

DAY 4- WEDNESDAY

Kelly Ingram Park

Our final day begins at Kelly Ingram Park, formerly West Park. It is a four-acre park located in Birmingham, Alabama. Here, during the first week of May 1963, Birmingham police and firemen, under orders from Public Safety Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor, confronted student demonstrators, almost all of them children and high school students, first with mass arrests and then with police dogs and firehoses. Images from those confrontations, broadcast internationally, spurred a public outcry which turned the nation's attention to the struggle for racial equality. The demonstrations in Birmingham brought city leaders to agree to an end of public segregation and helped to ensure the writing and then the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The park was named in 1932 for local firefighter Osmond Kelly Ingram, who was the first sailor in the United States Navy to be killed in World War I. In 1992 it was completely renovated and rededicated as "A Place of Revolution and Reconciliation" to coincide with the opening of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, an interpretive museum and research center, which adjoins the park to the west.

The park is the setting for several pieces of sculpture related to the civil rights movement. These include commemorative statues of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, and other heroes of the civil rights movement, as well as three installations by artist James Drake which flank a circular "Freedom Walk". A limestone sculpture by Raymond Kaskey depicts three ministers, John Thomas Porter, Nelson H. Smith, and A. D. King, kneeling in prayer.

The "Four Spirits" sculpture was unveiled at Kelly Ingram Park in September 2013 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. It was crafted in Berkeley, California by Birmingham-born sculptor Elizabeth MacQueen and designed as a memorial to the four girls killed in the bombing in 1963. The sculpture depicts the four girls in preparation for the church sermon at the 16th Street Baptist Church in the moments immediately before the explosion. Additional monuments honor Pauline Fletcher, Carrie A. Tuggle, Ruth Jackson, Arthur Shores, Julius Ellsberry, and the "foot soldiers" and other "unsung heroes" of the Civil Rights Movement.

<https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/al10.htm>

16th Street Baptist Church

The 16th Street Baptist Church was bombed on Sunday, September 15, 1963 as an act of racially motivated terrorism. The explosion at the African-American church, marked a turning point in the United States 1960s Civil Rights Movement and also contributed to support for passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The church was used as a meeting-place for civil rights leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph David Abernathy, and Fred Shuttlesworth. Tensions at this location further escalated when the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Congress on Racial Equality became involved in a campaign to register African-Americans to vote in Birmingham.

16th Street Baptist Church had become a rallying point for civil rights activities through the spring of 1963. Students were organized and trained here by Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Director of Direct Action, James Bevel, many of whom were arrested during the 1963 Birmingham Children's Crusade campaign. On May 2, more than 1,000 students, some reportedly as young as eight, opted to leave school and gather at the 16th Street Baptist Church. Demonstrators present were given instructions to march to downtown Birmingham and discuss their concerns about racial segregation in Birmingham with the mayor, then to integrate buildings and businesses currently segregated. Although this march was met with fierce resistance and criticism, and saw up to 600 arrests on the first day alone, the Birmingham campaign and its Children's Crusade continued until

May 5. These demonstrations led to an agreement, on May 8, between the city's business leaders and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, to integrate public facilities, including schools, in the city within 90 days.

These demonstrations, and the concessions from city leaders to the majority of demonstrators' demands, were met with fierce resistance in Birmingham. In the weeks following the September 4 integration of public schools, three bombs had been detonated in Birmingham. Other acts of violence followed the settlement, and several staunch Ku Klux Klansmen were known to have expressed frustration at what they saw as a lack of effective resistance to integration. The 16th Street Baptist Church—a known and popular rallying point for civil rights activists—had become an obvious target.

In the early morning of Sunday, September 15, 1963, four members of the United Klans of America: Thomas Edwin Blanton, Jr.; Herman Frank Cash; Robert Edward Chambliss; and Bobby Frank Cherry, planted a minimum of 15 sticks of dynamite with a time delay under the steps of the church, close to the basement. At approximately 10:22 a.m., an anonymous man phoned the 16th Street Baptist Church. The call was answered by the acting Sunday School secretary: a 14-year-old girl named Carolyn Maull. To Maull, the anonymous caller simply said the words, "Three minutes", before terminating the call. Less than one minute later, the bomb exploded as five children were present within the basement assembly, changing into their choir robes in preparation for a sermon entitled "A Love That Forgives".

The explosion blew a hole measuring seven feet in diameter in the church's rear wall, and a crater five feet wide and two feet deep in the ladies' basement lounge, destroying the rear steps to the church and blowing one passing motorist out of his car. Several other cars parked near the site of the blast were destroyed, and windows of properties located more than two blocks from the church were also damaged. All but one of the church's stained-glass windows were destroyed in the explosion. The sole stained-glass window largely undamaged in the explosion depicted Christ leading a group of young children.

Four girls, Addie Mae Collins (age 14), Carol Denise McNair (age 11), Carole Robertson (age 14), and Cynthia Wesley (age 14), were killed in the attack. More than 20 additional people were injured in the explosion.

<https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/al11.htm>

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) is a cultural and educational research center that promotes a comprehensive understanding and appreciation for the significance of civil rights developments in Birmingham with an increasing emphasis on the international struggle for universal human rights. BCRI is a "living institution" that views the lessons of the past as crucial to understanding our heritage and defining our future. Since opening its doors in 1992, BCRI has been visited by more than 2 million people from all 50 states and around the world.

Each year, BCRI reaches more than 140,000 individuals through teacher education (including curriculum development and teacher training), group tours, outreach programs (school and community), award-winning after-school and public programs, exhibitions and extensive archival collections. BCRI encourages visitors to examine basic issues of morality, law, justice and responsible citizenship. It also teaches that silence and indifference to the suffering of others can only perpetuate social problems and divisions.

<http://www.bcri.org/index.html>