

I went to see the movie, *Selma*, Saturday night as part of my own observance of Black History Month. I was both surprised and pleased that the theater was still full more than a month after opening weekend, and since I planned my arrival to miss the trailers, I ended up sitting in the very front row, right under the screen. Looking up at such an angle wasn't very comfortable at first, but I soon forgot about that, since being so close caused me to feel very connected to the film.



Not that I didn't feel fairly connected already. You may remember that I grew up in Atlanta during the sixties. President Kennedy was shot during my first semester of high school, and Dr. King was shot during my last semester. Atlanta schools were desegregated during those same years, all of which made high school a most interesting experience.



Jill and I went to Southwest High School, which is now the Jean Childs Young Middle School. I don't remember having African American friends in high school, but I did work in a warehouse with a young man named Calvin, who was indeed my friend.

And I had a friend in Bristol, Jim Street, who was, when I knew him, the retired Superintendent of Bristol City Schools. Years before, Jim had been the Principal of the Selma High School when the events chronicled in the movie were happening, and he felt that his leadership in those days had been helpful.

The movie was no fun to watch, but I thought it was very well done. I continue to be amazed by the courage of those Freedom Fighters, among whom some of you are numbered. I continue to be amazed and ashamed of the bigotry and the horrors chronicled in the film. And sadly, while we've come a long way in some ways, in other ways we still have a long, long way to go.

I was too young for the Civil Rights Movement, per se, but I got to help a little bit during the 70's. The Navy experienced a lot of racial tension while I was on active duty, and Admiral Zumwalt, who was then Chief of Naval Operations, ordered week-long training on race relations for everyone in the Navy. I took the training to lead those seminars, and was one of the facilitators at the Navy Base in Charleston, South Carolina.



Years, later, I was often the Reserve Chaplain who offered the Invocation for the Annual Zumwalt Habitability Awards when they were held in Louisville every other year.

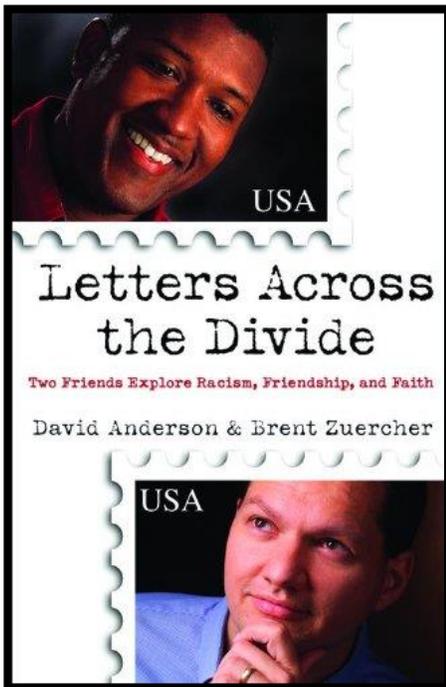


On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the award, Admiral Zumwalt was the featured speaker—not long before he died—and I was sitting with him and another Admiral at the head table (because I was “the Chaplain,” not because I was personally that important). I engaged Admiral Zumwalt in conversation about those seminars, and the other Admiral commented that “I got thrown out of one of those seminars.” To which I responded, “And I just might have been the person who threw you out!” So maybe I helped the Cause just a little bit.

While progress has been made, and many of us are still amazed that we have moved from Selma to see an African American as President of this great land in our lifetimes, events in Sanford, Florida, Ferguson, Missouri, New York City, and Cleveland, Ohio in recent months—just to name some of the more notorious events—show that much remains to be done.



One of the many wonderful things about CBF is that we are so uniquely positioned to advance the conversation about “race in America.” Thanks to the suggestion from Elaine Johnson, our *Men in Ministry* group is going to spend the next several months discussing David Anderson’s book, *Letters across the Divide: Two Friends Explore Racism, Friendship, and Faith*, written with Brent Zuercher.



Some of you know David. He’s the Pastor of Bridgeway Community Church right here in Columbia. And it might be that larger groups of us might find it helpful to study and to discuss this book together. The book records a very frank, honest, and thoroughly Christ-filled conversation that may help us all to “move the ball” during *our time* “on the field.”

The March from Selma to Montgomery was fifty years ago next month. What is the work to be done in our time?

Dave