

# VIEWPOINTS

Editor: Eric Spangler, [espangler@communitypress.com](mailto:espangler@communitypress.com), 576-8251

EDITORIALS | LETTERS | COLUMNS | CH@TROOM

[CommunityPress.com](http://CommunityPress.com)

FOREST HILLS  
JOURNAL

# Cincinnatians were at March on Washington

"I am happy to join with you today in what will go down as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation."

That's how Martin Luther King opened his "I Have a Dream" speech on Aug. 28, 1963. National civil rights leaders had called for 100,000 to march on Washington for freedom and jobs soon after President Kennedy sent his civil rights bill to Capitol Hill. Cincinnati activists helped King's prediction come true.

Abysmal race relations defined the South and much of the North. Cincinnati, just north of state-mandated segregation, had made some notable gains. African-American leaders had pressured downtown restaurants and Coney Island



**David Wolfford**  
COMMUNITY PRESS  
GUEST COLUMNIST

Cincinnati Mayor Ted Berry led a contingent of about 500 to the nation's capital. "The march will give witness that the Negro is united in America," Berry told the *Enquirer* in 1963. The Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth had moved here, but continued the intense fight in his native Birmingham. A mix of African-American

to integrate, and were now focused on ending discriminatory housing.

Local leaders like Clyde "Jimmy" Vinegar of CORE, William Bowen of the NAACP, and future

citizens, white clergy and others boarded a specially arranged train at Union Terminal. They packed two box lunches and prepared for possible violence. They sang freedom songs along the way, and picked up additional demonstrators near Portsmouth and Ashland, Kentucky. "The train ride gave us such a warm, friendly feeling," recalls Patricia Hogue (widow of University of Cincinnati Bearcat basketball player Paul Hogue) and a senior at Central State University at the time. Donations to the local NAACP enabled her to attend. "It was the most wonderful experience." It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. Would this crew face danger? Would the march have any

real impact? Could the civil rights bill become law? The *Cincinnati Post* and *Times Star* editorialized, "We favor the public accommodations section of the civil rights bill but think reform will come almost as fast without a law as with it." Both of Ohio's senators, Frank Lausche and Stephen Young, declined an invitation to attend. The uncertainty is what made it a dream.

"We were the first train to arrive at Union Station," recalls Hogue, "and we were some of the first to make it to the Washington Monument." They got a close view of Peter, Paul, and Mary, Harry Belafonte, and Joan Baez. Later in the day, at the other end of the reflecting pool, spoke A. Phillip Randolph, Shuttlesworth, and of course the

headliner, Dr. King. Press reports and recollections by local participants paint the day as "glorious," "wonderful," "peaceful" and "promising."

The march ended as an apparent success. In total, 200,000 attended. Most Cincinnati marchers returned home that evening. An intense debate on the bill, the assassination of its chief sponsor, and increased press coverage followed. A year later, Kennedy's successor signed the bill with King and other leaders standing behind him to help fulfill the dream. "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!"

*David Wolfford teaches Government and Politics at Mariemont High School.*