

## #1359 The Life, Legacy and Lessons of John Lewis

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning Best of the Left podcast, in which we shall learn about the life and legacy of Congressman John Lewis, at a moment in time when the lessons he has to teach us are as important as when he first learned them himself during the dawn of the civil rights era. Clips today come from Sojourner Truth, Lift Every Voice, The Brian Lehrer Show, Into America, Fresh Air, On Point, The Politicrat, and a portion of Barack Obama's eulogy given at John Lewis's funeral.

### Honoring C.T. Vivian & Congressman John Lewis - Sojourner Truth Radio - Air Date 7-21-20

**MARGARET PRESCOD - HOST, SOJOURNER TRUTH RADIO:** On Friday, July 17th, the world lost two icons of the civil rights movement in the United States; C.T. Vivian and Congressman John Lewis. C.T. Vivian born on July 30th, 1924 in Boonville, Missouri was an activist author minister and lead organizer during the civil rights movement alongside the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In 1947, C.T. Vivian took part in his first sit in demonstrations, which successfully integrated Barton's cafeteria in Illinois. C.T. Vivian co-founded the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference and help coordinate sit in protest against segregation in Nashville in 1960 and an historic civil rights March the following year. He also participated in the Freedom Rides in which activists traveled on interstate buses across segregated states in the South and there were met with much violence. The Freedom Rides challenge the lack of enforcement of two Supreme Court decisions, which rule that segregated public buses were unconstitutional. In 2008, he went on to establish the C.T. Vivian Leadership Institute. In 2013, former president Barack Obama awarded C.T. Vivian the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

And, Congressman John Lewis, born on February 21st, 1940 in Boon [sic], served as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, known as SNCC. He was an active member as a young man from 1963 to 1966. As respected leader of SNCC, helped organize the historic March on Washington in 1963, protesting racism and segregationist policies. There he delivered an impassioned speech in which he was prepared to deal with the question, which side is the federal government on? In 1965 on a day known as Bloody Sunday, he was beat up with batons by police on the Edmund Pettus Bridge resulting in a fractured skull. Like C.T. Vivian, Congressman John Lewis was awarded the presidential medal of freedom by former president Barack Obama. He represented Georgia's 5th Congressional district in the House of Representatives from 1987 until his passing.

Funeral services for C.T. Vivian are set for Thursday, July 23rd at the Providence Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, this according to the Atlanta Journal Constitution. And funeral services for Congressman John Lewis have not yet been announced, but memorials are expected to take place in Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and in his birthplace of Troy, Alabama, according to B.E.T. Let's go to a few clips. Now, the first you'll hear a C.T. Vivian confronting a very, very brutal situation in the South with just very, very brutal law enforcement and with him confronting Bull Connor, and then you will hear the voice of John Lewis. Let's go to those clips now.

**C.T. VIVIAN (ARCHIVAL AUDIO):** You can't keep anyone in the United States from voting without hurting the rights of all other citizens. He shoved the nightstick into my solar plexus. Then the policeman lets loose. It went all over the country. When you see that people are being beaten because they want to vote. The people in the country know who's wrong.

**PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA:** Rosa parks said of him, even after things that supposedly been taken care of and we had our rights. He was still out there inspiring the next generation, including me

**C.T. VIVIAN (ARCHIVAL AUDIO):** Only the things that help you help somebody are really worth the effort.

**FREDRICKA WHITFIELD, CNN HOST:** So this, in your view, is not an honor to represent all that you have done, but instead you say this is incentive to continue to do more.

**C.T. VIVIAN (ARCHIVAL AUDIO):** Of course, of course. And you got it exactly right. We have proven that we can solve social problems without violence, if we choose.

## **#GoodTrouble ft. John Lewis Part 1 - Lift Every Voice - Air Date 1-15-18**

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** You and I have talked a lot about your early days, but . . . There's a lot of young people out there that, that I think could get a lot of inspiration from the fact that you were very young. You were a college student and, and suddenly were compelled to jump head-first into the Civil Rights movement. Can you tell me a little bit about your motivation, and those early experiences about you making a very dramatic decision in your life to go full-in on a cause for justice?

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Well, growing up in rural Alabama, during the forties and fifties, I tasted the bitter fruits of segregation and racial discrimination, and I didn't like it. I saw the signs that said White waiting, Colored waiting, White men, Colored men, White women, Colored women. And I kept asking my mother, my father, my grandparents, my great grandparents why, and they would say, So, that's the way it is! Don't get in the way; don't get in trouble. But one day, 15 years old in the 10th grade, I heard the voice of Martin Luther King, Jr. on the radio and his words, his voice inspired me. I heard of Rosa Parks. I grew up 50 miles from Montgomery, and it was like manna from heaven hearing about Rosa Parks getting arrested, taken to jail. Hearing Dr. King delivering a speech at the First Baptist Church in Montgomery, it changed my life.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** Wow.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** And I kept saying to myself, if the people in Montgomery can do this, we can do something, too. So, in 1957, I applied to go to a little college called Troy State College. It's now known as Troy University. It didn't admit Black students. So, I submitted my application, my high school transcript. I never heard a word from the school.

So, I wrote a letter to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I didn't tell my mother; I didn't tell my father any my sisters or brothers, any of my teachers . I told Dr. King in this letter I needed his help.

He wrote me back and sent me a round-trip, Greyhound bus ticket, and invited me to come to Montgomery.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** That alone , it's spectacular to me that he wrote you back . . .

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** . . . He wrote me back . . .

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** . . . and sent you the round trip ticket .

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Well, he knew I was very poor. . . .

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** . . .yes . . .

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** . . . son of a sharecropper. But my father, in 1944, when I was four years old, had saved \$300, and a man sold him 110 acres of land. I think Dr. King had his, What can come out of Troy? Why is this boy doing this? It's dangerous. I got accepted at a little college in Nashville called American Baptist Theological Seminary, which later became the College of the Bible. I wanted to be a minister.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** Right.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** You know, growing up as a little kid on the farm, we raised a lot of chickens.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** Yes

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** It was my responsibility to care for the chickens, and we would gather all of our chickens together in the chicken yard, and my brothers and sisters and cousins were lined outside of the chicken yard. But, along with the chickens, they helped make up the audience, the congregation. I would preach to the chickens.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** And they would respond to you, right?

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Yes, make a little noise also. And Dr. King, somehow in some way, believed that something good can come out of rural Alabama, out of Troy. So, I was accepted to a little school in Nashville, Tennessee .And Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. got back in church one of his classmates who was one of my teachers, told him that I was there, and he suggested when I was home for spring break to come and see him.

