

## Long Distance Hiker Continues 400-mile Walk to Memphis for MLK50 His Goal is to Encourage Movement thru Walking

AMHERST, MA – March 9, 2018 – Long Distance Hiker Continues 400-mile Walk to Memphis for MLK50

A Massachusetts 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, will continue his journey after reaching Birmingham last week.

Ken Johnston is walking from Selma to Memphis, via Montgomery, Birmingham, Jasper, Tupelo, and Holy Springs as part of a community partnership project.

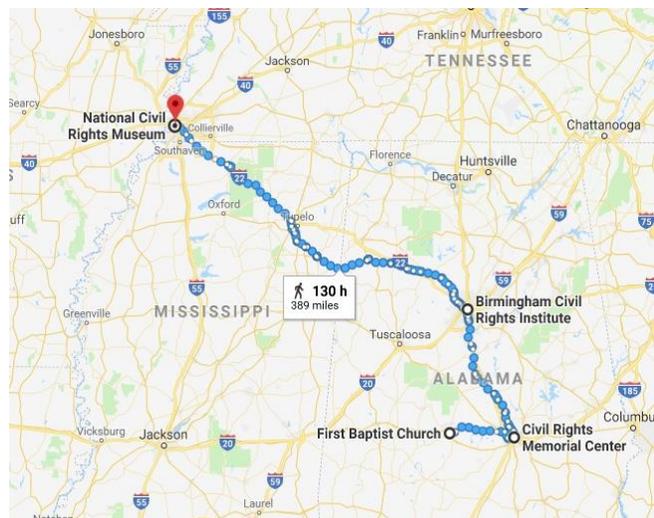
“Throughout American history, especially African-American history, walking has punctuated major social-change events, but it didn’t improve our physical overall health,” said Ken Johnston, an amateur long-distance hiker from Amherst, Massachusetts.

The walk will connect the historic U.S. Civil Rights Trail from Selma to Montgomery, continue on to Birmingham tracing the Underground Railroad and conclude at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. With over a hundred and forty miles completed thus far, Ken will begin the next leg of the trip on Sunday March 11. He will pass through communities along Highway 78 north of Birmingham before turning west to Sulligent, Alabama, and Northwest toward Tupelo.

“The idea behind **Walk to Freedom**, as I’m calling it, came to me after I finished walking across Massachusetts last summer and sensed that I needed to keep going. One of the things that struck me during this walk was that I saw very few people walking in the communities in which they live.”

Today many Americans live relatively sedentary lives. Walk to Freedom hopes to encourage the discussion of walking as a way for people to improve overall health through natural movement. 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 Birmingham to Baton Rouge.

“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 because I needed more movement in my life. When they accepted my proposal, I knew I had to do it,” Johnston said.

I will begin walking from Selma right after church on Sunday February 25, completing 100 miles a week to reach Memphis by April 2.

“Also, I’m trying to network with community groups, schools, and churches, that would be open to serving as a host family, for one night only, as I journey from Birmingham to Eastern Mississippi.

“I’m doing this walk to promote movement as part of everyday healthy living,” Johnston said, adding, “additionally, I see this journey as generating a series of questions and observations about the barriers that prevent people from enjoying the great outdoors. I look forward to sharing stories about my long distance walking experience with civic groups and area schools during my walk and upon my return.”

Groups or organizations wishing to be a host family, or invite Ken to speak to their group while he is crossing central Alabama between March 11 – March 19, may contact Ken Johnston directly by email at [ourwalktofreedom@yahoo.com](mailto:ourwalktofreedom@yahoo.com) or by phone at (413) 244-6766.