

**BECAUSE  
OF THEM  
WE CAN**

**BOX**

**JUST FOR KIDS**

# BECAUSE OF JOHN LEWIS

AGES 9-12



BOTWC MINI POSING AS  
JOHN LEWIS

NEVER, EVER BE AFRAID  
TO MAKE SOME NOISE  
AND GET IN  
GOOD TROUBLE,  
NECESSARY TROUBLE.



# MARCH ON!



A large cluster of people gathered around a Black **elder** with a trench coat and bookbag, during San Diego's Comic-Con. Many people, including children, were wearing shirts with animations, Captain America, Batman, and other superhero costumes, and holding toy figurines that meant the world to them. Many of these heroes were recognizable, given their popularity. The children recognized the elder, too. They walked alongside him. He made his way to his destination, and the crowd and excitement grew all at once.

This moment is not the first time that Black elder marched with a crowd alongside him, watching in awe. He would do it time and time again throughout history.

That elder was born on February 21, 1940, in Troy, Alabama, as the third child out of ten. His parents were

**sharecroppers**, named Willie Mae and Eddie. They named their son John. John Lewis.

At age five, John was preaching and in search of justice all of the time. He preached to the chickens in the yard and his family. At age fifteen, John Lewis first heard Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the radio. He was inspired and began to follow Dr. King's sermons and public service, including the Montgomery bus boycott that happened later. He knew that this was the work. As someone who had seen segregation and racism firsthand, John knew that seeking justice for Black people was his purpose.

Five days before his sixteenth birthday, John gave his first public sermon at Macedonia Baptist Church. It was called "a praying mother."

John met Rosa Parks when he was 17 and met Dr. King for the first time when he was 18.

**Create a timeline of John's childhood, up until the age of 18:**

A timeline diagram consisting of a horizontal line with seven empty boxes for events. The boxes are arranged in two rows: four in the top row and three in the bottom row. Arrows point from the boxes up to the line and down to the boxes.

After writing to Dr. King about being denied admission to Troy University in Alabama, John went to a meeting. Dr. King, who referred to Lewis as "the boy from Troy," discussed suing the university for discrimination, but he warned Lewis that doing so could endanger his family in Troy.

After discussing it with his parents, Lewis decided to attend American Baptist Theological Seminary and become **ordained** as a Baptist minister. He also received a bachelor's degree, in religion and philosophy, from Fisk University. Both schools are Historically Black Colleges/Universities, better known as HBCUs.



# READ & RESPOND



John was dedicated to The Civil Rights movement. He was instrumental in organizing boycotts, sit-ins, and marches, to support voting rights and racial equality. In 1961, he became one of the first Freedom Riders. The freedom riders, Black and White people were determined to ride from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans, together. At that time, several southern states enforced laws prohibiting Black and White riders from sitting next to each other on public transportation.

This nonviolent protest, riding on integrated buses, was often met by angry mobs and arrests, but John was determined to fight for desegregation. He called this “good trouble.”

What does this illustration/photo, show? Where is John Lewis in this photo? Why was the arrest of these protestors wrong?



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John Lewis became an avid pursuer of justice at every turn. He became nationally known, in 1965, for his prominent role in the Selma to Montgomery Marches--also known as Bloody Sunday. These marches did not happen on one day; they were three marches held on a 54-mile highway, organized by nonviolent activists like John, to demonstrate their desire for Black people to vote and protest the harm and murders of peaceful activists. During the march, led by John, over 500 marchers were met by police troopers that disrespected, attacked, and arrested them. The activists' sacrifice, televised images, radio announcer descriptions of this day prompted urgent statements from the president, a shift in the nation's understanding of brutality, and the Voting Rights Act.

This nonviolent protest, riding on integrated buses, was often met by angry mobs and arrests, but John was determined to fight for **desegregation**. He called this “good trouble.”

What are the most important events/ideas/steps to remember, about John Lewis' role in The Civil Rights Movement? Why are those the most important?

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# SEEKER OF JUSTICE



At the age of 25, John Lewis continued to be a seeker of the justice that many Black people still seek. His work did not stop there.

John went on to become a director for many foundations and grassroots organizations; he became a part of the Atlanta City Council and the United States House of Representatives. In these roles, he called for peace during the war, preservation of Black history, and continued his journey of protest.

While doing this work, he often made his way into popular culture. He was featured in “My President” by Young Jeezy. He voiced a character, also called John Lewis, on the TV Show Arthur. He also made many appearances in documentaries, and actors have portrayed him in films, like Ava Duvernay and Paul Webb’s Selma. He also had his graphic novel series called “March.”

John attended comics conventions, like San Diego’s comic-con. He attended in 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2017. During the 2015 convention, Lewis led, along with his graphic novel collaborators Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell, an impromptu Selma civil rights march arm in arm with children. As the march made its way to the destination, many people joined the march. Seeing the Black elder, John Lewis, in his trench coat and bookbag, was familiar. His attire was the same as the clothes he wore on “Bloody Sunday.” There was no need to call people to join. Everyone understood and knew the way.

And so they marched.

The author says that John Lewis is a “seeker of justice.” What evidence/reasons does the author give to support this idea?



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## GLOSSARY

**Comic-con:** Comic-con is a festival that raises awareness of and appreciation for comic books and related popular art forms which celebrate the historic and ongoing contribution of comics to art and culture.