So, in March of 1953, by this time I'm 18 years old, I took a Greyhound bus from Troy 50 miles away to Montgomery.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** Wow.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** And a young lawyer, I've never seen a lawyer, never met a lawyer before, a man by the name of Fred Gray -- who was a lawyer for Rosa Parks, Dr. King, and the Montgomery Movement and became our lawyer during the Freedom Ride, and during the March from Selma to Montgomery -- drove me to the First Baptist Church, pastored by the Reverend Ralph Abernathy.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** Yes.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** And I was so scared. I didn't know what to say or what to do. He ushered me into the office of the church. I saw Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy standing behind a desk. And Dr. King spoke up and said, Oh, are you the boy from Troy? Are you John Lewis? And I said, Dr. King, I am John Robert Lewis, but he still called me the boy from Troy up until he was assassinated.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** . . . Really . . .

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** He referred to me as the boy from Troy, how's the boy from Troy doing . . .

## **CT Vivian What kind of people are you? - Brian Lehrer Show - Air Date 7-20-20**

**BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW:** I also want to take two minutes and play an excerpt from the life of the other civil rights hero, leader, who died on the same day as John Lewis did on Friday. Not as universally well known as John Lewis, but for people in the movement at that time, C.T. Vivian was a force. He was a very close colleague of Martin Luther King as director of affiliates for King's group, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which was basically an organization of affiliates, church leaders from many different Southern communities and C.T. Vivian led anti segregation efforts in various cities, and was a leading practitioner of nonviolent protest. He was the victim of police violence and of being jailed multiple times. What we're going to play now. And I'm going to apologize for the 1965 sound quality with a little buzz in the background, but I think it's worth it. What we're going to play now is two minutes of an encounter in Selma, Alabama in 1965, when C.T. Vivian led a group to the courthouse there to try to register to vote. And it's incredible that this even exists because it wasn't like anyone had cell phones to record these things in 1965, right, but it was filmed. And what you'll hear is C.T. Vivian confronting the infamous segregationist sheriff in Selma from those days, Jim Clark, and Clark calling the group who was trying to register felons. When Vivian persists, Clark actually punches him in the face. And you'll hear some seconds of just chaos, it's just going to be audio chaos, no words for part of this after the punch, but then you'll also hear C.T. Vivian get back up, stick to his nonviolence and ask, "what kind of people are you?" So two minutes of C.T. Vivian, Selma, Alabama, 1965.

**C.T. VIVIAN (ARCHIVAL AUDIO):** ...courthouse does not belong to Sheriff Clark, this courthouse belongs to the people of Dallas County, and these are the people of Dallas County, and they have come to register. And you know this within your own heart Sheriff Clark. You are not as evil that as you ask, you know, in your heart, what is right, you just refuse to do it because you want these people behind you. And as sheriff of this county it's you're deeply concerned, you will go call the registrars rather than keep people from standing inside. What you're really trying to do it that intimidate these people, and by making them stand in the rain keep them from registering to vote.

And this, this is the kind of violation of the constitution, a violation of the court orders the violation of decent citizenship. You can turn your back on me, but you cannot turn your back upon the idea of justice. You can turn your back now and you can keep the club in your hand,

but you cannot beat down justice. And we will register to vote because as citizens of these United States we have the right to do it.

**DALLAS COUNTY DEPUTY SHERIFF:** I'm looking down the line seeing all the people who've been in jail for felonies, that's what I'm looking at.

**C.T. VIVIAN (ARCHIVAL AUDIO):** Precisely right, and if they're not fit to vote, you'll be able to find that out. But you'll not know until the, until they're on the registrar. And many of those have a felony action because Sheriff Clark made them a felony action, not because they were rightfully issued.

You don't have to beat us.

You don't have to beat us.

How dare you? You beat people bloody in order so they will not have the privilege to vote.

You beat me in the side and then hide your blow, but I don't want me to leave. We have come to register to vote. You beat us for the truth. What kind of people are you?

**BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW:** "What kind of people are you?" C.T. Vivian in Selma, Alabama with Sheriff Jim Clark in 1965. That incident helped lead to the passage of the Voting Rights Act later that same year. C.T. Vivian died on Friday, the same day as John Lewis. C.T. Vivian was 95 years old. John Lewis was 80.

## **Into Remembering John Lewis - Into America - Air Date 7-21-20**

**TRYMAINE LEE - HOST, INTO AMERICA:** Dr. Bernard Lafayette, Jr. has spent decades fighting for civil rights through organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He was named national coordinator for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign in 1968. Dr. Lafayette worked alongside John Lewis for years. But they met as roommates at American Baptist College way back in 1958.

**BERNARD LAFAYETTE:** We had a common kind of upbringing, you might say, in terms of the racial conditions that exist, and we had a lot of the same attitudes about not accepting it and not going along with it. But, at the same time, because of the way we were brought up, we didn't have any hatred towards other people. And so we had that in common. But, he was the president, class president, so, he was already in a leadership position. And the other thing is, he was a year ahead of me, so I got a chance to read all of his books, and he tutored me, okay?

**TRYMAINE LEE - HOST, INTO AMERICA:** That's much different than the nightmare roommate situation that some people have. You got John Lewis, [LAUGHTER] the president of the student body, mentoring and teaching you.

**BERNARD LAFAYETTE:** Yes.

**TRYMAINE LEE - HOST, INTO AMERICA:** Are there any stories that just stand out that you recall from those early days of just John Lewis?

**BERNARD LAFAYETTE:** Well, he was always very calm with others, and the thing that really impressed me was the fact that, when there was an issue or problem, he never did attack other people. He was very quiet and he listened, okay? And then he decided how he was gonna respond. And people respected him. I think that's why they wanted him as a leader, because, remember now, all of these students were potential leaders, like pastors of churches and ministers. So, this was a leader of the future leaders.

**TRYMAINE LEE - HOST, INTO AMERICA:** So, you have in John Lewis this natural born leader. Who were you at that time? And were you ready to jump into activism and protests from the beginning?

**BERNARD LAFAYETTE:** Well, actually, what happened was that, when John Lewis asked me about these workshops that were goin' on -- -- -- James Lawson, Jr. was a graduate student at Vanderbilt, and he was conducting these workshops in Nashville, because Martin Luther King had told him to come South -- and so John Lewis was going to them. And, you know, he asked me to come and I said, "No, man, I don't have time for that. I got jobs." I was always used to working, but he kept insisting. So I said, "All right, okay. All right." I'm gonna come just to shut his mouth. And, sure enough, when I went to that workshop, and they were talking about sitting in at lunch counters and stuff like that, I was hooked. So, it was John Lewis that got me hooked.

