

Selma Commemoration Feud: Two Groups Unify

By George E. Curry
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WASHINGTON (NNPA) – A very public conflict between the Bridge Crossing Jubilee, Inc., the local group that has been commemorating the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery March for more than four decades, and the largely White-run The Faith & Politics Institute, a Washington-based group that had organized competing marches in Selma and Montgomery on the week-

end commemorating the 50th anniversary of “Bloody Sunday,” has been resolved with both groups agreeing to participate in a single march in Selma, a coalition of organizations has announced.

“The organizations in the unified committee will sponsor one march, the sacred Bloody Sunday reenactment march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Sunday, March 8, 2015,” the 10 major organizations said in a joint press release. “No organizations in the

unified committee will sponsor and or participate in any other march.”

The Faith & Politics Institute, which focuses on bringing people together to reflect on spiritual values and hold conversations across racial, religious, ideological and party lines, had announced plans to hold a march led by President Obama in Selma on Saturday, the day before the big march, and a separate march and rally on Sunday in Montgomery that would have competed directly with

the annual bridge-crossing ceremonies. Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), who was brutally beaten on “Bloody Sunday,” is closely affiliated with the Faith & Politics Institute.

In an “Open Letter” to the group, dated Feb. 11, Alabama State Senator Hank Sanders of Selma wrote, “It appears to me that Faith and Politics has set out to not only diminish but to destroy Bloody Sunday. You not only scheduled another march on Saturday in Selma but you scheduled a march



Alabama State Sen. Hank Sanders of Selma

and rally in Montgomery on Sunday during the afternoon when the sacred Bloody Sunday March takes place in Selma. It would have been so simple to hold your events in Montgomery on Saturday and join the events in Selma on Sunday. However, the arrogance of power has caused you to try to diminish the sacred Bloody Sunday March and Commemoration and change history.”

After publication of Sanders’ letter, representatives from 10 organizations – including the Bridge Crossing Jubilee, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Rainbow PUSH, the National Action Network (NAN), The Faith in Politics Institute, and the National Voting Rights Museum in

that some of the nearly 600 other individuals who were also on the Bridge on Bloody Sunday in 1965 be included. In 2013 when Vice President Biden was here, Faith and Politics wanted to allot only 30 places for survivors of Bloody Sunday with 270 places for members of their delegation, including congressional staff members. When an agreement was worked out that it would be half and half, Faith and Politics then had the Secret Service give virtually every place to members of the Faith and Politics delegation. It seems that you value status, power and money far more than you value blood, sacrifice, struggle and history.”

According the Sanders, “In the 17 or so years that



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President Obama will speak in Selma on Saturday, March 7, the actual anniversary of the Bloody Sunday

Selma – came together to resolve the conflict.

The end result is that President Obama will speak in Selma on Saturday, March 7, the actual anniversary of the Bloody Sunday, but there will be no march in Selma that Saturday or in Montgomery on Sunday. The Faith in Politics Institute and local organizers have clashed before.

“This was not the first time I am sorry to say that the issue of who will be among those on the front lines has recently become a bone of contention. Faith and Politics has insisted that only members of the Faith and Politics delegation be on the front lines,” Sanders wrote. “We have insisted

Faith and Politics has been coming to the Bridge Crossing Jubilee, not once have you organized a March or contributed in any way. You raise millions of dollars by claiming to sponsor the Bloody Sunday March but never paid for even a chair, a porto-toilet, water or anything else. You never organized other people to come if they were not in your delegation. You just show up and insist on privilege even though you refused to be a co-sponsor because you could not be the sole sponsor. This is about your privilege and power. Bloody Sunday is about sacredness, sacrifice and struggle.”