers, former Mayor James Perkins, Jr., state legislators, and Evan Milligan, the plaintiff in the landmark 2023 Supreme Court victory that secured Alabama's second majority-Black congressional district. **This is what community belonging looks like in practice** – through music, food, cultural performances, and dialogue, participants shared experiences and reflected on Selma's legacy and its future.



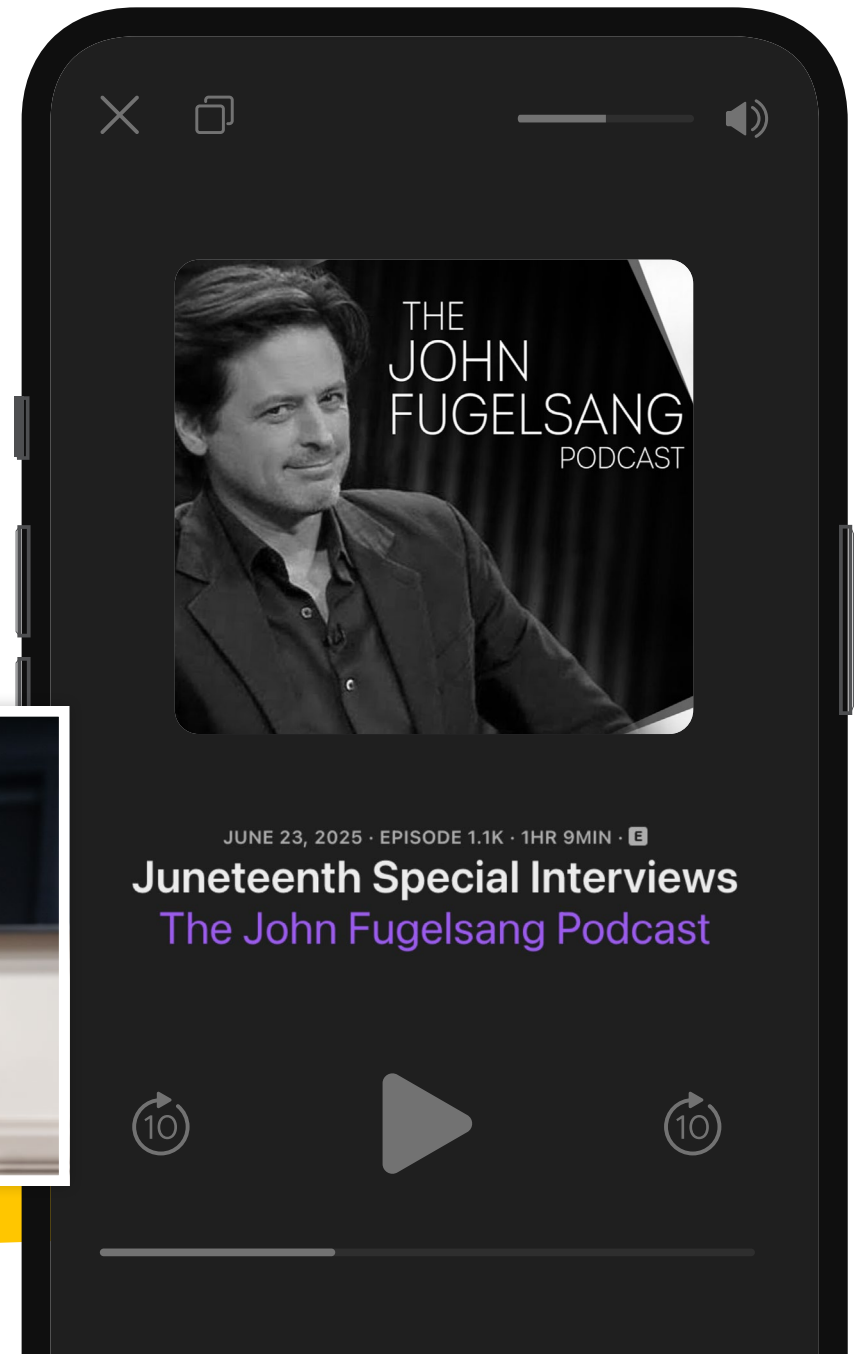


Marking Juneteenth on the national stage

Foot Soldiers Park's work **reached national audiences through SiriusXM's Tell Me Everything**, where host **John Fugelsang** (actor, comedian and radio personality) spoke with CEO Kimberly Smitherman about Selma's legacy, Juneteenth's significance, the 1865 moment when enslaved Black Americans in Texas learned of their freedom, and the power of community activation. Kimberly emphasized:

"At Foot Soldiers Park, Juneteenth is not just symbolic, it's strategic. It's where truth and joy and memory and activation all come together. And we use that power of the holiday so we can meet people where they are."

