

## Selma, 2014

Directed by Ava DuVernay

Written by Paul Webb

### Cast

David Oyelowo...Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Carmen Ejogo...Coretta Scott King  
Jim France...Gunnar Jahn  
Oprah Winfrey...Annie Lee Cooper  
Tom Wilkinson...President Lyndon B. Johnson  
Giovanni Ribisi...Lee White  
Colman Domingo...Ralph Abernathy  
Tessa Thompson...Diane Nash  
Common...James Bevel  
Lorraine Toussaint...Amelia Boynton  
E. Roger Mitchell...Frederick Reese  
Dylan Baker... J. Edgar Hoover  
Wendell Pierce...Rev. Hosea Williams  
Nigel Thatch...Malcolm X (as Nigél Thatch)

David Dwyer...Chief Wilson Baker  
Stephan James...John Lewis  
Stan Houston...Sheriff Jim Clark  
John Lavelle...Roy Reed  
Tim Roth...Gov. George Wallace  
Stephen Root...Col. Al Lingo  
Jeremy Strong...James Reeb  
Elizabeth Diane Wells...Marie Reeb  
Tara Ochs...Viola Liuzzo

**Questions for Reflection:** These questions are intended for personal reflection and discussion among St. Mark's friends (rather than responses for a history class).

1. How did you feel after watching the film? Inspired? Depressed? Happy? Confused?
2. Who was your favorite female character? Why?
3. Who was your favorite male character? Why?
4. Which character did you find the most complex? Why?
5. What was your favorite/least favorite scene?
6. Du Vernay was criticized for minimizing LBJ's role and position regarding The Voting Rights Act. What do you make of her portrayal of the relationship between LBJ and MLK?
7. Who was Du Vernay's intended audience for the film? What story/stories do you think she is telling in this film?
8. The snubbing of Selma at the Oscars led to the #OscarsSoWhite likely as result of political actions of David Oyelowo and Ava DuVernay. If you were the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, what would you award an Oscar for: Best Picture, Directing, Best Lead Actress/Actor, Best Supporting Actress/Actor, Costume, Musical Score, Writing?
9. What are your overall impressions of this film?
10. Did viewing this film change the way you view/understand the world? If so, how?

Background Information copied from:

<http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/kits/Selma-The%20Bridge%20to%20the%20Ballot%20Viewers%20Guide.pdf>

## **The Groups**

**The Dallas County Voters League**, a local group led mainly by Selma teachers, worked to encourage black citizens to register to vote and held classes to prepare them for the literacy and civics tests.

**The Ku Klux Klan** first emerged during Reconstruction as a vigilante group that used horrific violence to intimidate and control Southern blacks. The white supremacist group arose again during the 1950s and 1960s. Members used violence—including bombings and murder—in a campaign of terror against supporters of the civil rights movement.

**The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)** organized students to take direct action such as sit-ins, freedom rides and voter registration drives to bring an end to segregation. A major civil rights organization, SNCC operated throughout the South and enjoyed support from people across the country.

**The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)**, whose first president was Martin Luther King Jr., grew out of the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott. The group worked to support and direct opposition to segregation by collaborating closely with Christian churches.

**The White Citizens' Council** consisted of white leaders (e.g., bankers, newspaper editors, politicians and business owners) who banded together throughout the South to resist desegregation after the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision. Called the “uptown Klan” by Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, the members used their economic and political power to enforce white supremacy and oppose integration under the slogan “Never!”

## **The Places**

**16th Street Baptist Church.** A church in Birmingham, Alabama, that served as a hub of activity during mass anti-segregation demonstrations in 1963, including the Birmingham Children’s Crusade. In September of that year, members of the Ku Klux Klan planted a bomb in the basement, killing four girls, Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Denise McNair.

**Black Belt.** The rich soil of the Black Belt drew cotton planters—and their enslaved workforce—to the region before the Civil War. After the war and into the 20th century, the sharecropping system that replaced the plantation system kept the largely black population mired in poverty.

**Brown Chapel.** One of the Selma churches that allowed activists to hold mass meetings during the voting rights campaign, including rallies led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dallas County Courthouse. The site of the registrar’s office and the only place where residents of Dallas County could register to vote on one of the two days each month it was open.

**Edmund Pettus Bridge.** A bridge that crosses the Alabama River, over which U.S. Highway 80 runs, connecting Selma to Montgomery.

**George Washington Carver Homes.** A public housing project in Selma for many black residents, the Carver Homes became a staging area for demonstrations.

**Good Samaritan Hospital.** This Catholic facility was Selma's black hospital. Jimmie Lee Jackson died there after being shot. Doctors at the hospital also treated people injured on Bloody Sunday.

**Marion, Alabama.** Located in the Black Belt, the county seat for Perry County had its own groups working for voting rights.

**Montgomery, Alabama.** Located 54 miles east of Selma, the capital city was where Governor George Wallace lived and worked.

**R.B. Hudson High School.** In Selma's segregated school system, R.B. Hudson was the black high school attended by many of the student activists.

**River Road.** On February 10, 1965, Sheriff Jim Clark's officers violently forced young demonstrators down this road for two miles to stop them from protesting.

**Selma, Alabama.** Located in the middle of Alabama's Black Belt, this was the largest city in Dallas County and also the county seat.

**U.S. Highway 80.** The road connecting Selma to Montgomery and the route for the 54-mile Selma-to-Montgomery March.

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**VOTE411.org** VOTE411.org is a non-partisan "one-stop shop" for information related to elections and voting, including a polling-place locator.

**Voting Rights & Elections at the Brennan Center for Justice** The Brennan Center for Justice works to preserve and expand the right to vote for every eligible citizen. Through practical policy proposals, litigation, advocacy and communications, the Brennan Center works to ensure that voting is free, fair and accessible for all Americans. The Brennan Center website also provides up-to-date information about contemporary voting issues. [brennancenter.org/issues/voting-rights-elections](https://brennancenter.org/issues/voting-rights-elections)