

Exploring Civil Rights Tourism in Alabama



Embracing the Past to Build a Better Future

Certified Public Manager® Program

CPM Solutions Alabama 2022



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The research, findings, and recommendations presented in this white paper do not represent the views of any agency or organization, but rather the collective educational research and analysis from the above diverse group of participants in the Certified Public Manager® Program.

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INTRODUCTION

“America is essentially a dream. The substance of the dream is expressed in these sublime words, words lifted to cosmic proportions: That all are created equal.” These words were spoken by Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. in a commencement speech at Lincoln University on June 6, 1961. In this speech, Dr. King was calling out to everybody that the promise of the United States of America, epitomized in the American Declaration of Independence, was to all people, not just white people.

Unfortunately, when the United States of America’s Constitution was written, these words were not extended to everyone who lived within the United States. After a bloody Civil War, the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments enshrined freedom, citizenship, and the right to vote. In 1877, the beginning of discriminatory Jim Crow laws designed to erode these amendments and force segregated black citizens into second class citizenry began.

However, Black citizens knew the promise of America and fought to gain the same rights given to White citizens. Black leaders organized and educated their base and they lectured, educating anyone who would listen. And in the early- and mid- Twentieth Century, progressive activists and Black leaders were able to organize in an effort that became the birth of Civil Rights. Many gave their lives in this effort to raise awareness that the essential message of the Declaration of Independence “all men are created equal” did not include a large portion of Americans, and would continue to exclude minorities unless huge, systemic change was realized. The struggle to ensure these unalienable rights to every American culminated in the Civil Rights Movement.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s started our nation on the path of fulfilling the promise of the United States of America. Alabama is at the heart of this journey because the story of the Civil Rights Movement cannot be told without relating significant events that occurred in Alabama, starting with the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, the 1961 Freedom Riders Bus Bombing in Anniston, the 1963 Birmingham Campaign, the 1963 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing, and leading to the 1965 Bloody Sunday Selma-Montgomery March that culminated with

Dr. Martin Luther King's fiery "How Long, Not Long" speech made in front of the steps to the Capitol Building of Alabama.

The Alabama Tourism Department (Tourism Department) is dedicated to ensuring that these events are not forgotten. The Tourism Department is dedicated to bringing a fresh outlook to attract visitors to Civil Rights locations, allowing visitors to experience these events and understand their importance. By bringing visitors here, the Tourism Department can increase revenues to bolster Alabama's economy.

The Exploring Civil Rights Tourism in Alabama CPM Solutions Alabama Team will enumerate current civil rights tourism initiatives happening in Alabama that are drawing visitors to the State, recommend personalized improvements to those initiatives based on an analysis of parallel tactics from selected locations in Alabama, and offer recommendations for dynamic strategies to further highlight Alabama's historical significance in the Civil Rights Movement.

BACKGROUND OF CIVIL RIGHTS TOURISM IN ALABAMA

The State of Alabama is at the forefront of Civil Rights Tourism in the United States. Our dedication to celebrating the Civil Rights Movement goes beyond public monuments and traditional institutions like museums; it includes more interactive and engaging experiences. For example, in recent years a series of *To Kill A Mockingbird* play performances have been held seasonally in the titular town of Monroeville, where the story is set, bringing in lovers of that cherished story from all over the state and revitalize a dialogue about the rich, racially charged text. Many museums within the State offer age-appropriate interactive experiences.

Rosemary Judkins is currently the Group Travel Sales Manager for the Alabama Tourism Department, but she began working for our state in the Office of the Alabama Secretary of State near the end of Former Governor George Wallace's last term as governor. When talking to our group she explained how George Wallace, initiated the creation of the first Civil Rights brochure. Despite his role as an infamous segregationist, he recognized the importance of recording this pivotal moment in history, listing civil rights locations, events, and the crusaders who fought for

these rights. Thus began Alabama's role at the forefront of preservation of the modern American Civil Rights movement.

People promoting tourism in Alabama all recognize Alabama's unique role in the national civil rights narrative. Grey Brennan and Rosemary Judkins of the Alabama Tourism Department, Chip Hill of the City of Montgomery Mayor's Office, and Ron Simmons of the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce all emphasize that the story of American Civil Rights cannot be told without including pivotal events that took place in Alabama. The Montgomery Chamber of Commerce has named their Civil Rights tourism campaign "The Journey Starts Here", highlighting Montgomery Alabama's role in staging the first significant boycott against segregation, The Montgomery Bus Boycott.

The National Parks Service encouraged historians and experts across the southeast to pinpoint landmarks integral to civil rights activism and change, leading to the founding of The United States Civil Rights Trail. Alabama's portion of the Civil Rights Trail has a sanctioned itinerary issued by the Park Service, comprising five cities in four days. This agenda includes essential locations to the movement, like the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama.

