



NAACP

Pennsylvania
STATE CONFERENCE

PRESS RELEASE

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NAACP Pennsylvania State Conference Remembers the Iconic Legacy of Civil Rights Leader U.S. Congressman John Robert Lewis

While a student at Fisk University, John began to organize sit-ins and demonstrations to challenge the segregation of the Jim Crow Laws of the South. He participated in the Freedom Rides and literally put his life on the line many times as he was severely beaten and arrested by police. Because of his forthright efforts in the movement, John Lewis became a nationally recognized leader known as one of the Big Six leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. The Big Six were Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., James Farmer, John Lewis, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young – leaders of six prominent civil rights organizations who were instrumental in the organization of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963.

Once elected Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which he helped form, SNCC was largely responsible for organizing student activism in the Movement. In 1964, John Lewis and coordinated SNCC efforts focused on organizing voter registration drives and community action programs during the Mississippi Freedom Summer. In 1965, Lewis along with Hosea Williams, another notable Civil Rights leader, helped command one of the most pivotal moments of the Civil Rights Movement when they led over 600 peaceful, orderly protestors across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama on March 7, 1965. However, as they crossed the bridge, the marchers were met with attacks by Alabama state troopers in a inhumane confrontation that became known as "Bloody Sunday." This moment in history would lay the groundwork for what John Lewis would continue to commit the rest of his life. In 1986, he was elected to serve as United States Representative of Georgia's fifth Congressional District which he held until his death on July 17, 2020. Among his plethora of awards and honors, Congressman Lewis was the recipient of the NAACP Spingarn Medal and the highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom award granted by President Barack Obama.

With all his unselfish, relentless life-long work for civil rights, Kenneth L. Huston, President of the NAACP Pennsylvania State Conference stated, "I believe that Congressman John Lewis will always be a testament to the "good trouble" which he exemplified as the conscious of Congress, the moral leader of integrity, and a legacy of a consistent message of standing firm in the fight for justice for all until it is achieved. "

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Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest nonpartisan civil rights organization with a mission to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities. The Pennsylvania State Conference was established in 1934 and pursues the same mission throughout the Commonwealth.