

The author, John Lewis, is from a family consisting of sharecroppers in the South in the Jim Crow age and stood up to assist form the movement of civil rights with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. After that, he was a leader. He successfully guided activists along the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama where they encountered armed state soldiers. He appeared for Atlanta as a US Congressman for more than 30 years before his death in July 2020. Barack Obama praised John Lewis at his funeral: "Like many US citizens, I am greatly indebted to John Lewis and his powerful vision of freedom."

This book review will illuminate the vision of freedom of John Lewis, first-hand. Furthermore, with exciting examples from his exceptional life, you will learn the fundamentals of all real activists. In a seemingly more partitioned world than ever, this is a message we must take into account.

Chapter 1 - The civil rights movement demonstrates that if people are decisive to make a distinction, nothing can cease their strength.

John Lewis guided a crowd of pacifist protestors to the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama on March, 7th, 1965. John Lewis and activists organized a walk to the state capitol to protest the voter discrimination. At the peak of the bridge, they saw the State troopers and the assigned citizens of Alabama. The soldiers and the annoyed group were not intended to allow protestors to pass through, with their firearms, tear gas, and batons.

Lots of pacifist protestors were ruthlessly battered, and hospitalization was needed for some of them. Lewis himself lived with a broken cranium that opened scars throughout his life.

This was one of the gloomiest times of the American civil rights movement. However, for John Lewis, all the ambiguity and pain was worthwhile. Since that dreadful day, America has made a big improvement in closing the racial gap. The movement formed an example of tackling today's hardships.

This movement was only a little stage on the long path to America's intangible fate. The job was not complete.

The author, who became a representative of America afterward, felt that contemporary times are filled with a distinctive hatred. He thought rancor existed at unprecedented levels that were even not observed in the 1960s.

Do you recall the times that Barack Obama's election is thought to be a gate to post-racial America? It is no longer believed. Not in the aftermath of trials to wreck the president's heritage, the militarization of police, and arming the government to make it a representative to persecute. The worst of propriety Lewis ever attested was the State Union speech in which President Obama was mentioned as a liar.

However, it looks like people start to see the truth. They are again concerned with their responsibilities for the democratic process. They are recalling or recognizing that we are one. The opening of the eyes of people resembled Lewis of the civil rights movement - the robust wind that passed through the US and changed the spiritual identity of the country.

This past is a significant memory that shows things may look gloomy like in the time of Lewis on the top of that bridge. However, these gloomy times are only initial points for better things.

Chapter 2 - Believing in your convictions makes your enemies weak.

Did you have a belief that you know it is true within all of your veins? According to Lewis, this is named "faith". Faith in your beliefs is one of the most crucial attributes an activist can own. Owning faith is being sure about your dreams like you are about the water is being liquid and the sky is being blue. Thus, nothing could undermine your belief that your convictions are correct.

Lewis paid his price by having his skull broken by the police, a run over him by horses, threatened by dogs, repelled with fire hoses, worn manacles, and put to prison. However, he had the faith that made him continue to believe his convictions. He never hesitated in his belief in nonaggression or that we are only human as a family, whatever our race is.

His conviction is cultivated while he is raised in the middle of the brutality and fright of the partitioned deep South. He saw obviously that the disparity that governed his world was not correct. Furthermore, he realized that apartheid was something fundamentally wrong because of wrong logic. Lewis and his activist friends found power in their beliefs at the time they finally managed to throw aside these man-made ideas made to bring them down.

Look at Lewis' fellow and counterpart Rosa Parks. People believe she was a legend because she rejected handing over her place on the bus to a white person. She was a tailor in Montgomery, Alabama, and also an activist, and worked as the secretary in her local chapter of the NAACP. Furthermore, she currently started to study Activist Theory on Racial Integration. With her legendary act of nonaggressive rejection, she was aiming to test her new faith in the possibility of integration. She was stating that she had a strength that nobody under no circumstance, even if it is confinement or imprisonment, can clear it off.

In reality, facing violence and inequality made the faith of Lewis and his counterparts more powerful. Every shock was further evidence that our racially fallacious society could not put out the fire for the freedom it felt. When Lewis encountered hundreds of fully armed cops while standing up in the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, he did not even feel a tiny bit of fright of injury or death. Nobody could hurt him. His belief had swept away all the strength of them.

Chapter 3 - The effort for the right to vote in Selma exemplifies the strength of patience.

Did you hear the statement: "Patience is a virtue."? Yes, it is particularly applicable in activism.