**TRYMAINE LEE - HOST, INTO AMERICA:** There are so many iconic photos of John Lewis. And one that stands out to me which really puts on display the sacrifices that y'all were making is this image of him after he got bloodied and beaten in Alabama, I believe it was, during the Freedom Rides.

Oh, yeah.

**BERNARD LAFAYETTE:** Could you take us back to 1961 when the Freedom Rides began?

So, when it started, we started training people, okay, like we did for the sit-ins there, for the Freedom Rides. And we set up a 24-hour training station. So, you have to get organized. It's not just a matter of goin' down, protesting or doing some, sit-ins, or whatever. We had a backup group, in other words. So, when we took over the Freedom Rides, John Lewis was the spokesman for the first group, and I was spokesman for the second group, the backup group. So, we had to see what was gonna happen to them when they got to Birmingham leaving Nashville. And then, whatever happened to them, then we'd decide on the second group. They got arrested, and while they got arrested, we launched a second group, and we crossed each other in the middle of the night, okay, because some of us went by car and some went by train. And what we did was met together in Birmingham and started off there. Now, when John Lewis was attacked was when we got to Montgomery. And we got into Montgomery. It was very quiet even though it was on Saturday morning: no people on the street, no cars running, nothing like that. We had National Guardsmen. We had state troopers. Everybody giving us protection on the bus. But, when the bus got to Montgomery, Alabama bus station, okay, all those protections disappeared, helicopters and everything.

**TRYMAINE LEE - HOST, INTO AMERICA:** They were there and then they're just gone.

**BERNARD LAFAYETTE:** Yeah. So, we got suspicious. So, I told the students to all join hands and find a partner. No matter what happens, you stick with your partner so somebody'll know what happened to you. And while we were there getting ready to get off the bus, a group of reporters had gotten a bus out of Birmingham earlier ahead of us so that they could film and take pictures and stuff like that.

And the mob came out of the bus station and took off and started beating up all the reporters, beating White reporters, smashing cameras over their head. I couldn't imagine. I didn't know what would happen. So anyway, we joined hands. And the mob came and started beating us up.

Then, when they hit John Lewis, they hit with a Coca-Cola crate over the head, and that metal strip was the thing that put that gash in his head. Not just the crate, okay? And they were trying to kill John Lewis because they knew him, and had identified him as one of the leaders. They were clobbering him over the head and putting scars. Then they came after me. And, boy, this guy had on some brogan shoes, and he was gonna kick me in a certain place on my body. And I tried to protect myself, so I folded my arms around and bent down when he started to kick. And he ended up cracking three of my ribs. I went through the Freedom Rides all those days and months with three cracked ribs because there's nothing you can do with cracked ribs. You can't do surgery and all that. So, that was a lesson for me, because I learned how to endure pain. And I didn't wanna complain. Because [LAUGH] my buddies wouldn't let me go on the Freedom Rides if I had cracked ribs, you know?

**TRYMAINE LEE - HOST, INTO AMERICA:** You just had to tough it out.

**BERNARD LAFAYETTE:** Right. So anyway, John Lewis -- it's not the fact that he was hit over the head -- the thing about it, John did not move! He did not try to escape. He stood there even after they cracked him over the head. I guess the word that you can describe John Lewis is he had indescribable resistance. Yeah. That was his way of responding in a nonviolent way, to show them that hitting him over the head was not a way to stop him.

## Remembering Rep. John Lewis - Fresh Air - Air Date

### 7-20-20

**TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR:** In the 1960s Lewis repeatedly risked his life working to end segregation and gain voting rights for black people in the South. When he was growing up in Alabama, there was one County whose population was 80% African American, but there wasn't a single registered Black voter. Here's our interview.

[SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED NPR BROADCAST]

Congressman Lewis, welcome to FRESH AIR, and thank you so much for joining us.

When you were a young man, were you ever challenged at the polls? Did you have a hard time registering, or did anyone ever try to prevent you from voting?

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** When I was growing up in rural Alabama, it was impossible for me to register to vote. I did not become a registered voter until I moved to Tennessee, to Nashville as a student.

**TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR:** Why was it impossible?

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Black men and women were not allowed to register to vote. My own mother, my own father, my grandfather and my uncles and aunts could not register to vote because each time they attempted to register to vote, they were told they could not pass the literacy tests. And many people were so intimidated, so afraid that they would lose their job, they would be evicted from the farms and they just - they almost gave up.

**TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR:** Your parents were sharecroppers.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Now...

My mother and father and many of my relatives had been sharecroppers. They had been tenant farmers, like so many people in South. They knew the stories that had occurred. They knew places in Alabama where people were evicted from the farm, from the plantation. They read about, they heard about incidents in Tennessee where people were evicted from the farms and the plantation back in 1956, in 1957 in west Tennessee between Nashville and Memphis, Tenn.

**TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR:** Now, because of that, did you - did your parents tell you not to bother to try to vote because it would be dangerous, they might lose their farm?

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** My parents told me in the very beginning - as a young child when I raised the question about segregation and racial discrimination, they told me not to get in the way, not to get in trouble, not to make any noise. But we had teachers. We had high school principals. We had people teaching in colleges and university in Tuskegee, Ala. But they were told they failed the so-called literacy test.

**TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR:** One of the more dramatic moments of the civil rights movement was a march that you helped lead in 1965 of about 600 people. The march was supposed to be from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., demanding voting rights. But the marchers were stopped soon after you started marching. And you were beaten by the police. Would you talk first a little bit about the goal of that march?

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** In 1965, the attempted march from Selma to Montgomery on March 7 was planned to dramatize to the state of Alabama and to the nation that people of color wanted to register to vote. In Selma, you could only attempt to register to vote on the first and third Mondays of each month. You had to go down to the courthouse and get a copy of the so-called literacy test and attempt to pass the test. And people stood in line day in and day out, failing to get a copy of the test or failing to pass the test.

So after several hundred people had been arrested and people had been beaten and one young man had been shot and killed, we decided to march. And on Sunday afternoon, March 7, about 600 of us left a little church called Brown Chapel AME Church and started walking in an orderly, peaceful, nonviolent fashion through the streets of Selma. We were walking in twos, no one saying a word. We came to the edge of the bridge crossing the Alabama River. We continued to walk.

