

Mylon Patton

I will forever be grateful for the privilege of being in the cohort. Being in a group full of changemakers, survivors, and down-to-earth individuals truly changed my life. When I spoke with the changemakers on the trip, it inspired me even more to continue the fight. When I looked into the eyes of the survivors who have long fought this battle for justice and peace, I saw resilience—but I also saw hope; hope that the system which runs with precision to keep many behind bars will cease to exist. I have grown to realize this cohort is a family. We laughed together. We cried together. And we were inspired together.

As a younger member of the cohort, I had much to learn. I am thankful for my fellow cohort members for being so willing to share their experiences, beliefs, and thoughts with me on anything from poetry to the abolition of prisons.

Our cohort did many great things on the trip. We took a visit to Bryan Stevenson's Equal Justice Initiative Memorial, where we were inundated with Our people's sad but resilient history. Similarly, I believe that the memorial that has been demanded in honor of the victims of State Violence in Chicago will be one that is centered around truth-telling, peace, and action.

Standing behind the pulpit where Dr. King once inspired millions reaffirmed for me that the ability to make a difference is so very attainable. My Faith and my belief in the potential that America can be greater flooded my mind throughout that experience, and it was empowering to see my peers—who I have grown to realize as my Family—stand in that room with me.

The Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama, is named after a former Alabama Senator, Confederate general, and Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. I remember that walk our group took across the bridge so vividly.

There was a sense of reverence with every step I took on the bridge; I felt that I needed to do my best to place myself in the shoes of those who came before me. On the other hand, I did not want to linger too long. The end of the bridge, and the realization that the race had been won, brought me closer and closer.

Walking that bridge, for me, was symbolic of the work we have accomplished and the work we have yet to see through.

And we are still walking that bridge.