Alabama's importance in Civil Rights Tourism was further recognized by the National Parks Service after Congress appropriated funding for the African American Civil Rights Grants Program in 2018 through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF). Their News Release on September 13, 2019, announced a \$12.259 million grant to fund 44 projects across 17 states and twelve of the 44 projects allocated grant monies to sites in Alabama for a grand total of \$3,496,159.00, awarding over one quarter of the entire grant monies to projects inside Alabama (National Park Service, 2019).

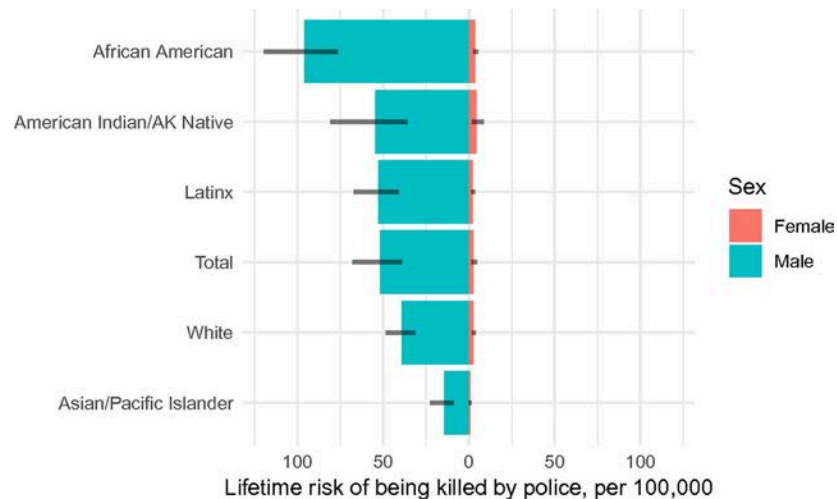
GROWING NEED TO INCREASE ALABAMA CIVIL RIGHTS TOURISM

Over the last few years, tragedies suffered by Black citizens during law enforcement interactions have been portrayed across national media, raising public awareness of social injustices and the importance of continual law enforcement reform.

The Black Lives Matter hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter, began in 2012 after the death of Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of his killer, George Zimmerman the year before. The organization Black Lives Matter (and Black Lives Matter Foundation, Inc.) was founded in 2013 by three black female activists and grew nationally. (Greene et al., 2019) Then on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Mr. George Floyd, Jr. was killed by police who were arresting him. A police officer, Derek Chauvin, knelt on Mr. Floyd's neck and back for 9 minutes and 29 seconds despite Mr. Floyd's cries that he couldn't breathe while three other police officers and numerous spectators watched. This ended in the death of Mr. Floyd from asphyxiation. This exchange was caught on video and swept the nation and the world. There was national outrage, and the Black Lives Matter organization galvanized this outrage into protests and riots across the nation. This outrage, combined with similar instances of police brutality across the nation, has opened many eyes to the injustices minorities still face.

A study published by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) in 2019 used data to estimate and predict the risk of various demographics being killed by police across the United States. (Edwards, 2019) It found that Black men are approximately 2.5 times more likely to be killed by the police during their lifetime than White men and that Black women are about 1.4 times more likely to be killed by police than their White counterparts. The study uses data from police-related killings across the nation to show that Black men are killed by law enforcement at a rate of 2.8 to 4.1 per 100,000, and they use this statistic to calculate that use of police force is the cause of 1.6% of all deaths of Black men between 20 and 24 years old.

The Edwards graph at the top of page 9 presents a breakdown of the lifetime risk of being killed by police by racial identity.



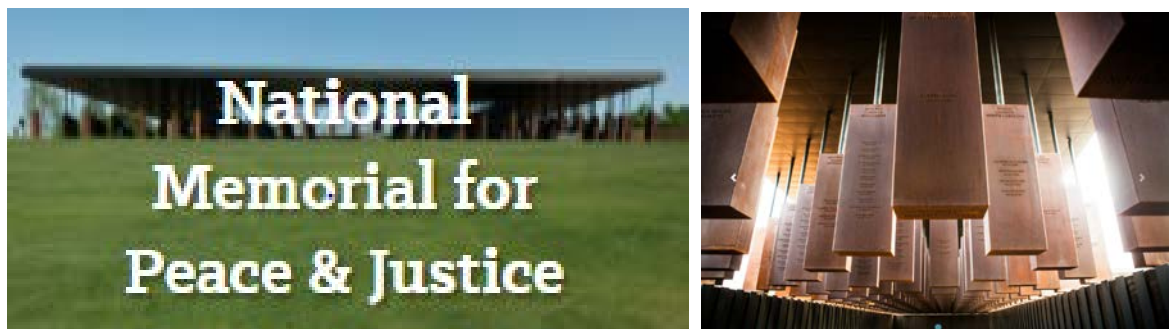
Mainstream media publications available to the average consumer have also begun to take note of violence toward Black people. After Michael Brown was killed by police in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, The Washington Post, a renowned publication with a significant social media presence, started to log every fatal shooting by an on-duty police officer in the United States. It has documented over 5,000 fatal shootings by police. Although half of the people shot and killed by police are White, Black Americans are shot at a disproportionate rate (Tate et al., 2022).