We came to the highest point on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Down below, we saw a sea of blue - Alabama state troopers. And we kept walking. We came within hearing distance of the state troopers. And a man identified himself and said, I'm Major John Cloud of the Alabama

state troopers. This is an unlawful march. You will not allowed to continue. I give you three minutes to disperse and return to your church.

In less than a minute and a half, the major said, troopers advance. And you saw these men putting on their gas masks. They came toward us, beating us with the bullwhips, nightsticks, shoving [ph] us with horses and releasing the tear gas. I was hit in the head by a state trooper with a nightstick. I thought I saw death. I thought I was going to die. I had a concussion there at the bridge. And almost 44 years later, I don't recall how I made it back across that bridge through the streets of Selma.

But I do recall being back at the church that Sunday afternoon. The church was full to capacity, more than 2,000 people on the outside. And someone said to me, John, say something to the audience. Speak to them. And I stood up and said something like, I don't understand it - how President Johnson can send troops to Vietnam but cannot send troops to Selma, Ala., to protect people who only desire is to register to vote.

What was

**TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR:** the impact, do you think, of that march on the actual passage of the Voting Rights Act?

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** The march created a sense of righteous indignation among the American people. When they saw the photographs, when they read the stories, when they heard the news on the radio or watched it on television, they didn't like it. A few days after Bloody Sunday, there was demonstration in more than 80 American cities - at the White House, at the Department of Justice. People were demanding that the government act.

President Johnson didn't like what he saw. He called Governor Wallace, the governor of Alabama at the time, to come to Washington and tried to get assurance from the governor that he would be able to protect us if we decided to march again. The governor could not assure the president, so President Johnson federalized the Alabama National Guard, called up part of the United States military. And eight days after Bloody Sunday, President Lyndon Johnson spoke to a joint session of the Congress and made one of the most meaningful speeches any American president had made in modern time on the whole question of voting rights and introduced the Voting Rights Act.

And I was sitting in a home in Selma, Ala., that evening when President Johnson spoke to the nation and spoke to the Congress, sitting with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. And at one point in the speech, before Dr. - before President Johnson, rather, concluded the speech, he said, and we shall overcome. And we shall overcome. I looked at Dr. King. Tears came down his face. And we all cried a little to hear President Johnson say, and we shall overcome. And he said to me and to others in the room, we will make it from Selma to Montgomery, and the Voting Rights Act will be passed.

Finally, two weeks after Bloody Sunday, we started on the third effort to make it from Selma to Montgomery. Three hundred of us marched all the way. But by the time we walked into Montgomery, there were more than 25,000 citizens. And that effort led the Congress to debate the Voting Rights Act and pass that act. And president Johnson signed it into law in August of 1965.

## #GoodTrouble ft. John Lewis Part 2 - Lift Every Voice - Air Date 1-15-18

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** But you used a word earlier about how liberating it was to surrender to the cause of nonviolence, to surrender to the ideals of this movement and this philosophy of love that so penetrates your being. I feel it when I'm in your presence, this calm, unconditional, unyielding love that led you to be beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, beaten on freedom rides, beaten at lunch counters. I wonder, can you connect that ideal of love to . . . Here we are, in present day politics, and people all around this country . . . We don't see often that spirit of love. How does that, can you tell me about your personal philosophy, this liberating philosophy, and how you see it needed today, maybe?

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Well, the philosophy is in keeping with the teaching of Gandhi, in keeping with the Scriptures. It's better to love than to hate. Dr. King used to say to us over and over again, Hate is too heavy a burden to bear. You free yourself; you liberate yourself and say, I'm not going to hate. I'm just going to love everybody. Dr. K used to joke from time to time, and say, Just love the hell out of everybody.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** Right?

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** You will feel better. One of the guys that beat us in Rock Hill, South Carolina in May, 1961 [loud beeping heard in background]

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** Yes, those are the buzzers for Congress. They tell us when to go and where to go, but keep going. One of the people that beat you . . .

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Yeah, [he] came to my office, came to my office years later here in Washington, he had been enquiring with local people, members of the press, that he wanted to meet this guy that he had attacked at the Greyhound bus station in Rock Hill. He was in his seventies. He came with a son who was in his forties and a reporter from Rock Hill, South Carolina came with him . And he came in, and I said, Welcome. He said, Mr. Lewis, I've been a member of the Klan. I'm one of the people that beat you and your seat mate. Will you forgive me?

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** Wow.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Um, I said, I forgive you. He said, Will you accept my apology? I said, I accept your apology. His son started crying; he started crying. They hugged me. I hugged him back. And the three of us cried together. It is the power of the way of peace, the power of the philosophy and the discipline of nonviolence. But you cannot go around just hating people or putting people down because of their feeling, their being, their past, their color, their nationality; we all are human.

## 'Good Trouble' A new generation of activists in John Lewis' indelible legacy - On Point - Air Date 7-20-20

**MEGHNA CHAKRABARTI - HOST, ON POINT:** But first, let's listen to Lewis himself remembering what it was like being a young activist on a massive national stage on August

28th, 1963. He was just 23 when he stood beside Martin Luther King at the Lincoln Memorial, the youngest speaker at the historic March on Washington. He was introduced that day by A. Phillip Randolph.

**A. PHILIP RANDOLPH (ARCHIVAL AUDIO):** I have the pleasure to present to this great audience young John Lewis, national chairman, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Brother John Lewis.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** When A. Philip Randolph called my name to introduce me on the street to the podium, then I said to myself, I said, I must go for it, and I started speaking...

**JOHN LEWIS (ARCHIVAL AUDIO):** We march today for jobs and freedom. But, we have nothing to be proud of, for hundreds and thousands of our brothers are not here.

**MEGHNA CHAKRABARTI - HOST, ON POINT:** Well, I had the pleasure of speaking with Congressman Lewis at length back in 2013, and we want to hear more of that conversation. Now, we started by talking about what had happened earlier that summer in '63, when civil rights leaders first told President Kennedy that they were planning to March on the nation's capital.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** That was back in June, when we met with the President. A. Philip Randolph, this dean of Black leadership, this prince of a man, spoke up in his baritone voice. And he said, Mr. President, the Black monsters are restless, and we're going to March on Washington. And you can tell by the body language of President Kennedy he didn't like the idea, someone talking about marching on Washington.

**MEGHNA CHAKRABARTI - HOST, ON POINT:** The march hadn't even been formally planned at that time, right?

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Not at all, not at all, but the idea he saw of bringing hundreds and thousands of people to Washington. He said, if you bring all these people to Washington, won't there be violence and chaos and disorder? And we will never get a civil rights bill through the Congress. Mr. Randolph responded and said, Mr. President, this will be an orderly, peaceful, nonviolent protest.

