

□ **WASHINGTON, DC – House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer (MD) spoke on the House Floor today on the forty-fifth anniversary of the first Selma to Montgomery civil rights march, more commonly referred to as “Bloody Sunday.” Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:**

“Forty five years ago, civil rights activists attempted a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to demand that their governor honor their right to vote and their God-given equality. The world knows what happened to those marchers: how they were stopped by state troopers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, how they were savagely beaten with nightsticks, and how 23-year-old John Lewis, who was helping to lead the march from the front, was beaten to the ground and took life-threatening injuries. Today, as a Member of Congress, John Lewis still bears those scars.

“But he does not bear resentment. This weekend, I was privileged to join him and more than a dozen of our colleagues on a pilgrimage to the sites of the great American civil rights struggle. The movement that he helped to lead across the bridge out of Selma was a movement of racial reconciliation and nonviolence—a movement that grew only stronger the more the hate and violence of its enemies was exposed. For centuries, race hatred persisted in America because millions turned away from its reality, and millions more denied the humanity of its victims. But it was impossible to turn away from Bloody Sunday. By demonstrating the unshakable dignity of the Americans who were denied their fair share in our common life, and the brutality of those who would deny it to them, Bloody Sunday was a victory of nonviolence.

“Two weeks later, thousands joined with Dr. King to finish the journey. And they made it to Montgomery. There, on the steps of the state capitol in the heart of segregated America, Dr. King spoke to the crowd: ‘We must come to see that the end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience. And that will be a day not of the white man, not of the black man. That will be the day of man as man...Somebody’s asking, ‘When will wounded justice, lying prostrate on the streets of Selma and Birmingham and communities all over the South, be lifted from this dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men?’...How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever. How long? Not long.’

“Five months later, with some of the Selma marchers in attendance, the Voting Rights Act was signed into law. And the lie that some of our fellow citizens deserve subjugation and segregation was dealt a fatal blow.”

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