This may sound contrary to common-sense. Eventually, in activist societies, lots of stress is placed on determined, strong movements, such as protests. Waiting is often related to weakness and hopeful expectations and ascribed to the people who accept losses.

However, patience can be strong leverage for transformations. This fact was excellently demonstrated with the effort for equality in voting in the civil rights movement. This effort, in conclusion, brought the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The tale starts in 1870, at the time the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution provided African Americans the right to vote, leastways in theory. In effect, the tale was dissimilar.

Till the 1960s, to prevent African Americans from using their rights, the government of the Alabama State and the Ku Klux Klan tried every way they could. A measure they implemented was something named the "Grandfather Clause". This clause let anybody vote without any obstacle if their grandfathers had the right to vote. Nearly all the grandfathers of African Americans were condemned to slavery, so the grandchildren needed to register afresh.

To register, they needed to be tested whether they can read and write. However, the test was not a literacy test. Rather, the test was filled with very challenging questions about weird texts from the state Constitution. As Henry Louis Gates, a Harvard professor, stated, the test was so challenging that his counterpart could find the correct response to only one question.

Moreover to all these, when Black people started to come for registration during the civil rights movement, the Registrar's Office just shut down to prohibit this.

Lewis and activists had only one choice remaining: standing in the line no matter what. And they waited silently as a line at the Registrar's Office of Selma for two years. They were hit, disparaged with words, and imprisoned. However, no matter what, they turned back and waited consistently every single day. They persisted so patiently to get their rights that the abuse and brutality of police became ridiculous.

This silent waiting in line had a gigantic effect. It passed through the resistance of the South and caused directly the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the most influential law passed by Congress in 50 years.

Chapter 4 - With an attentive study, they can grasp what is correct about themselves and what to do to get it.

The civil rights movement was a challenge for the legal rights of African Americans. However, it was not only this. It was a strong commitment to demonstrating the truth: equality of humans is an unnegotiable right.

This right was not readily available for John Lewis. He lived in Alabama's cotton fields where racism was how people live. Thus, he committed his life to get to know the reasons for his world to be in this way. He read all the newspapers and history, the theory of politics, and philosophy books he found.

The success of the civil rights movement could only become likely with the people like Lewis that committed to study, plan, and prepare for years. The aim for these? Getting to know how life should be and constructing a plan for executing it.

It was not a coincidence that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. became the leader of the movement. He was getting ready through all of his life.

Of course, he was gifted. However, he also formed his persona knowingly. He learned what his people were going through. He did not get angry at the racism, it attracted his attention. He decided to learn the ways to assist people who are made resentful by hate. To find solutions, he examined all the prime philosophers and theologians and obtained a Ph.D. along the way. Thus, when the citizens of Alabama came to him and asked him to be the leader of their action, he was prepared.

The way to reach the truth is not only studying academically. You can reach it just by being attentive to the environment that surrounds you. However, today some of the leaders do not know the living conditions of the majority of Americans. They do not care about raising indigence, joblessness, unsafe food, homelessness, and obstacles to health care. This ignorance comes from the thought that the world differs for different races.

However, Lewis was thinking that we are one family. Furthermore, at the time we approve this truth, it will be challenging to turn back to the old thinking and live comfortably with it. Lots of people, including politicians and citizens, are not ready for this devotion. However, some people can inspire all of us. According to Lewis, three pioneer role models who were trying to find the truth in the 1960s - John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr. - recalled him to continuously pursue equality.

Chapter 5 - In every behavior, be certain that you demonstrate the humanity of your purposes.

It is a success in itself that you study sufficiently so that you own your truth completely. However, it is not sufficient to affect the world positively. For this, you need to take action.

Especially, you should design behaviors encompassing inclusion and inspiration, not exclusion and alienation.

According to Dr. King, faith is useless if not aspires you to assist people in solving their hardships. Still, he is pointed as an excellent orator. However, a greater success of him was that he went beyond the pulpit to convey his message through action. For instance, he got award money because of being the youngest Nobel Prize winner. And he used the award so that others in purpose could utilize it. His bounty is an example of how actions can be used to show your truth is respectable.

As a leading player of the civil rights movement, Dr. King encountered a lot of hate and rage, even from his family. In addition to the threats to kill him and messages of hate, he, his spouse, and their four little kids were attacked with verbal and physical violence, bomb assaults, and even assassination trials.