[Listen to the full interview](#)





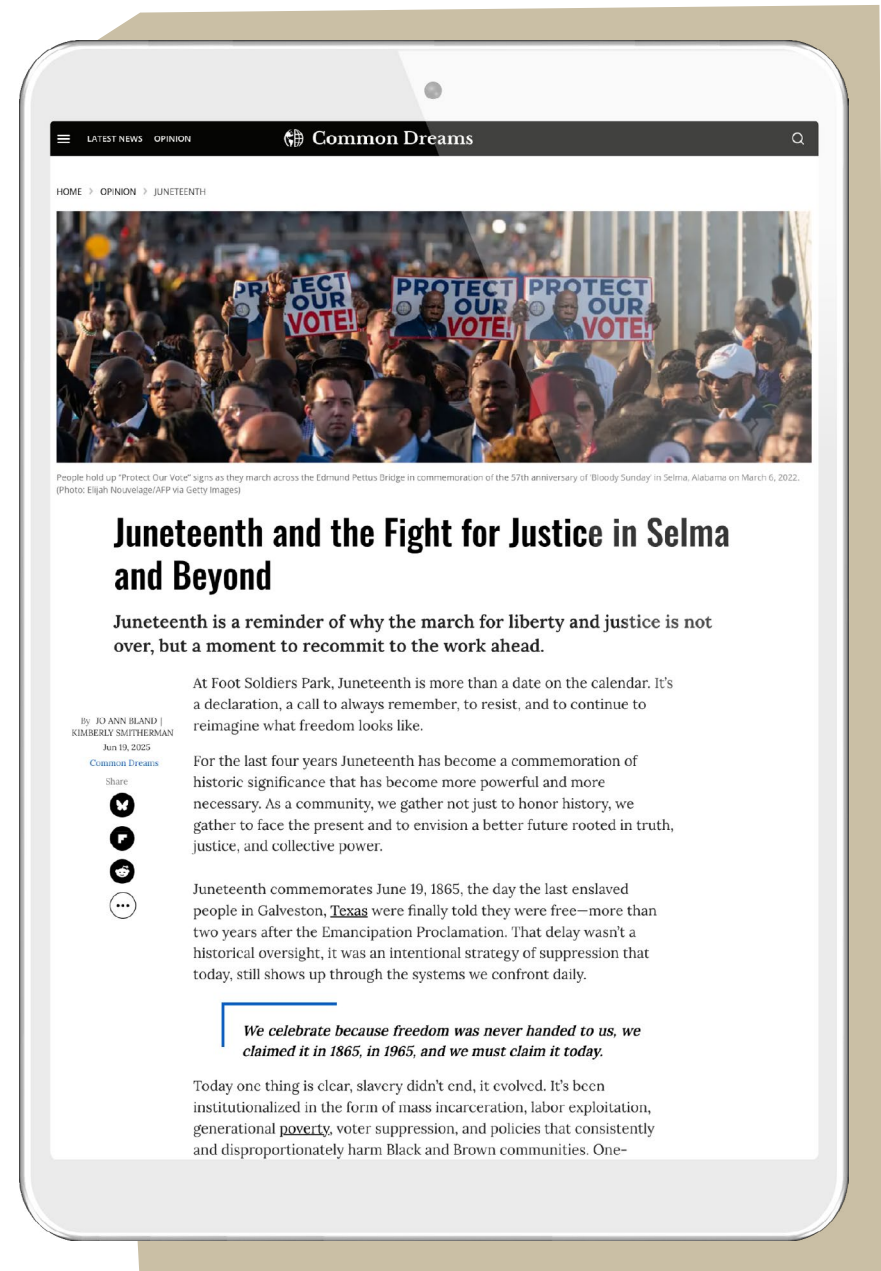
Where memory meets movement

Our CEO, Kimberly Smitherman, published an op-ed “Where Memory Meets Movement,” in Common Dreams, an independent news platform reaching nearly one million readers annually, challenging the nation to move beyond Juneteenth remembrance towards action. **Kimberly made a powerful case: honoring history is not enough. The truth is history demands bold action.**

"This Juneteenth we need to face the truth - there will be no erasure. What our history shows is how resilience can lead to transformation. Generation after generation we have turned pain into purpose, and memory into motivation to design systems that move us closer to justice."

Kimberly Smitherman, Foot Soldiers Park Founding Partner and CEO

[Read the full op-ed](#)



TEAM SPOTLIGHT

Meet Robert Stewart, Director of Finance & Alabama State Senator

For Robert Stewart, joining Foot Soldiers Park wasn't a career move - it was a homecoming. A Selma native and descendant of the historic Alabama Black Belt, **Robert carries a personal legacy shaped by his grandmother, who served as a nurse on Bloody Sunday.** He was drawn to Foot Soldiers Park by its commitment to transforming civil rights history into a foundation for economic empowerment for the people who are often left behind.

As Foot Soldiers Park Director of Finance and Alabama State Senator representing District 23 (the youngest senator in the state legislature when elected in 2022), Robert brings deep financial expertise and leadership.

