



**National
Urban League**

*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.*

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Family of Congressman John R. Lewis
Via E-Mail: jamila.thompson@mail.house.gov

Dear Lewis Family:

On behalf of the National Urban League Board of Trustees and the entire Urban League Movement, we offer our condolences to the family of the Honorable John Robert Lewis. The nation has suffered an irreplaceable loss in our beloved Congressman, John Robert Lewis.

He was one of our country's most noble patriots. He loved the promise of this land and dedicated his life to protecting human rights, securing civil liberties, and building what he called "The Beloved Community" in America. John Lewis was an advocate for the American dream like none other. He was our unwavering champion for over six decades. It earned him the unofficial title of the "Conscience of the U.S. Congress."

John Lewis was a personal hero, a friend and a mentor. I recall that in 1990, the first time I ran for office in New Orleans — Congressman Lewis, Ambassador Andrew Young and Mayor Maynard Jackson supported me by hosting a fundraising event; and providing gems of wisdom for the journey. In 2013, the National Urban League recognized Congressman Lewis with our highest honor, the Civil Rights Champion Award. In his presence, I was reminded that I stand on the shoulders of history. That this icon reached back to pull the next generation of leaders like me to the front of the line was at once life affirming and humbling. He was always affable, always available, always fighting—until the very end.

Whitney Young, a former NUL President, worked with John Lewis on the 1963 March on Washington and participated in the March that followed Bloody Sunday, among other events.

Past National Urban League Presidents also remembered him:

Vernon Jordan said "*Congressman Lewis was the epitome of a warrior for the common good. He prayed, sang, and bled for this nation. All of us, black and white, owe him a great debt and wish him a peaceful rest.*"

John Jacob recalled that "*At the 1963 March on Washington, I was impressed with the vision expressed by Dr. King, the eloquence of Whitney Young, and the commanding presence of A. Philip Randolph. But, it was the courage, the commitment and the passion of a young 23 year old speaker, John Lewis, who moved me to recognize that I could no longer be just a spectator of the movement, I needed to be an active participant.*"

Hugh Price shared that “When John Lewis ran the Voter Education Project in the early 1970s, I accompanied him on a tour of high schools in Alabama to educate students about the importance of voting. The young people were in awe of him, as was I. We were truly blessed to be in the presence of civil rights royalty.”

As the Urban League Movement—Trustees, Affiliate CEOs, staff and volunteers—remembered him, there were expressions highlighting his honesty, integrity, decency, freedom fighting, leadership, compassion, fearlessness, courage and devotion to justice; and his abiding Faith as a source of strength.

John was a mentor. He understood, on a personal level, the need to instill the American values of justice, freedom, and liberty in our youth. In his formative years, he met and was inspired by both Mrs. Rosa Parks and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It led him to a lifetime of national service.

We have and will continue to value and appreciate his gifts to us of *Frontline Leadership, Courage of his Convictions, Integrity and Moral Compass, Speaking Truth to Power.*

Be assured the National Urban League Movement will demonstrate its appreciation of his service by strengthening the efforts to restore the Voting Rights Act and rename the Act and the Edmund Pettus Bridge in his honor.

With respect and gratitude for all that the Honorable Congressman John Robert Lewis has done in the quest for civil rights and social justice, we will continue the fight as leaders and foot soldiers. We will carry his mission forward:

getting into trouble...good trouble...necessary trouble.

May He Rest in Peace and Power.



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