



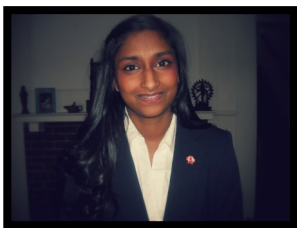
# NPS-RTCA FELLOW BLOG



## Blog #3: Groundwork USA in Selma

March 2015

Hi! My name is Rani Jacobson and I am the newest Fellow at the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (NPS-RTCA) program at the Boston office. I am funded through Conservation Legacy and working a lot with the NPS as well as Groundwork USA (GW). Throughout the next year, I will be blogging about all the interesting experiences I get and amazing work NPS and GW is doing!

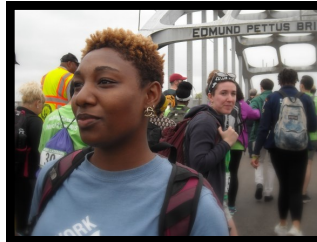


### Special points of interest:

- Check out more coverage from the Selma to Montgomery March on Groundwork USA's Facebook page.
- Visit the Selma to Montgomery National Historical Trail: [www.nps.gov/semo](http://www.nps.gov/semo)
- For more info about Groundwork USA visit: [www.groundworkusa.org](http://www.groundworkusa.org)
- For more info about the Rivers, Trails and Community Assistance Program visit: [www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca)

As soon as I had accepted my current Fellow position with the National Park Service, the first order of business (after all of the paperwork, of course) was to apply for the Walking Classroom, an event hosted by NPS in Alabama, honoring the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the March from Selma to Montgomery. Over the course of five days, I would be walking from Selma to Montgomery, a 54-mile journey that was taken by civil rights activists in 1965 as a part of the Voting Rights movement.

I was joined by eight other youth leaders from Groundwork programs across the country and traveled down to Selma from Boston in a twelve-seater van. The logistics of the whole trip were a little hazy and we did not know what kind of event to expect. For a few us, it was the first time down South, and the sight of a Confederate flag as we drove through South Carolina only increased our anxiety about the response for participating in a commemorative civil rights march. On the ride down, we discussed the roles race play in our lives, the struggles we still have today and how we address them in both our professional and personal lives. I was so fortunate to get to know a great group of leaders who are just as



**Groundwork Anacostia River – D.C. youth leader, Dominique Skinner walks over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, reflecting on the events of Bloody Sunday.**

passionate about their environment and their communities who will undoubtedly become some of my lifelong friends. It was also particularly helpful because the march was highly emotional and it was great to have a group that could pull the experience together, reflect on it and find ways where we could move forward and continue to make a difference through our newfound lens.

The National Park Service aimed to reenact as much as possible for the Walking Classroom; therefore, we marched along the same path that civil rights activists did 50 years ago – to the actual day. We stayed in “Tent City” on the grounds of the Lowndes Interpretive Center almost every night, participated in a Mass Meeting at the Brown Chapel AME Church, walked over the Edmund Pettus

Bridge, chanted and sung along to the words that were spoken in 1965, heard firsthand accounts from the “foot soldiers” of 1965 and participated in many key discussions about race. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, I marched into Montgomery up to the Capitol with over two thousand other people to hear the governor, both mayors, the director of the Southern Poverty Law Center and two keynote speakers: Dr. Bernice King, daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Peggy Wallace Kennedy, daughter of former governor George Wallace.

Coming back, I am more excited than ever to continue the conversation about race, inclusion and diversity in the work place- with the National Park Service and Groundwork USA!



**Hugging NPS-RTCA staff member, Sophie Sarkar, and GW ARDC youth leader, Dominique Skinner after marching into Montgomery.**  
Photo credit: Albert Cesare