The above-described current events and political unrest serve as acumen for many to revisit our past, as one way to prevent history from repeating itself. And, thinking of it from a different standpoint, research has shown that Black people spend about \$48 billion globally each year to travel. Of those consumers, studies indicate that roughly 68% of that demographic want to spend that money learning about their history and culture on vacation. (Enelow, 2016) Tourism Director Lee Sentell has also referenced international statistics, citing the fact that Alabama’s growing political diversity is piquing interest, and therefore funding, from global travelers. (Harper, 2018)

There are already examples of Alabama embracing and recognizing the impact of its history. On April 26, 2018, the Equal Justice Initiative opened the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama. It was created as a memorial to Black victims of lynching in the United States. On October 1, 2021, the Equal Justice Initiative Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration opened as well, creating a double-feature dedication to the United States of America’s lynching victims. (Hobbs & Freudenberger, 2018). These creations from the Equal

Justice Initiative generated international interest in Montgomery, Alabama and Civil Rights events that occurred in this state. The first room of the Legacy Museum delivers the effect of traveling on a slave ship across the Atlantic Ocean and subsequent rooms build upon a feeling of connection to the experiences of these oppressed people. On the grounds of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice is an outdoor structure with massive rectangular monuments hanging from the ceiling, each one inscribed with the name of a lynching victim(s), the date of the lynching, and the county and state the lynching occurred within.

The international interest generated by the opening of the National Memorial for Peace & Justice combined with growing movements like Black Lives Matter and their focus on the inequities that Black people still face today has brought focus to Alabama and our growing civil rights tourism industry.



In a state where the largest tourism draw is its attractive coastline, such provocative and brutally honest tributes can bolster economic growth while serving humanitarian purposes for people of all backgrounds. By reckoning with the uglier side of its history, Alabama can continue to disprove its sometimes-maligned reputation for being regressive and strengthen integrity among its citizens.



Celebrating Alabama Tourism Department

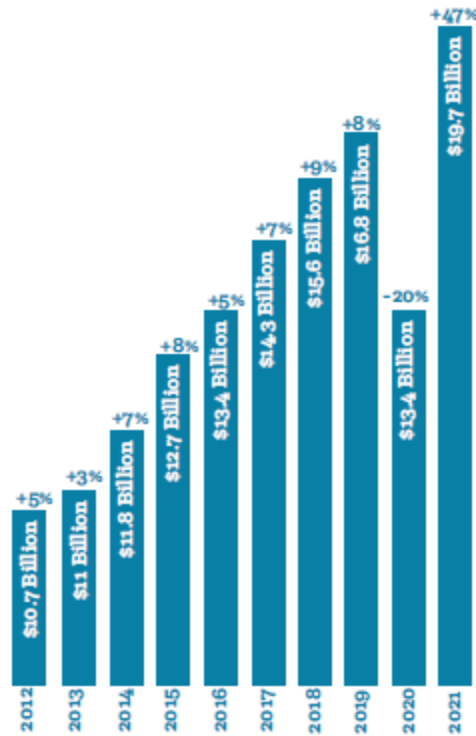
The Tourism Department promotes the numerous significant Civil Rights sites available in the State of Alabama. They are focused on promoting Alabama Civil Rights events, sites, and museums. They work in conjunction with tourism partners in private organizations and in national and city governments.

In an interview with leaders from the Tourism Department, we discovered the Tourism Department's budget is derived from a 1% share of Alabama's lodgings tax of 4%. According to the Alabama Department of Revenue website, lodgings tax is a privilege tax on persons, firms, and corporations engaging in the renting or furnishings of rooms, lodgings, or other accommodations to transients for periods of less than 180 days of continuous occupations. Currently, it is tourism's only way of tracking visitors.

The Economic Impact for Alabama's Travel Industry in 2021 helped fund 227,334 jobs last year as every \$128,231 of expenditures creates one direct job in Alabama (2021, Alabama Tourism Industry Economic Impact Report).

The graph at the top of page 12 illustrates the annual growth of the Tourism Department's impact on Alabama's economy (2021, Alabama Tourism Industry Economic Impact Report).

