



BAY AREA

Oakland Youth Return Home from Congressional Civil Rights Pilgrimage in Alabama



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This past weekend, seven young women from Oakland's Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Center, ages 14 to 18, joined nearly 50 bi-partisan and bi-cameral members of Congress for the annual Congressional Civil Rights Pilgrimage in Alabama. The delegation attends the pilgrimage each year as guests of Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

They spent three days visiting pivotal sites in the history of the Civil Rights Movement including 16th Street Baptist Church, Brown's Chapel, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and The Freedom Riders Museum to name a few. They walked the Edmund Pettus Bridge side by side with Barbara Lee, John Lewis, Kamala Harris, Nancy Pelosi and others.

It was the Freedom Center's 12th Pilgrimage and, as always, Freedom Center youth leaders were integral and active participants. They were sought out by Congressmembers as representatives of their communities and peers.

They provided insight and counsel about the importance of other-interestedness, finding and using our voices, civic engagement and the vital necessity to transform themselves to change in the world.

Their participation was the result of study and work at the Freedom Center. The young women have attended regular classes at the Freedom Center, spent hours reading and studying, participated in marches, community events and voter registration campaigns. They admirably represented the Freedom Center—and their families, schools and communities.

The Pilgrimage is an example of the kind of cross-party, interracial and intergenerational work we need more of to strengthen our democracy and engage our pluralistic society.

This year's Freedom Center delegates, led by Dr. Karen Bohlke, Director of Government and External Relations, included:

Jaylin Brown, San Leandro High School, 9th grade, from San Leandro, CA

Ayanna Boateng, Sacramento Charter High, 12th grade, from Sacramento, CA

Jayda Gray, Oakland Technical High School, 10th grade, from Richmond, CA

Ursa Kaiser, Oakland Technical High School, 10th grade, from Oakland, CA

Ellie Lee, Alameda Science and Technology Institute, 12th grade, from Alameda, CA

Fayth Njenga, Kentwood High School, 12th grade, from Kent, WA

Jennifer Hernandez, Lincoln High School, 9th grade, from Tacoma, WA

The delegation included students from Congressional Districts of Congressional Members Barbara Lee (CA 13th CD), Ami Bera (CA 7th CD), Derek Kilmer (WA 6th CD), and Adam Smith (WA 9th CD).