

"Stories from Selma: Rev. Gwendolyn C. Webb," March 2015

I'm Reverend Gwendolyn Cook Webb, and I'm from Birmingham, Alabama.

In 1963, I was involved in the movement in Birmingham as one of the student leaders. And Dr. King came in, and the church was packed, especially with youth.

And Dr. King asked, he talked to us, and said that the movement was just almost dead and he needed some people to go on the last leg with him – the last movement with him. And he said, "Who will go with me?"

When he looked up, and looked out, the only people that was standing was us kids. And being a student leader, we had to make sure that those we were leading knew what could and would happen.

The movement was a secret – it was a secret weapon, the children. And so, therefore, we had to keep it a secret. But we had to sign a pledge that we would do it non-violently. And in signing that pledge, it said you would not use weapons, you would not retaliate.

He taught us how to do a love chain. And if your brother falls, you don't leave him. You reach down and pick him up.

It wouldn't have been a Selma without Birmingham. Birmingham was the turning point of all of this. Birmingham, where the children – 16th Street Baptist Church was bombed. Birmingham, Alabama, was the most vicious, the most racist city anywhere – in Birmingham, Alabama.

Birmingham taught a lot of things in life. In Birmingham, we went to jail with a purpose. But young people now – going to jail with no purpose. I was a little kinky-haired, dark-skinned black girl in Birmingham, Alabama, the second black female cop and they didn't want us. And you think, I'm glad to be here. At 66, I'm glad to be here.