King got over \$50,000, in today's value approximately one-half of a million dollars, in 1964 as Nobel Peace Prize. King could use this money to establish a safe and sound living outside the hazardous South. However, he gifted all the money for the civil rights cause.

With this altruistic gift, King highlighted the movement's fundamental message of inclusion and love for everybody. The reason for the success of this movement was partly this gift. This exemplifies the potential of activism even in current days. Civil rights activists transformed the ongoing unjust situations for African Americans in the strongest country of the world in just 12 years.

An instance of the success of the movement could be observed in the talk of Lewis about the "bad old days" with kids of the partitioned South. The kids cried with fear when he mentioned the insults he and his family suffered. Children were getting sad and confused with all the details of legalized discrimination and this shows a great advancement.

There was an unfair condition because people were giving permission silently to all these. At the time people started to quit their permissions, the conditions started to change.

Chapter 6 - Peaceful resistance in response to anger is the topnotch weapon of love.

The most brutal century was the twentieth century in modern history. In between 1900 to 2000, around 33 million troops and 54 million nonmilitary people died in the war. Around 100 million of them were dead because of political pressure. However, we still choose violence while resolving disputes. Does it tell something about human advancement? We learned how to go to the Moon, but why could not we learn how to live peacefully together?

Lewis had faith in love and peace to be the strongest weapons. He and his peers were soldiers of peace during the civil rights movement. Their guns were absolute love and readiness to devote themselves to a better society. In the end, these guns ruled the nation.

Lewis was among the core 13 Freedom Riders. Their purpose was basic but absolute: take a bus jointly, no matter what one's race is, and go to New Orleans from Washington, DC. In 1961, South buses were separated according to race although there is a Supreme Court decision that disallows this. Lots of white people from the South could fight for continuing discrimination.

During their path throughout the South, activists were brutally attacked by crowds. Lewis was beaten to the ground in Rock Hill, South Carolina, and then relentlessly kicked as he fell to the ground.

However, he never used violence and not even raised a hand to the assailants to defend himself. When the police intervened, he refused to sue.

Lewis and his fellow Freedom Riders demonstrated love by silently resisting the anger of an insulting regime. With love, they allowed Black people to see that they are not lower in status. They managed to clear the intrinsic load of hate in white Southerners as well.

40 years later of the attack in Rock Hill, Lewis is surprisingly called by someone. This was a prior Klansman, Elwin Wilson, who was his assailant on that day. He called to say sorry. This expression of regret would not have happened if Lewis has sued or defended himself with violence on that day. Instead, such violence would conceal Wilson's fault and it would be much harder for him to realize his guilt and accept it boldly.

This is the strongest testament of Lewis for the strength of love in the face of brutal hate.

Chapter 7 - Allowing your light to glow brilliantly is a strong tool for radical activism.

It is not astonishing to know that struggle is extremely challenging. The tale of John Lewis is sufficient to demonstrate that since he went through verbal swears, assassinations, and 40 arrests. You might think whether you would do such devotion in the name of humanity. Does the risk for a prize that you might not see with your eyes pay off? You should ask this question to yourself and answer it according to yourself.

Lewis thought that all of us have a spark inside us of the divine as our light. This spark has different shapes in everyone because we have different abilities. Lewis devoted his life to stimulate his companion people to turn their inner sparks into fires. He thought that we came to life to perform our abilities completely so that our possibility to glow could be seen by everyone.

However, encouraging humankind to allow their light glow is not initiated by Lewis. He thought that the eventual aim of America's developers was alike: Making it easy, not challenging for every citizen to follow their dreams.

The civil rights movement enhanced this story in a very significant way. The movement's challenge was to improve the faulty opinion that some humans are more valuable since they have more light than others. They took huge steps, however, the war has not completely won. Currently, activists of the Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, and the Occupy Movement are battling the same wars that were battled in the civil rights movement.

Anyone in these movements has embarked on the responsibility to eliminate the vigors of discrimination and demolition by utilizing their inherent light. You also have this chance.

John Lewis grasps that if not acted, the gloominess just becomes more powerful. This is the reason he committed his life to this battle. All of the actions, his and ours, save the strength of light on this world. Favorable and peaceful actions just enhance and develop a place for more light.

So, what will you choose?

Across That Bridge: A Vision for Change and the Future of America by John Lewis Book Review

The rising civil rights member John Lewis refined the characteristics needed to make a permanent transformation in the course of his life of activism. Just like John Lewis and his counterparts inspired from the previous battles, activists in current times can take the civil rights movement as a template to influence the conditions in their world favorably.

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