His definition of wealth extends beyond balance sheets. *"Wealth is a community project," he says. "Without it, you're left at the whims of the powerful."*

He sees Foot Soldiers Park's role as essential at this moment. *"Foot Soldiers Park is important now more than ever as we see the efforts to not teach true history... That is a huge role where Foot Soldiers Park can continue to raise the consciousness of our nation and our world."*





GRATITUDE & APPRECIATION

To everyone who walks alongside us – thank you

The Selma foot soldiers of 1965 did not march alone. Neither do we. We are grateful to everyone who walks alongside us in this work. Every program we launch, every young person we reach, every piece of history we preserve, and every community we strengthen is made possible by the generosity and commitment of the people and organizations who support us. You are not just donors and partners – you are a part of the movement. And we are profoundly grateful for every one of you.

Thank you to our donors & partners

Partners & Funders

5IVE

100 Black Men of Selma

Alabama Association of
Nonprofits

Alabama Department of
Human Resources

Alabama Department of
Tourism

Alabama State House

The Annie E. Casey
Foundation

ArtsRevive

Association of African
American Museums

Best Buy Teen Tech
Center at Wallace
Community College

Black Belt Community
Foundation (BBCF)

Black Mayors Conference

Black Voters Matter

City of Selma

Common Power

The Conservation Fund

Dallas County Schools

DLA Piper

The Educational
Foundation of America

Fluker Consulting

George Washington
Carver Homes

Gospel Tabernacle
Church of God in Christ

Nakisha Gregory

The Grumbach-Bloom
Fund at The New York
Community Trust

Harpers Playground

Harwood Institute

Heyday Holdings, LLC

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John R. Lewis Legacy
Institute

MASS Design

McRae-Gaines
Learning Center, Inc.

Mellon Foundation

Nwankpa Design

OpenAI Foundation

Selma City Schools

Selma-Dallas County
Children's Policy Alliance

Selma Housing Authority

Selma Police Department

Selma University

Sweet Home Alabama

Tides Foundation

Trust for Civic Life

University of Alabama

Urban Strategies, Inc.

Wallace Community College

Westfuller Advisors, LLC

Alabama Forward: A Partner in Democracy

Alabama Forward, a 50-member nonpartisan coalition advancing pro-democracy policies across the state, has been **a valued partner and key supporter of Foot Soldiers Park this year.**

Their investment has strengthened our civic education and engagement efforts, supporting the development of our K-12 curriculum Footprints, our Civic Engagement Corps field plan, and access to voter data tools and training. Alabama Forward also sponsored the Kidz Zone at our Juneteenth commemoration, creating space for youth engagement and learning.

We are grateful for their partnership and shared commitment to a more engaged and empowered Alabama.

"The power of Alabama Forward is having partners like Foot Soldiers Park, who are deeply grounded in Selma's history, truly invested in the people, and leading work that is rooted in the community. We have very few organizations in the network that not only do civic engagement, but also provide services like financial literacy, which can have a huge impact because if folks don't have certain basic needs met, they can't engage."

Micaela Oer, Alabama Forward

**ALABAMA
FORWARD**

Southern Poverty Law Center: Standing with Selma

Thank you to the Southern Poverty Law Center for your continued support of Foot Soldiers Park. Through the 2025 Vote Your Voice Initiative, we are advancing year-round civic engagement and building the lasting infrastructure envisioned by the foot soldiers of 1965.

"Our democracy is on the line every single day. More people should donate to organizations like Foot Soldiers Park that have lived through this historically and are helping to navigate what it's like in this day and age — and need to continue to strive for change."

Robin Brule,
Southern Poverty Law Center

**SP
LC**

FOOT SOLDIERS PARK FUTURE COMMUNITY HUB

From sacred ground to national treasure

The programs launched in 2025 lay the groundwork for our vision of community power, civic leadership, and cultural tourism in Selma. Realizing that vision requires sustained investment and a permanent place to grow.

In 2026, **we plan to launch our first capital campaign to support the build of our campus and bring Ms. Bland's vision to life** with a permanent memorial to the foot soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement, a vibrant John R. Lewis Playground, and a state of the art education and community campus for learning, healing, and inspiration.

We invite all who believe in preserving Selma's legacy to join us as fellow foot soldiers, carrying forward the courage and enduring strength of ordinary people who dare to dream of a better tomorrow.





"The area of the new campus [where the 1965 foot soldiers gathered and strategized] is one of the most underserved communities in Selma and the state. **Selma should be a mecca where people come to be rejuvenated, to revitalize, to go back out there and help change the world...** We're going to build Foot Soldiers Park there, put that gorgeous memorial, a playground where all children can play, and the educational building where they can come and not only hear those histories, but talk to the people who were there. And it ought to spur economic development... **It's amazing. I see it. I want it.**"

Jo Ann Bland (in memoriam 1953-2026), recorded November 2025



The foot soldiers of 1965 changed history. What comes next is up to us.

To learn more about our work or to explore
partnership opportunities, email us at:

info@footsoldierspark.org



FOOTSOLDIERSPARK.ORG