Alabama Tourism Expenditures 2012-2021

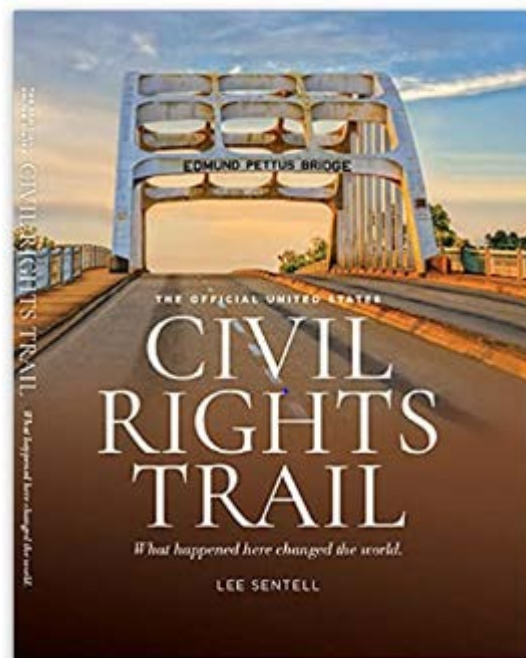


In 2022, Alabama moved from number 30 to number 6 in the nation’s rankings of Google’s travel search activity, with the state experiencing its largest increase in tourism interest since 2019. (Alabama Tourism Department, 2022) The \$19.6 billion that tourists spent in the state during 2021 has exceeded even pre-pandemic numbers, dwarfing 2020’s tourism revenue by 47%. This jump in travel revenue comes shortly after the appointment of Lee Sentell as Director of the Alabama Department of Tourism (ATD) in 2019. Sentell immediately began leading the Department in great strides toward this success, with a substantial emphasis woven through its overall travel campaign on promoting the landmarks of the Civil Rights Movement that pepper the state. (Associated Press, 2019) The office received an international award distinguishing its civil rights marketing project as early as November 2019, winning Best Regional Destination for its promotional materials concerning important civil rights locations across the southeast.

And on November 5, 2019, the International Travel Awards, held in London, presented to Alabama Tourism Department a major international award, ‘Best Regional Destination Award’, for its marketing campaign of the U.S. Civil Rights Trail.

The Official U.S. Civil Rights Trail by Lee Sentell

The recent spike in travel activity throughout the state occurred contemporaneously with the landmark debut of *The Official U.S. Civil Rights Trail: What Happened Here Changed the World*, a companion book to its titular multi-state civil rights' exhibition. The Trail itself was announced in 2018 after Jonathan Jarvis of the National Park Service worked with historians and southern tourism offices to identify dozens of the Movement's landmarks. (National Park Service, 2018) Written by Alabama Tourism Director Lee Sentell and published by the Alabama Media Group, *The Official U.S. Civil Rights Trail*, that debuted on June 24, 2021, highlights Alabama as one of fifteen states that served as constant battleground for the Civil Rights Movement. Alabama hosts more locations on the Trail than any other state, with 29 locations marked as integral sites of significance for the movement. Furthermore, *The Official U.S. Civil Rights Trail* is featured prominently on the United States Civil Rights Trail website, <https://civilrightstrail.com> and This Is Alabama website, <https://store.thisisalabama.org>.



In addition to disseminating content about Alabama's civil rights destinations to the rest of the country, the Tourism Department is also building a bedrock of knowledge and awareness from

within. In the fall of 2021, it chose the storied town of Selma, Alabama to host its annual “Welcome Center Retreat”, an educational conference for front-line staffers of Alabama’s eight welcome centers to come together. Workers were updated on tourism destinations across the State, with a heavy emphasis on civil rights landmarks, allowing them to advise and direct visitors on how to spend their time. (Smith, 2021)

Online Presence

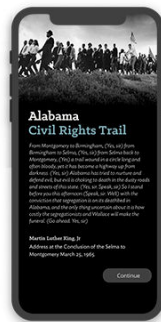
The Department of Tourism’s travel website has become a useful and dynamic index of details about the Civil Rights Trail sites and how best to reach and experience them. It boasts a lengthy list of 81 “Road Trips,” meticulously designed with pages of where to stay, eat, and most pertinently, visit. (Alabama Tourism Department, 2022). Fourteen of these curated trip guides feature Alabama’s civil rights legacy as the focus of their agenda and the primary reason for the journey there. For instance, Road Trip No. 4, “Selma to Montgomery” catalogues everything a visitor needs to know in making the 54-mile National Historic Trail between the two cities. The focal and starting point of the trip is the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, an already-famous symbol of civil rights, but the agenda also points out several attractions that are certainly more obscure, such as the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute located on U.S. Highway 80 East, and Trail markers along the route honoring lesser-known heroes of the movement like Viola Liuzzo. Viola, a civil rights activist, was fatally shot by Ku Klux Klan members after shuttling fellow activists to the Montgomery airport.

The Road Trips collection is one of many digital resources the Tourism Department is providing to maintain an online connection with potential visitors to the state. A brochure of Alabama’s entire section of the U.S Civil Rights Trail is detailed on the Tourism Department’s website, highlighting specifically what each city is famous for in the context of the movement, plus helpful tips about lodging, dining, and other attractions. (Alabama Tourism Department, 2022). The site also links to their recently launched Alabama Civil Rights Trail mobile application, which is free and contains comprehensive information about most aspects of traveling to Alabama’s featured spots on the trail and their civil rights landmarks. A revamp of the original app first released in 2014,

the updated version has several interactive functions, including maps of destinations, a media library dedicated to the Civil Rights Movements, and opportunities for users to share their locations and experiences with other users. (Alabama Tourism Department, 2022)

Both the Alabama Road Trip App and Alabama Civil Rights Trail App will help visitors plan their trip to experience Civil Rights in Alabama. Both apps have received a rating of 4.5 stars on the Play Store.