**MEGHNA CHAKRABARTI - HOST, ON POINT:** You were just 23 at the time.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** I was 23 years old, had all of my hair and a few pounds lighter.

**MEGHNA CHAKRABARTI - HOST, ON POINT:** You were speaker number six on that day. First of all, tell me what you saw.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Hundreds and thousands of young people: students, volunteers, Black and White, up in the trees, trying to get a better view. Then I looked straight ahead. I saw many, many young people and people not so young with their shoes off, their feet in the water, trying to cool off on this hot August day.

**MEGHNA CHAKRABARTI - HOST, ON POINT:** Now your speech, Congressman Lewis, on that day, many people think that it's actually as memorable, possibly, as Dr. King's was because Dr. King gave this resounding sermon almost about hope and dreams in America. Is it fair to say that your speech was something of a counterpoint about the reality of what was happening

in the South at that time? I mean, in the speech you say that we come here today with a great sense of misgiving.

**JOHN LEWIS (ARCHIVAL AUDIO):** It is true that we support the administration's Civil Rights bill. We support it with great reservation, however. Unless Title III is put in this bill, there's nothing to protect the young children and old women who must face police dogs and fire hoses in the South while they engage in peaceful demonstration.

**MEGHNA CHAKRABARTI - HOST, ON POINT:** Basically, because you didn't feel that enough was in the Civil Rights bill to protect people against violence in the South.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** I thought it was too little and too late, and down in the body of the speech, I said, Listen, Mr. President, listen, members of Congress, wake up, wake up. You're trying to take the revolution out of the streets and put it in the courts. I said, You tell us the wait you tell us to be patient.

**JOHN LEWIS (ARCHIVAL AUDIO):** We are tired. We are tired of being beaten by policemen. We're tired of seeing our people locked up in jail over and over again, and then you holler, be patient. How long can we be patient? We want our freedom, and we want it now.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** But what people really didn't like, near the end of the speech, I said something like, If we do not see meaningful progress here today, the day may come when we will not confine our marching on Washington, but we may be forced to march through the South, the way Sherman did, nonviolently. They said, Oh, no! You can't say that, John. And it was Martin Luther King, Jr. who said to me, John, that doesn't sound like you, and we deleted that from the speech.

**MEGHNA CHAKRABARTI - HOST, ON POINT:** And yet it was still so passionate and forthright. I'm asking you about this because we're speaking a half century later, and it's very easy with that kind of distance to look back on momentous events like this through kind of rose-colored lenses, isn't it. And yet in 1963, there was horrific violence. There was no guarantee, as President Kennedy said, that the Civil Rights bill would be passed.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Well, 1963 was an unbelievable year. Hundreds and thousands of people had been arrested and jailed. Bull Connor, the police commissioner in the city of Birmingham, had used dogs and fire hoses on people: little children, on women. We had to act; we had to do something. I remember the morning of August 28, 1963, before we made it to the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, we met with the leadership of the House, the leadership of the Senate, both Democrats and Republicans. And we started walking down Constitution Avenue. We saw hundreds and thousands of people already marching. Now, we were supposed to be their leaders. It was almost like saying, There go my people. Let me catch up with them.

## **John Lewis - The Politicrat - Air Date 7-19-20**

**OMAR MOORE - HOST, THE POLITICRAT:** There was a lot of tension between SNCC and SCLC. Now, SCLC is the Southern Christian Leadership Conference headed at the time by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

And the SCLC was a more moderate civil rights organization born out of the church, which is more the black church, which is more conservative, tends to be historically more conservative. Born out of that tradition, Dr. King was a preacher, obviously, and as a reverend, and as someone who came out of that preaching tradition of the black church, he was much more of a, I would say disciplined figure in that respect and someone who, had a very different way of appealing to the conscience of America. In fact, Dr. King was the conscience of America. And Dr. King was just coming into stride as a national figure or had been prior to 1963, although 1963, the March on Washington, really catapulted him, although he had been in the fight before that he was one of the leaders of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 and 56.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott went on for over 380 days. Along with Rosa Parks, Rosa Parks, and Dr. King were two the chief engineers of that bus boycott. So you had all these events in A. Philip Randolph and Dr. King tended to get along a little better than A. Philip Randolph and John Lewis did, and look, Dr. King and John Lewis, as I said, there was tension between them there's no secret about that. No secret about it at all. In fact, as I said, SCLC was more conservative in its ways of approaching justice for Black people in this country. And SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, they didn't play around. John Lewis' folks, John Lewis and company, they didn't play around. They wanted change now and they criticized SCLC; felt that it was too slow, it was too moderate. Again. SNCC was the younger generation, it was a student movement, and this is something that has always gone on in this world, the clash of generations. And I don't mean that violently. I mean that, there's this intellectual clash. There's this one group that wants things right now to change, "we've had enough", "we're not going to grow up in a world where we are being completely trampled upon". We're seeing this right now in 2020, of course, with the Black Lives Matter movement and a new generation that is picking up that mantle.

And then you had SCLC perhaps a little bit older, a bit more seasoned, a bit more weathered, a bit more moderate in their approach. So that tension continued. And the apex of that was at the 1963 March on Washington. And there were numerous, by the way, Ava DuVernay captures the tension between SNCC and SCLC very well, by the way, in her film *Selma*, so I urge you to go to watch that film if you haven't seen it. It is available on streaming platforms and it's available, obviously on Blu Ray and DVD, I urge you to go and watch that movie if you haven't. She captured some very good moments of that in that movie, but she did a great movie.

But this tension between these groups, it was remarkable leading up to 1963, the March on Washington, which was August the 28th of that year in 1963. And what people do not remember, or are frequently only drawn to it as the so called *I Have a Dream* speech by Dr. King, which was a legendary speech, but he said a lot of things in that speech that the media do not talk about because a lot of them are about and against the interests of those corporations that broadcast what we call news today, or what passes for it, I guess.

But this was a remarkable time because behind the scenes, there were so much rancor; John Lewis was not having it at all. He wanted to speak and then it wasn't until late that he got the chance to speak in terms of late in the process of getting all of this together for the speakers for this March on Washington, for this culmination on the Washington Mall, where Lincoln was, the monument.

