

Celebrating the Remarkable Contributions of John Lewis

“You must be bold, brave, and courageous and find a way... to get in the way...to get in trouble, good trouble, necessary trouble.”

-John Lewis



John Lewis was born February 21, 1940 to sharecroppers in Troy, Alabama. As a boy, he was very bothered by segregation in the South. He knew segregation was wrong from a very young age. He met Rosa Parks at the age of 17 and Martin Luther King Jr at 18. He joined MLK Jr. and the civil rights movement when he was just 21 years old. He was the youngest member of the “Freedom Riders” and one of the original “Big Six” civil rights icons, organized during the March on Washington in 1963. He stood beside MLK Jr. while he delivered his “I Believe” speech. He led three marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama to end racial segregation in the US. He was often beaten and jailed for his participation in protests. He was elected to the House of Representatives and served from 1986 until his death in July, 2020.

He was a champion, not just for civil rights, but for injustice of other communities, including the Jewish community. In 1988, he introduced a bill to create a National African American Museum in Washington. It took 15 years and many defeats to finally get the Senate’s approval. President George W. Bush signed the bill for the Smithsonian to establish the museum’s location in 2003. The museum finally opened on September 25, 2016. He was awarded many honorary degrees and awards over his lifetime, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded by President Obama in 2010. He served up until his death in July, 2020 from pancreatic cancer. He was the first African American to lie in state in the Rotunda of the US Capitol.

Born: February 21, 1940

Died: July 17, 2020

Hometown: Troy Alabama, Lived in Atlanta Georgia

Education: American Baptist College, Fisk University