Alabama Civil Rights Trail



Trace the struggle for equality - and the progress - with this free official app for iPhone and Android.

Walk in the footsteps of the Civil Rights Movement by exploring the people, places and events that brought Alabama into the international spotlight and changed the course of history.



All-In-One Ticket for Civil Rights Sites

For practical marketability aimed at families and larger groups seeking to tour Alabama generally, the Tourism Department rolled out All-in-One ticket packages in January of 2022. (Martin, 2022). The message to the public is that they can “spend less and do more in Alabama,” and they are available for direct purchase by consumers and through third-party tour sellers like TripAdvisor. While these tickets are not solely geared toward civil rights attractions, each package covers many of the 29 stops on the Trail. For the Birmingham and Central Alabama package, the 16th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and the Historic Bethel Baptist Church are three of the twelve locations included, meaning that civil rights tourism accounts for one-fourth of the deal. Groups affiliated with churches, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations are among those interested in touring Alabama’s landmarks. According to Rosemary Judkins, the Tourism Department hopes that this type of pass program, along with its increased media presence

and tailored agendas available online, will engender more interest not only within this demographic, but in the population at large.

Development of Experience Givers

In efforts to focus on promoting an experience of civil rights history, the Tourism Department has created Alabama Civil Rights Trail Podcasts and are developing personal Experience Givers.

The Alabama Civil Rights Trail Podcasts are located on their website, where listeners can listen to experiences of people who lived through turbulent civil rights events. It is currently a three-part series that was launched in April of 2021. (Kennedy, 2021) Each of the three, thirty-minute episodes dive deep with interviews of historians and civil rights experts that tell real-life stories of people who lived through the Movement. There is a short introductory podcast, introducing listeners to what they can hear on the podcasts, followed by three podcasts that tell the stories of the Freedom Riders, the Birmingham Campaign, and the Selma March from the viewpoint of actual participants. The episodes end by encouraging listeners to visit the Tourism Department's website to plan their own civil rights journey. In a world where tourists of all age groups, especially the key demographic of people under the age of 30, are seeking out travel information exclusively online, the podcast is a hybrid of entertainment and information that casts the topic of civil rights in a uniquely compelling light.

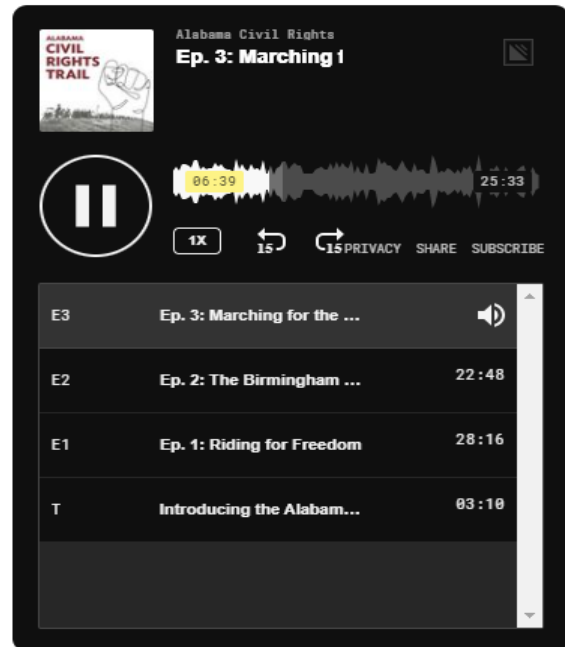
The Legacy Lives! Hear it

The Alabama Civil Rights Trail podcast adds a new dimension to how this history is told.

Hear Stories of the Movement and Their Morals for Today

The Alabama Civil Rights Trail Podcast features real stories of real people who were there. They were the foot soldiers who held the front lines of the Movement. They were the freedom riders and protestors. They sat when people ordered them to leave. By telling their stories, they'll be remembered and shared. And with the help of historians and other experts, we can learn why the events and actions from decades ago remain so relevant today.

Available wherever you get your podcasts.



The Tourism Department is looking for and developing Experience Givers. Experience givers recreate the past, taking tourists inside events as opposed to conventional tour guides who simply show where events occurred and recite what happened at these places. Experience Givers help tourists experience these events by painting a picture that brings the visitor into the story. Our team's Experience Giver was Michelle Browder, an artist who also owns and operates the tour company, More Than Tours. When Michelle was considering moving, she was encouraged by employees at the Tourism Department to remain in Alabama. In addition to encouragement, they also connected her with grants that helped her develop her tour company. They explained that she had the opportunity to share stories of Alabama in a way that was both fresh and unique.