This was something, this was really something and A. Philip Randolph was not having it. He did not want John Lewis to say anything that was considered incendiary by the standards of either his organization or, most of the other moderate leaders. He was petrified and John Lewis was demanding the chance to speak. He wanted to convey the urgency of now. And as Dr. King says the fierce urgency of now. And I'm sure that John Lewis, excuse me, Dr. King says the fierce urgency of now, and I'm sure John Lewis may have conveyed that to Dr. King. Look, there's no question that Dr. King and John Lewis may not have been the closest at the time, but I can tell you they did get closer during this march on Washington and beyond. This was a major, major situation. And John Lewis, it's incredible what happened in trying to get these speeches together. It's just phenomenal actually, when you really think about it.

A. Philip Randolph was saying this and the Washington Post is also record this story by, you know, Julian Brockett actually said this is so interesting. Jillian Brocket in The Post said A. Philip Randolph was pleading with John Lewis, absolutely pleading with him, and that Randolph looked at Lewis and with tears in his eyes and said, maybe he begged him, he said to John Lewis, you look, "I've waited my whole life for this opportunity. Please don't ruin it." This is when I say that John Lewis was a firebrand and a radical, I'm not joking, he was. And then quite frankly, that never really wavered throughout his entire life.

## Remembering John Lewis - On Point - Air Date 7-20-20

**MEGHNA CHAKRABARTI - HOST, ON POINT:** I've been thinking about this all weekend. There is a page turning in American history with the death of . Congressman Lewis. just your thoughts on what's the nation has now lost since his passing.

**ERRIN HAINES:** Absolutely. Well, I would say with the passing of John Lewis, and also, I should say the Reverend CT Vivian, who was another civil rights leader, both of them died in Atlanta, just hours apart.

And these types of men and women, this generation-- what they survived and what they sacrifice and trying to really make this country live up to its founding ideals, right? Until the revolution of 1776 is complete, as Congressman Lewis said, with their passing, for so many years, just their physical presence, in many ways was a guard rail, for this country, a reminder, not only of an era that I would say most of the countries not want to go back to, but, of the progress, you know, that that was hard fought and won. And without those people here, I think that there is a real fear and concern, especially as we've seen, kind of, the retrenchment of racism in our current political and social climate, even as we see people pushing back against that and trying to reject that in this national reckoning on race that we see.

And a lot of that is in the spirit of folks like Congressman Lewis and Reverend Vivian.

**MEGHNA CHAKRABARTI - HOST, ON POINT:** Right. You know, so, there are just the sort of coincidences in history. Maybe not coincidences, but facts in history that give me goosebumps sometimes. Right, because you remind us rightly that Reverend CT Vivian and Congressman Lewis died within hours of each other.

It just suddenly popped into my mind that, you know, talking about the unfinished work, realizing the founding principles of this country, like Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died

within hours of each other too. Yeah, I think I would put both Reverend Vivian—I would definitely without a doubt, put both Reverend Vivian and Congressman Lewis in the same firmament as founders of and champions of what should be the American ideal.

**ERRIN HAINES:** That's absolutely right. I mean, those men and women, the folks who were on the front lines, but also the foot soldiers whose names and faces we don't always know, are among our country's founding and founding mothers and fathers, because they really did help to make our democracy real for so many who had been so long excluded. I mean, I think about, I think about that generation, especially the women of that generation too, who had to fight twice as hard, to get the vote, that we celebrate obviously with the Centennial of the 19th amendment, for which my newsroom is named, but really much like the greatest generation, which we honor a lot for defending freedom during World War II, these black Americans, really, survive battle. And they helped to perfect our union.

## Barack Obama's eulogy at John Lewis's funeral

**PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA:** Bull Connor may be gone. But today we witness with our own eyes police officers kneeling on the necks of Black Americans. George Wallace may be gone. But we can witness our federal government sending agents to use tear gas and batons against peaceful demonstrators. We may no longer have to guess the number of jelly beans in a jar in order to cast a ballot. But even as we sit here, there are those in power are doing their darnedest to discourage people from voting — by closing polling locations, and targeting minorities and students with restrictive ID laws, and attacking our voting rights with surgical precision, even undermining the Postal Service in the run-up to an election that is going to be dependent on mailed-in ballots so people don't get sick.

Now, I know this is a celebration of John's life. There are some who might say we shouldn't dwell on such things. But that's why I'm talking about it. John Lewis devoted his time on this Earth fighting the very attacks on democracy and what's best in America that we are seeing circulate right now.

He knew that every single one of us has a God-given power. And that the fate of this democracy depends on how we use it; that democracy isn't automatic, it has to be nurtured, it has to be tended to, we have to work at it, it's hard. And so he knew it depends on whether we summon a measure, just a measure, of John's moral courage to question what's right and what's wrong and call things as they are. He said that as long as he had breath in his body, he would do everything he could to preserve this democracy. That as long as we have breath in our bodies, we have to continue his cause. If we want our children to grow up in a democracy — not just with elections, but a true democracy, a representative democracy, a big-hearted, tolerant, vibrant, inclusive America of perpetual self-creation — then we are going to have to be more like John. We don't have to do all the things he had to do because he did them for us. But we have got to do something. As the Lord instructed Paul, "Do not be afraid, go on speaking; do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." Just everybody's just got to come out and vote. We've got all those people in the city but we can't do nothing.

Like John, we have got to keep getting into that good trouble. He knew that nonviolent protest is patriotic; a way to raise public awareness, put a spotlight on injustice, and make the powers that be uncomfortable.

Like John, we don't have to choose between protest and politics, it is not an either-or situation, it is a both-and situation. We have to engage in protests where that is effective but we also have to translate our passion and our causes into laws and institutional practices. That's why John ran for Congress thirty-four years ago.

Like John, we have got to fight even harder for the most powerful tool we have, which is the right to vote. The Voting Rights Act is one of the crowning achievements of our democracy. It's why John crossed that bridge. It's why he spilled his blood. And by the way, it was the result of Democratic and Republican efforts. President Bush, who spoke here earlier, and his father, both signed its renewal when they were in office. President Clinton didn't have to because it was the law when he arrived so instead he made a law that made it easier for people to register to vote.

But once the Supreme Court weakened the Voting Rights Act, some state legislatures unleashed a flood of laws designed specifically to make voting harder, especially, by the way, state legislatures where there is a lot of minority turnout and population growth. That's not necessarily a mystery or an accident. It was an attack on what John fought for. It was an attack on our democratic freedoms. And we should treat it as such.

If politicians want to honor John, and I'm so grateful for the legacy of work of all the Congressional leaders who are here, but there's a better way than a statement calling him a hero. You want to honor John? Let's honor him by revitalizing the law that he was willing to die for. And by the way, naming it the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, that is a fine tribute. But John wouldn't want us to stop there, trying to get back to where we already were. Once we pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, we should keep marching to make it even better.

