

JoAnn Bland



Jo Ann Bland-(July 29, 1953- February 19, 2026) Born in Selma, Alabama, she joined the civil rights movement at 8 years of age, participating in sit-ins and being arrested more than a dozen times, and became one of the youngest marchers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday in 1965, when she was just 11 years old. She had come with her older sister to join a march from Selma to the state capital in Montgomery. Before they'd even left Selma, the activists, led by Hosea Williams of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and John Lewis of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, or SNCC, were met by armed state troopers and local police, some on horseback, and viciously beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Film captured that day brought the brutality used to suppress the rights of Black Americans into homes across the U.S. Living that history drove Bland to dedicate her life to sharing it, trying to safeguard the lessons from that time. A true foot soldier for freedom, she later participated in the Selma to Montgomery March.

Jo Ann Bland was one of the first Black students to integrate A.G. Parrish High School in Selma, Alabama. Following High School, she continued her education at the College of Staten Island in New York. She later served in the United States Army. After her return to Selma, she co-founded the National Voting Rights Museum, and continued educating others about civil rights. Her family announced her death in a statement saying, "Miss Bland departed this life surrounded by love, leaving behind a legacy of strength, grace and unwavering dedication to her family and community."