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Like An Idea Whose Time Has Come: Day 2

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Like An Idea Whose Time Has Come: Day 2

Abstract

"They told us we wouldn't get here. And there were those who said that we would get here only over their dead bodies, but all the world today knows that we are here and we are standing before the forces of power in the state of Alabama saying, 'We ain't goin' let nobody turn us around.'"

I met Edith today. We were walking down the road and Edith was with us. She didn't say much. She just sort of gurgled, dangling from a sling on her mother's chest. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

CW150, Gettysburg, Selma, rascism, Civil Rights Movement

Disciplines

African American Studies | Cultural History | History | Public History | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Social History | United States History

Comments

Interpreting the Civil War: Connecting the Civil War to the American Public is written by alum and adjunct professor, John Rudy. Each post is his own opinions, musings, discussions, and questions about the Civil War era, public history, historical interpretation, and the future of history. In his own words, it is "a blog talking about how we talk about a war where over 600,000 died, 4 million were freed and a nation forever changed. Meditating on interpretation, both theory and practice, at no charge to you."

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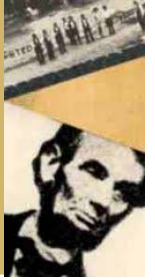
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Interpreting the Civil War

Connecting the Civil War to the American Public

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SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2015

"They told us we wouldn't get here. And there were those who said that we would get here only over their dead bodies, but all the world today knows that we are here and we are standing before the forces of power in the state of Alabama saying, 'We ain't goin' let nobody turn us around.'"

I met Edith today. We were walking down the road and Edith was with us. She didn't say much. She just sort of gurgled, dangling from a sling on her mother's chest.

Edith is a baby making the march from Selma to Montgomery. That in and of itself is a fascinating idea. Her mother is white, a kindhearted woman from the Midwest whose sister is rolling a stroller along for support. But Edith seems happiest walking with her mother, bouncing along in time to mom's rhythmic steps along Route 80.

Edith's father is from Kenya. They call their children, "Amerikenyan." I like the ring of that.

Edith wouldn't exist if it weren't for the men and women who plunged across Lowndes County in 1965. Her mother has fair skin; she has a dappled brown face and a beautiful little smile. But Edith was a crime at one point in the eyes of some Americans: miscegenation. Wandering down that same stretch of highway we walked today 50 years ago, Edith's very existence was crime in Alabama. And Maryland. And Virginia.

But no one was holding Edith's skin against her today. She was part of our family.

And we are a family now. It's odd to think of that idea from an interpretive perspective, but there are very few other words which truly fit. Wandering down the road and chatting about our world, our society, our nation, our lives with these couple hundred complete strangers feels like a family reunion.



Rain can't dampen the spirit
or the message of the Selma 50th Marchers

And even the traffic passing by joins in. Some honk, some wave. Trucks yield to the demands of the students as they crank their arms through the air, begging for just one more blast of an air horn. Almost everyone is thrilled to see us. Rubberneckers abound in the westbound lanes, traffic crawling by us in both directions, brown arms protruding from windows and wagging through the air furiously in joy.

There are a few who aren't joyful. Some fair faces scowl. A couple make lewd gestures at men and women who only wish them well. I hope they grouse because they are late for a doctor's appointment or their son's birthday; I fear their anger bubbles up from an entirely different wellspring.

Nearly every face that snarls when we wave or sing seems to look like mine. Nary a black face seems upset to see hundreds of engaged citizens recreating an historic trek across an historic landscape to dramatize a still sadly shameful condition.



Ranger Anthony building a house of the mind as the march spilled into Lowndes County and its toughest 24 mile stretch

But we march for them, too. That's the nature of believing in freedom. It's about extending it to all, not just some. The American song is sung by a rich chorus of voices. And every throat should be free to warble notes with the rest, as long as they aren't attempting to silence their fellow singers out of spite, anger or hatred.

And we're marching for Edith. She'll be back in just a couple decades to do it all over again.