Michelle took us through downtown Montgomery on a trolley car, weaving stories of Montgomery throughout different historical times and showing the underside of history that is often glossed over. One story was the story of Anarcha, Lucy, Betsey, and nine other enslaved women, who were both unwilling patients and surgical nurses of Doctor J. Marion Sims. It is a chilling story of how J. Marion Sims practiced experimental unnecessary surgeries without anesthesia, assaulting these women who could not fight back, then he was honored for his actions as the "father of

modern gynecology”. Thanks in large part to Michelle, his so-called honor has been revealed as dishonorable.

Michelle balances the stories of Montgomery, sharing different perspectives. Her tour celebrates the progress that the city of Montgomery has made. On the tour we were encouraged to reflect on these events and how we can use these stories to shape our world into a better world. Michelle’s trademark for her tour company is red glasses, symbolizing the necessity to “take a second look” at history and dig deeper into experiences. Our team’s experience was so profound that during our Solutions Alabama presentation, our team wore red glasses to demonstrate the impact of the experience she provided.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our team’s research of the Tourism Department’s current initiatives, Alabama is a front runner in the Civil Rights Tourism industry. By conducting research and connecting with state and city leaders, we have identified the following recommendations for increasing civil rights tourism in Alabama.

a. QR Code/Geofencing

While Alabama is utilizing the aforementioned online resources to expand its tourism audience, the Tourism Department is seeking innovative ways to reach the younger generation to expand its audience.

In its 2020 Tourism Industry Recovery Proposal, readily available to the public at www.tourism.alabama.gov, the Tourism Department listed geofencing and social media as examples of methods it seeks to execute within its marketing campaign. Geo-fencing is a location-based marketing tool typically incorporated into smartphone applications to send information to travelers, such as local restaurant advertisements popping up on social media when the user pings in that specific locale. (C. Smith, 2019) Geofencing was utilized during the 2022 World Games to inform visitors of the many civil rights attractions found in the area.

While geofencing is currently being utilized, we recommend integrating push notifications into the Civil Rights Trail application (or other applications) and then storing and evaluating that data to track traveler patterns. This would tailor publicity for the Trail to specific demographics. Push notifications use a custom geofence to define regional boundaries where an app wants to target travelers, so that certain advertisements and promotions are triggered to capture the user's attention when they enter or near that location. Success in this domain may be more applicable for targeting those who happen to be traveling in the area for work or personal reasons, whose plans may not already include any civil rights locations. By advertising based on location, the Tourism Department could access and market to a larger group of travelers that are already near the feature it's promoting, increasing the chance that their curiosity is piqued enough for them to visit.

On the back end, evaluating the data gained from geofencing strategies is invaluable for a tourism office to understand its target audience and take steps to further personalize its experiences. (Kressmann, 2014) Instead of relying on surveys and other online methods of gathering information, we recommend the Tourism Department tracks travelers' actual movements, which is more reliable and accurate representation of what content they will gravitate towards. This is an advantage especially when recruiting interest from a younger generation that may reject abstract concepts like the "Civil Rights Movement" but is excited by an experience tailored to their personal taste.

Currently, the cities of Birmingham and Montgomery are utilizing QR codes. Both Birmingham and Montgomery have placed QR Codes on historic walking trail signs in each respective city's downtown area. When scanned on a visitor's cell phone, the information provided not only tells

them the story of what happened but will direct visitors to the next civil rights attraction. We recommend QR codes to be utilized at all sites along the Civil Rights Trail. From the QR codes, data can be collected revealing the number of annual visitors at each site, providing the Tourism Department with information that is not currently being tracked.

b. In-State Signage and Advertising

While the Tourism Department utilizes social media and podcast platforms for online tourism advertising, we recommend that visitors be directed to its civil rights attractions by a traditional sign program. Many states, such as Maryland, have implemented such a sign policy that applies a “predictable and recognizable system” to help tourists identify places of historic and cultural significance, especially when visiting popular locations near those attractions. (Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development, 2015) This type of comprehensive system ensures that in-state signage is uniform and informative, providing directional and mileage indicators for every nearby point of interest.

As mentioned earlier, Alabama is home to a treasure trove of white sandy beaches lining the Gulf of Mexico that attract tourists from all over the nation. To get to this coastline, driving tourists must pass through many sites on the Civil Rights Trail, including but not limited to Birmingham, Montgomery, Monroeville, and Mobile. We recommend signage at every point of entry to the State that announces the Alabama Civil Rights Trail. We also recommend companion signs along the highway directing visitors to nearby civil rights locations.

Alabama also boasts eleven National Park Service sites connected to the Civil Rights Movement, such as Kelly Ingram Park in Birmingham. (National Parks Conservation Association, 2022) It is logical that better, clearer signage may move out-of-state citizens visiting cities in our state to dedicate a portion of their business or pleasure trip to make room for these parks.



It should not be overlooked that Alabama is also home to eight National Forests, many of which are close to or overlap with cities on the Civil Rights Trail. Bankhead National Forest is not far from Birmingham; Talladega National Forest is very near to Anniston; one of the closest major cities to the Tuskegee National Forest is Montgomery. (United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, 2005) Many nomadic-type travelers who gravitate toward national parks and forests are campers, equipped for road trips and eager to see the lay of the land in whatever state they are in. We recommend strategic signage and advertising in these areas to direct a traveler already primed for such a detour to engage with Alabama cities just miles from their chief destination.



