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Remembering John Lewis
Dan McCready [info@danmccready.com]

Sent: Saturday, July 25, 2020 10:05 AM
To: Steve Johnston



Dear Steve,

When I campaigned with John Lewis in Fayetteville, it was a half century after Selma. But just down the road, the votes of Black people were still being stolen.

What he said next amazed me.

I was honored to share this story, and remember this hero, in yesterday's Fayetteville Observer.

I wanted to also share it with you, below —

Dan

[John Lewis Showed Me What Greatness Means](#)

John Lewis put things in perspective. He'd been thinking about the election fraud in Bladen County every day, he said. But unlike me, he wasn't surprised. He'd seen this movie before.



Among my life's blessings, I count the chance to have had three conversations with John Lewis, the civil rights icon who passed away last week. In each conversation, just by being who he was, he taught me something about greatness.

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It wasn't what I expected.

The first time I met John Lewis was a couple of weeks before the 2018 midterm election. I was locked in a close U.S. House race for North Carolina's 9th District; he came down to Fayetteville, at the eastern edge of the gerrymandered district, to lend his support.

Like most campaign events, the trip was a blur. The highlight was hearing John Lewis encourage people to vote. "The right to vote is precious, almost sacred," he said.

It wasn't until after the hustle and bustle that he and I had a chance to really talk. I figured he might be like many other congresspeople I'd met: Polite but a little busy. Who was I to take up the time of this American hero? When he was being beaten in Selma, I was almost 20 years away from being born.

Imagine my surprise when I found myself talking with one of the most gentle people I'd met: A soft speaker, as modest as you could be, who looked me in the eye like I was the only person who mattered. He was like this with all people, I was told later.

The second time John Lewis and I met was a few months later, on Capitol Hill. This time, it was under much different circumstances. I thought I'd narrowly lost the election, but in an incredible turn of events, it turned out that my opponent's campaign had committed massive election fraud. Such fraud was extremely rare in America; this was the largest case in modern American history. They targeted people of color, went to their doorsteps, and stole and manipulated their absentee ballots. This took place in rural Bladen County, just south of Fayetteville.

The last couple of months had been a vortex. A few volunteers and I had exposed the election fraud; we were now trying to stop my opponents from undermining the ensuing investigation.

I was shocked. Politics this dirty wasn't supposed to happen in America. I'd started my career in the Marine Corps — I never imagined I'd come back from serving in Iraq to see Americans' fundamental rights under attack like this at home. Having grown up white and privileged, I didn't realize how bad systemic racism still was in America.

John Lewis put things in perspective. He'd been thinking about Bladen County every day, he said. But unlike me, he wasn't surprised. He'd seen this movie before.

How awful, I thought, and how amazing. A half century after John Lewis had marched for voting rights, votes were still being stolen. He'd helped secure the Voting Rights Act of 1965. But now the Act was gutted and voter suppression through legal means like gerrymandering was also on the rise.

Then John Lewis said something I'd never forget. "What happened in Bladen County is a disease," he said. "A disease that, if it's not cured, can infect a country."

I suddenly saw our fight in Bladen County for what it was: One small skirmish in a long battle. Any of us who'd stumbled upon it now had an awesome responsibility: To try to stand on the shoulders of giants like him, and decades of everyday Americans who'd fought for civil rights. He inspired me, as he did so many over his lifetime, to keep fighting.

He would want us to vote

The last time I spoke with John Lewis was toward the end of the special redo election that was ultimately called. He dialed in as a surprise guest to my staff's nightly conference call, to pump them up when they needed it most. That's who John Lewis was. He spent his life doing great work for all people, and he was great to all people along the way.

As John Lewis looks down on us now, how would he want us to spend the time we still have? For starters, he'd want us all to vote in November. Voting is how we elect politicians who will protect, instead of suppress, the vote. And it's how we work to end the root problem of systemic racism, which the killing of George Floyd, a Fayetteville native, also laid bare.

John Lewis would say we all have a role to play — just as he showed me. But he'd also want us to be good to each other along the way.

Paid for by McCready for Congress

Dan McCready is a former member of the United States Marines. Use of his military rank, job titles, and photographs in uniform does not imply endorsement by the Marines or the Department of Defense. This email was sent to sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org. Click [here](#) if you'd like to unsubscribe. We try to send only the most important information and opportunities to participate via email.



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