

## Amherst Hiker to Begin 400 mile Freedom Walk in Selma

AMHERST, MA – January 30, 2018 – Long Distance Hiker to Begin 400 mile Freedom Walk in Selma

An Amherst man, who has been invited to join in remembering the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee, plans to walk from Selma to Memphis, via Montgomery and Birmingham, as part of a community partnership project.

Throughout American history, especially African-American history, walking has punctuated major social-change events, said Ken Johnston, an amateur long distance hiker. "I am doing the walk for the preservation of our civil rights which are being eroded weekly under the current administration."

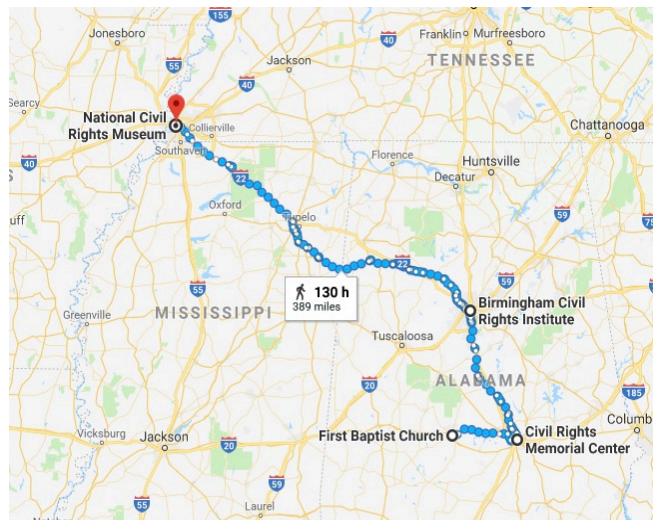
The walk will connect the historic U.S. Civil Rights Trail from Selma to Montgomery, trace the Underground Railroad and conclude at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis.

"The idea behind **Walk to Freedom**, as I'm calling it, came to me after I finished walking across Massachusetts last summer and I sensed that I needed to keep going. I heard the whispers of our ancestors in the words of the great Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman: 'Keep going, if you want a taste of freedom, keep going!'"

Walk to Freedom will take 37 days and connect with people, places and history across 18 counties and 28 townships between Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee – the distance driving from Boston to Baltimore.

"When I sent my proposal to participate in the 'Where Do We Go From Here?' MLK50 Remembrance Ceremonies in Memphis, I had an idea to do this. When they accepted my proposal, I knew I had to do it," Johnston said.

To accept the opportunity to be a part of the MLK50 remembrance ceremonies, I must raise \$5,500 by February 23, to meet my goal. I will begin walking from Selma right after church on Sunday February 25, completing 100 miles a week to reach Memphis by April 2.



"I'm doing this walk because I believe the Civil Rights of many Americans are being eroded today," Johnston said, adding, "additionally, I see this journey as generating a series of questions and

observations that I look forward to sharing with area schools and civic groups like the David Ruggles Center upon my return.”

“I owe a lot to those who came before me, and those who have helped me along the way. This is my way of paying homage to their legacy while simultaneously building on my own,” Johnston said.

Groups or organizations wishing to invite Ken to speak to their members before, during or after the walk may contact him directly by email at [kjohnston16@yahoo.com](mailto:kjohnston16@yahoo.com).

**For more information, or to arrange an interview, contact Ken Johnston at 413-244-6766.**