Current signage at the Alabama State Line on Interstate Highways reads “Welcome to Sweet Home Alabama”, “Governor Kay Ivey”. Below this missive is the statement “Home of the 2022 World Games”. Now that the world games have taken place, we recommend changing “Home of the 2022 World Games” signage to “Home of Alabama’s Civil Rights Trail”. Without this signage, visitors to Alabama may overlook their unique opportunity to visit historical places that were at the heart of civil rights history. It is equally important to place Memorial Signage on highways regarding upcoming civil rights sites. This informs visitors where these sites are located but it also informs Alabama citizens about the many civil rights wonders our state has to offer. Places like Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the Edmund Pettus Bridge from Selma to Montgomery, and the internationally known Legacy Museum where visitors and citizens can do more than just visit, they can experience the emotions of the people who lived through these events. Furthermore, giving citizens of Alabama a sense of pride in what our state has to offer helps create ambassadors to their friends and acquaintances in other states.

However, in accordance with Code of Alabama Section 23-1-8-1, this signage cannot be funded by using State Funds. The Alabama Department of Transportation quotes the price of replacing the World Game signage below the “Welcome to Alabama” sign would be approximately \$3,053.00 each. This includes the price of the sign (\$1,093.75), labor & equipment (\$808.61), and an administrative fee of 13.63%. In addition, adding signage of upcoming civil rights sites inside Alabama would be approximately \$2,053 each, based upon the price of the sign (\$997.88), labor and equipment (\$808.61), and an administrative fee of 13.63%. Because state funds are not an option as state law prohibits the Tourism Department from advertising within the state, we recommend partnering with the cities of Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma. Combining the weight of the Tourism Department’s influence with each individual city’s budget and partners could influence the Alabama Department of Transportation to place signage on an Alabama highway near places where civil rights sites are located.

c. Website Revisions

The Tourism Department has two separate websites. Our team discovered each website contains many helpful features. We recommend the following changes to enhance the features on these two platforms.

The two different sites are found at <https://tourism.alabama.gov> and <https://alabama.travel>. Multiple search engines, Google, Bing, Yahoo, DuckDuckGo, and AOL, all show the first official choice for Alabama Tourism Department is <https://tourism.alabama.gov>.

This first website, <https://tourism.alabama.gov>, brings visitors into Alabama Tourism Department's official working site, explaining the Department's role in the tourism industry. It has the 2021 Economic Impact Report, information about applying for grants, and other information for tourism stakeholders.



Visitors who access the second website, <https://alabama.travel> or “Alabama’s Official Travel Guide”, also known as Sweet Home Alabama, view a rolling collage of the natural beauty of our state that include beaches, state cuisine, the space program, golf courses, museums, and a civil rights memorial. This second site has a visual appeal. A study that examined visual appeal and usability found that visual appeal beats usability as someone only has one chance to create a first impression. (E Wolfgang Drex1, 2021) An appealing first impression can encourage visitors to the website to stay and explore its features.



We recommend Alabama’s Official Travel Guide as the primary landing page. This will allow visitors to first view the beauty and wonder of Alabama. As you scroll down, visitors can order a printed Alabama Vacation & Events Guide and Alabama State Highway map. After a visitor enters their name and contact information, they see an option of selecting a specific interest such as “Civil Rights Legacy”, but if this option is shown earlier in the ordering process, people with certain interests will know that information is available.

A recent study by an American travel agency surveying a sample size of 1000 people showed that almost 90% of those participants now prefer to travel domestically instead of internationally (Pacaso, 2022). This movement toward almost exclusively in-country travel for Americans indicates that more easily available information, like Alabama’s events and map mailer, could finalize a tentative plan for a trip here. When scrolling down the website, users can select the “Civil Rights Legacy” icon. Under “Experience Alabama’s Civil Rights Trail” it mentions a PBS and Amazon Prime travel television series *Travels With Darley*, where Darley Newman visited Alabama Civil Rights historians, activists, and sites. Viewers can read more about African American Historic Sites, information about Lee Sentell’s amazing cultural travel book, *The Official U.S. Civil Rights Trail, What Happened Here Changed the World*, as well as information about celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

We recommend a link be provided to *Travels With Darley*, either a Youtube link advertising the episode (3 minutes, 8 seconds) [\(1404\) Travels with Darley - Alabama Civil Rights Trail: Montgomery - YouTube](#) or the actual episode. This link may entice viewers to visit these websites, creating further advertisement for the Tourism Department.

We recommend utilizing two productions by the Alabama Tourism Department: *Alabama Civil Rights Trail* (31 seconds) [\(1404\) Alabama Civil Rights Trail - YouTube](#) and *Alabama Civil Rights and More with Michelle Browder* (10 minutes, 16 seconds) [\(1404\) Alabama Civil Rights and More with Michelle Browder - YouTube](#).

