

Donald Trump was pushing and shoving his way through the Republican primaries and Bernie Sanders was promising free college education for all. People were taking sides on the question of whether Black Lives Matter was racist (as if black lives matter only when the value of white lives is acknowledged). The generation forged in the 60s, my generation, people destined to make America more equitable, more environmentally sensitive, less violent, and more inclusive, now lived in a deeply divided society marked by permanent war, an increasing gap between rich and poor, climate change denial, resurgent racism, gun violence, and distrust of government. I wanted to get out into the American homeland at a street level to observe and ponder what was happening....

We drove to Selma, Alabama where we were scheduled to meet my sister Ann who was a VISTA volunteer working with the rural black community in the small village of Annemanie outside of Selma. The plan was to meet Ann at a local Holiday Inn restaurant to spend some time together before Gramps and I moved on to our destination in Florida. Ann brought with her a lovely young female friend, a black woman from Annemanie. No problem, right? The civil rights movement had sensitized American to the importance of equal rights. *Brown v. Board of Education* had been on the books for almost 15 years and the Civil Rights Act prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations had been enacted four years previously. But this was Selma, the Selma of police dog and water hose fame....

It is universally known that music evokes memories of special times, places, and people. If this is true in general, it was true in spades during my road trip. A day, a week, a month on the road pushes your mind down rabbit holes that lead to hidden depositories of sentimental relics. During a short commute to work, an FM station might play a random song that exhumes the forgotten feeling of first love. You arrive at work and the song is still playing and you are tempted to sit, to listen, to savor and ruminate, but discipline and habit and the day's tasks compel you to turn off the engine, exit your car, and walk distractedly up the walk to the door that is the portal, and has been the portal, to your responsible, prosaic grown-up life. But if on a road trip you could stay with that song, Diana Ross' *Ain't No Mountain High Enough*, for example, a song that is a portal to the moment of an early love, and you let it wash over you and seep deeply into the cracks of your psyche's guarded interior, you could reconstruct the context and nuances of the experience, and write a poem....