By making sure every American is automatically registered to vote, including former inmates who've earned their second chance.

By adding polling places, and expanding early voting, and making Election Day a national holiday, so if you are someone who is working in a factory, or you are a single mom who has got to go to her job and doesn't get time off, you can still cast your ballot.

By guaranteeing that every American citizen has equal representation in our government, including the American citizens who live in Washington, D.C. and in Puerto Rico. They are Americans.

By ending some of the partisan gerrymandering — so that all voters have the power to choose their politicians, not the other way around.

And if all this takes eliminating the filibuster — another Jim Crow relic — in order to secure the God-given rights of every American, then that's what we should do.

## **#GoodTrouble ft. John Lewis Part 3 - Lift Every Voice - Air Date 1-15-18**

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** I love how you talk about the work and the discipline and the study. That we can't just sit back and entertain ourselves, that there has to be a focus and a discipline. And that's something clearly that impressed Martin Luther King about you. And, I

can only imagine for you going through the Civil Rights movement leading into the assassination of someone that you had an intimate relationship with, what that must have shaken, how that must've shaken you. But, you turned a tragedy into a triumph, because you became a Congressperson. You became a national leader. You never yielded, even when it came to the continued work. King, at the end of his life, was doing things that were making him unpopular. He was speaking out against war and what was going on in Vietnam. He was challenging the very economic systems that were resulting still in such great poverty, with the Poor People's March. And I wonder now, if you think, many years from now, when you and I may have passed this earth, when they speak of you, how do you want to be remembered by those who come after us?

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** I want people just to say, He tried to help out. He did his best; he's just trying to help out. He . . . That I was deeply moved and inspired by the teaching of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. I saw a need; I saw problems that I wanted to try to help solve.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** That's really powerful.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** That's all we can do.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** . . . is continue to do our best. Well, you are, um, my hero, and not just because of what you've done, but I just think you're one of those people in my life that is a man of such integrity, because -- and I sit with you in the Congressional Black Caucus -- you speak little, but when you speak everybody stops, because your words are so consistent with your actions. You're such a man of deep character, and you make me want to live up to the values that you so live, of love, kindness towards even those who hate you, even those who disagree with you, of being willing to make yourself uncomfortable consistently in the face of injustice. So, I just want to thank you for being a mentor to me. And you've been from the, from the, literally the first

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Well, Senator, you don't have to say it. I just try to help out.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** Yeah.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** You remind me, I was coming back to Washington on a Sunday night. I was on a flight from Atlanta, and, walking down the aisle, and, a gentlemen said as loud as he could, Trump! So, I didn't, I just kept, kept walking. I didn't say anything. And sometimes walking through the airport in different places, people would say -- they think they, I guess, they're getting to me or answer me.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** Yes

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** But they don't understand, you know? I've been called many, many things, but I'm not going to let anything get me, now. Yes. I'll keep walking. Keep moving. During the March from Selma to Montgomery, in 1965, a guy wrote a little song saying: Pick 'em up, Lay 'em down. All the way from Selmatown, As we march. And that's what we must continue to do.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** Pick up our feet, set 'em down.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Yes, sir.

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** That's right. Keep striding towards freedom.

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS:** Right?

**SENATOR CORY BOOKER:** King said so eloquently, something I repeat all the time, he said we'll have to repent, not for the vitriolic words and violent distractions of the bad people, but the silence and inaction, the good people. Well, you are good people. But you and the energy you put out are changing lives.

And I want to end just with a personal note. The lawyers that helped me move into the town I grew up with, and I think I first told you the story when you and I were sitting on the Capitol steps doing a live Facebook feed, and all those people came out really to be with you, as you and I were protesting the attempts to roll back healthcare.

But when I asked the lawyer who represented my family and was part of the elaborate sting operation that exposed the racial segregation that was going on and racial steering that was going on in Northern New Jersey. I asked that lawyer why he did what he did. And he said to me -- and he changed the destiny of my family -- I said, why did you do it? He said, Corey, I was sitting comfortably at home watching TV, and then suddenly the news broke in to highlight some of these marchers who were going from Selma to Montgomery. And I watched these young people and old people get beaten with billy clubs, savagely, viciously.

And it's so disturbed him that he went to work the next day, and he and his partner ultimately decided, since they couldn't afford to go to Alabama, they would do the best they could to offer help to any civil rights organization in New Jersey they could find. They found the Fair Housing Council and he would later get a file with my parents' name on it.

Your protest on that bridge, even though that day you were not successful, the fact that you stood up with all those other marchers, you instantaneously changed the heart, a thousand miles away in New Jersey, changed the heart of a man who would then go on and change the destiny of generations yet unborn. I would not be sitting here today if it wasn't for that chain reaction of love that was unleashed by one act of protest on a bridge, the Edmund Pettus Bridge, and leapt space and time, the love that you exhibited. And love is work; love is struggle; love is hard. The love that you showed on that bridge today, and those other marchers, made a way for me, changed my life. So, I owe you a debt I can never repay. The best I'm going to do is try to pay it forward by trying to live in your example, in King's example, in Christ's example, of radical love, a love that is risky: love that's dangerous, love that's hard, love that gets mocked, love that gets heckled, love that gets beaten, but to continue in the way that you do every single day, and I witness it and I watch it, that you live with that humility, and that love of all, and that strident activism to cause good trouble.

## **Final comments on the passing of Michael Brooks and my thoughts on the impact of COVID-19 on the movement for racial justice**

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with Sojourner Truth, highlighting some historical audio of CT Vivian, the first clip from Lift Every Voice featured Senator Cory Booker speaking with John Lewis about his early days in the

movement and meeting Martin Luther King, Jr. The Brian Lehrer Show played more historical audio of CT Vivian. Into America featured a conversation with an old roommate and close friend of John Lewis. Fresh Air spoke with John Lewis about the March from Selma and its impact on the Voting Rights Act. The second clip from Lift Every Voice featured John Lewis explaining his belief in radical love and forgiveness.

On Point played audio of a past interview with John Lewis describing his speech at the March on Washington. The Politicrat explained a bit of intergenerational behind-the-scenes tension in the civil rights movement. On Point spoke with a modern activist about the legacy John Lewis is leaving behind.

Barack Obama gave a eulogy at John Lewis's funeral in which he highlighted the need to honor John's legacy with political action. And finally, we just heard Senator Cory Booker and John Lewis speaking in our third clip from Lift Every Voice about the lived impact of the reverberations that ripple out from getting into good trouble.