The *Alabama Civil Right Trail* commercial grabs your attention by highlighting a Black grandfather helping his grandson experience the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the Civil Rights Memorial, and the First Baptist Church in Birmingham, while a White mother takes her daughter to experience the church where Martin Luther King preached. The commercial ends with both children's eyes meeting over an example of a segregated drinking fountain and their depth of what each child has learned can be felt with this exchange. The final screen shot is the statue of Martin Luther King and the Sweet Home Alabama logo and website. This commercial conveys the scope of the personal growth possible when experiencing these famous civil rights memorials in person.

The Alabama Civil Rights and More with Michelle Browder introduces visitors to prominent events and places that occurred in Alabama. Michelle Browder, the Experience Giver who connected with our team, embraces Alabama's history from Native Americans to now. Her words span a comprehensive timeline and geographical reach in the context of the state, reminding us of Alabama's first residents, Native Americans. She brings to life Alabama's slave holding history, Civil War, and Civil Rights, visiting well-known sites in Montgomery like the Dexter Avenue Church, The Freedom Riders Museum, the Rosa Parks Museum, the Legacy Museum, the First White House of the Confederacy, and the National Memorial of Peace and Justice. Then she suggests going to the Montgomery riverfront for thoughtful reflection on how the historical lessons these places represent have shaped our collective culture. While on this journey, she also makes recommendations on local restaurants that can give someone a flavor of Alabama. She makes this journey throughout Alabama showcasing other civil rights locations: Huntsville's Space and

Rocket Center, Muscle Shoals' Sound Studios, W.C. Handy's Home, and Helen Keller's Birthplace. By the time her production is finished, a viewer has received a taste of what is available in Alabama not only for viewing but for experiencing.



We recommend linking these two productions in a prominent place on the Civil Rights Legacy page, with captions that attract people to select them. Potential visitors to Alabama would receive a sample of the experience that Alabama is selling. Particularly with the Michelle Browder video, because the guide to content is interwoven with dining and leisure recommendations, a potential visitor will get a comprehensive illustration of what his or her trip could look like. We also recommend the Featured Locations and Events title be eliminated and the locations underneath be moved to The Legacy Lives Here.

When viewing “Places to Go” under Cities of Interest, civil rights places are listed but it is possible to make this listing more prominent. One example is Anniston, where a Civil Right monument appears when the “What to See & Do” montage is viewed. The Freedom Riders National Monument in Anniston is listed under “Civil Rights Heritage Trail –The Other Bus” in the montage but adding a picture or caption explaining the significance of the other bus will generate more interest. Each featured city that has a civil rights attraction should have an accompanying item advertising each attraction, to ensure that no town is left out of Alabama’s trail.

Next are the podcasts that give personal perspectives to civil rights events and provide historical context to which listeners of today can relate. Because the content of these podcasts is educational, this presents an opening to provide these podcasts to schools, helping to engage younger generations. We recommend the podcasts be provided to Education Departments at both Federal and State level. Encouraging young people to listen to podcasts of historical events can generate

interest in coming to these locations, and as stated earlier, groups affiliated with schools are among those most interested in touring Alabama's landmarks

Below the podcasts is a list of upcoming events. We recommend updating these events periodically to correspond to events featured in the Tourism Tuesday Newsletter that the Alabama Tourism Department sends out every Tuesday to an email group of people interested in upcoming events in Alabama.

Under "The Legacy Lives Here" additional pictures of civil rights sites appear that allow a visitor to click on the picture of each featured location and find the address, hours of operation and a telephone number. Near the bottom of the website is a list of civil rights sites and a map of Alabama. Corresponding dots on the map pinpoint the location of civil rights sites on the map. Both features are extremely helpful in finding specific civil rights locations.

Finally, many travel sites have a review section where visitors can comment on their experiences. A number of today's travelers love to read reviews before they go to a site. Furthermore, we recommend the Tourism Department add a readily accessible review section for civil rights sites, museums, and memorials for the benefit of visitors who plan their travels based upon reviews.

CONCLUSION

By increasing knowledge of the Alabama Civil Rights Trail through Alabama Civil Rights Tourism, additional revenue can be generated by increasing the number of visitors who stay overnight in Alabama hotels. Alabama Tourism's funds are generated strictly from hotel taxes. This revenue stream can be utilized to further advertise the trail, which will lead to a perpetual cycle of self-sustaining financial stability for civil rights tourism.

By continuing to promote "experiencing" Alabama Civil Rights Sites and Museums, we can increase awareness of the everlasting need for equality and encourage citizens to treat one another with fairness and justice, thereby fulfilling the promise of America to all its' citizens, regardless of race. By bringing these experiences to the forefront of Alabama's tourism advertising and

making the best information even more accessible, we will continue to promote Dr. King's brilliant dream. We can make the substance of that dream more than just a quote in a textbook, creating a tangible experience with cosmic implications: that all are created equal. This integral principle is made even more effective because it is entrenched in the geographical location where the nation's civil rights journey began—Alabama.

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