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### ***Mary Lee Bendolph Biography***

**Mary Lee Bendolph** (born 1935) descends from generations of accomplished quiltmakers in Gee's Bend, Alabama. She learned to quilt from her mother and other relatives. She worked in the fields and attended school sporadically until she was 14, when she began her own family. She has seven living children. Bendolph was one of many Gee's Benders who accompanied Martin Luther King, Jr. in his march at Camden, Alabama in 1965. In 1999, she was profiled in a *Los Angeles Times* Pulitzer Prize-winning article, *Crossing Over: Mary Lee's Vision*. Her quilting style marries a flair for improvisation to traditional construction techniques that emphasize rectangles and squares. Her small compositions of cloth build to create complicated compositions that occasionally contain humorous touches and autobiographical references. Since 2002 Bendolph has worked to promote greater understanding of her community and art form. She has appeared on television and radio programs, including PBS's documentary *The Quiltmakers of Gee's Bend*. Her quilts have been featured in museum and gallery exhibitions, including *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* and *Gee's Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt*. Bendolph was the featured artist in the traveling exhibition *Mary Lee Bendolph, Gee's Bend Quilts, and Beyond*.