Now, today, I have something to say that will be news to some of you undoubtedly. A lot of people who, you know, are pretty well tapped in to progressive news, politics, YouTube channels, and things like that, this will not be news to them. But if you delve into progressive politics primarily through Best of the Left, then you may not have caught wind yet that

**Jay Tomlinson, Best of the Left:** Michael Brooks, host of the Michael Brooks Show, producer of the Majority Report, sadly passed away very suddenly at the age of 37, which makes him, within about a year of being my age. And, he, you know, it was very unexpected. It was very sudden, no one saw it coming, obviously. And the only detail that I know is that it involved a blood clot. And so I just had a couple of things to say about him. During the shows that I have watched listening to people who knew him better than I did (and you know, a lot of people knew him better than I did) describing what they appreciated about him. One thing really, really stuck out to me and they described it as something that Michael would say, which is *to be hard on systems, but gentle on people*.

And I would say that I sort of intrinsically knew that this was his focus, but I hadn't heard it expressed so explicitly or succinctly. And is one of those concepts that's hard to nail down about a person because it's about listening to what people don't say, listening to the arguments they don't make, listening to the criticisms they don't bother bringing up, and remaining focused on the big picture, focus on systems, systems of influence, systems of power and oppression, while maybe criticizing individuals, but always keeping in mind that it is not the individual on which the weight of the world rests or from which the problems come.

It is the way systems interact with individuals that is much, much more important. So obviously this resonates with me a lot and I think relevant to today's show. I think it strongly resonates with the messages that we've been learning today from John Lewis. The radical love that Lewis spoke of, I think, is just another way of saying to be gentle on people, while at the same time being hard on systems.

Plus, you know, I love a succinct summation of a concept. So I am definitely going to be stealing that one from Michael. I'm glad that I was able to learn that about him, that he said that explicitly, even though I hadn't heard it before.

And I wish that I could say I was a friend of Michael's. I did meet him once. I visited the Majority Report studios during a trip to New York City a few years ago, but it only took that one meeting to confirm what many others have been saying about Michael, all these people who know him well. Inevitably those who either knew him or are just fans of his work will end up mentioning his impressions and his dark sense of humor.

And during my visit, my one meeting with him, the moment that stands out to me was an incredibly dark impression of Amy Goodman, of all people, reading just one devastatingly, terrible news headline after another, like satirical news headlines that he was making up in Amy Goodman's voice. And I was in absolute tears with laughter during that conversation.

So when I think of Michael on a personal level, that is what I think of. And it mirrors exactly what everybody says about him. And then just on the professional level, as the curator of a show called the Best of the Left, I regularly sift through content from,

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** you know,

**Jay Tomlinson, Best of the Left:** 150 media sources.

And, obviously I do my best to only present the best of the best of what I find. And Michael, honestly, held a very special place in my workflow. Unlike the vast majority of sources that I would search through and sift through and see what people had to say about any given topic, you know, as I was pulling together material on a given theme, I would often find myself actively seeking out Michael's YouTube channel in the hopes that he would have commented on a topic, because I knew that if he addressed this, if he talked about this issue, then he would have brought a really interesting and nuanced perspective to the conversation.

And that's always what I was on the lookout for. So while the vast majority of the content I look through, I search it more passively. Michael was one of the very very few commentators who I would proactively seek out to hear what he had to say on a given topic. And so on a professional level, he exemplified what it is to be what I consider the best of the left. So he will be missed personally and professionally. And, you know, my heart goes out to everyone who is feeling his loss even stronger than I am.

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Now, last thing I have for you, I want to wrap up going back to John Lewis. I want to share some thoughts that I had when watching just a portion of John Lewis's memorial service in Selma, his coffin was taken on one last ceremonial crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma. And I wrote this, what I'm about to read, just moments after watching the video of that event. So if you'll indulge me, it's not that long.

I tend to cry more often about happy and heartwarming things than about sadness. This is not a hard and fast rule though. And sometimes exceptions come along to prove it.

I watched John Lewis be taken on his last crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, but it wasn't for John Lewis or our collective loss of him that I was crying.

It was the masks being worn by those accompanying the coffin that got to me. My parents moved to Alabama a couple of years ago when I visited and was asked what I wanted to do. I

said my only interest was to visit Selma and Montgomery to see the civil rights museums, namely the Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery.

While in Montgomery, in addition to the museums, we also saw Rosa Parks' bus stop visible from the steps of the state house, where Jefferson Davis gave his inaugural address as president of the Confederacy. Between those two points sits the church where Martin Luther King, Jr. was pastor when he was recruited into the civil rights movement.

Walking that street feels like being in a diorama of America's racial history. As we approached the church, hoping to find out about opening hours and tour times, we were met outside by a custodian of the church, a middle-aged black woman who had just locked up the building for the lunch hour. She asked us, before we had a chance to speak, if we were coming to see Martin's church. We said we were, and as she explained the banal details of when the next tour would begin, she gave each member of our group, a big hug and thanked us for coming. There was no doubt that she had hugged thousands, possibly tens of thousands of people in just the same way throughout her years of welcoming people to King's church.

But it was equally clear that each one was infused with intention, not at all a perfunctory or hollow gesture, stripped of meaning from repetition. And that wasn't the last hug we received from strangers that day in Montgomery. Love, and the expression of it, is not a platitude in the movement for racial justice. It is at the core of where the movement and its members who live it daily and get their strength.

As I watched the physically-distanced and masked people, accompanying John Lewis's coffin across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, I thought of the women who welcomed visitors to Martin Luther King Jr's church and how they are now unable to hug visitors, to demonstrate the love of the movement in the most direct and personal way.

And understanding of the cruel reality of a movement and its members being robbed of such an essential tool for justice and strength began to wash over me. My heart broke and the tears began to flow.

And that's going to be it for today. As always, you can give us a call on our voicemail line (202) 999-3991.

I promise I will be getting back to those, someday soon. Things have been very odd recently, and the voicemails have been sort of shunted to the side, but I am as anxious as anyone to get back to them. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or making donations of any size at [patreon.com/bestoftheleft](https://patreon.com/bestoftheleft). That is absolutely how the program survives. Of course, everyone can support the show just by telling everyone you know about it and leaving us glowing reviews on Apple podcasts and Facebook to help others find the show. For details on the show itself, including links to all of the sources and music used in this and every episode, all that information can always be found in the show notes on the blog and likely right on the device you're using to listen.

So coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington DC, my name is Jay!, and this has been the Best of the Left podcast coming to you twice weekly. Thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from [bestoftheleft.com](https://bestoftheleft.com).