**Sharecropper:** a tenant farmer who gives a part of each crop as rent.

**Segregation:** the action or state of setting someone or something apart from other people or things or being set apart.

**Elder:** (of one or more out of a group of associated people) of greater age.

**Ordain:** make (someone) a priest or minister; confer holy orders on.

**Racism:** prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.

**Desegregation:** ending of a policy of racial segregation.





# GOOD RESEARCH



**DIRECTIONS:** In the spirit of “Good Trouble,” we have a special assignment for you. John Lewis spent a large part of his legacy fighting for the right to vote. Currently, in the United States of America, many people are trying to stop others from voting.

## Whoa! How can someone stop people from voting?

Voter suppression is the way that certain parties or individuals try to change the outcome of an election. They want to discourage and prevent people from voting. It includes stopping early votes, **racism** at the places you can vote, and getting rid of places you can vote. This happens more often in Black neighborhoods, Native American reservations, and college campuses.

You aren't old enough to vote, but you can help! You can tell people what's happening and make a change. Your voice matters.

- With your parent/guardian's permission and help, look up information on “Voter Suppression and Your State.”
- Find the main ideas that will help people understand voter suppression.
- You can create a poster with this information and post it online, in your yard, or anywhere many people can see it.
- Have your parents/guardian's tag #botwcbbox, on social media, so we can find it and post it!

## Here is our example:

- People are waiting in lines for over five hours to cast their ballots.
- We have broken machines.
- Polling sites open late and we don't have enough backup paper ballots.
- Use your voice to make noise, today! We don't have much time! Everyone should be able to vote!

Voter suppression  
IS REAL.  
It's happening  
in Georgia,  
RIGHT. NOW!



# WORD TO JOHN LEWIS!



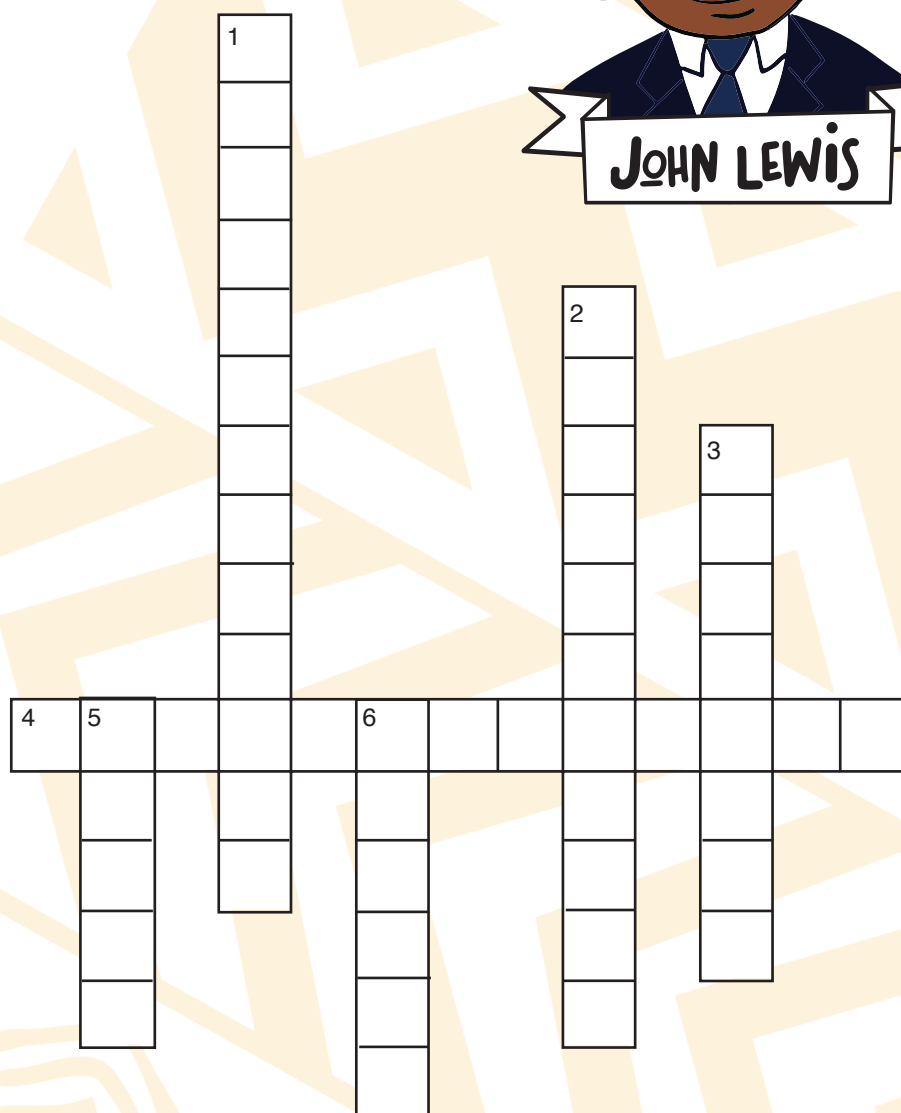
**DIRECTIONS:** Use the definitions to figure out the words that belong in this crossword puzzle.

**DOWN:**

- 1. Tenant farmer who gives a part of each crop as rent.
- 2. The action or state of setting someone or something apart from other people or things or being set apart.
- 3. Make someone a priest or minister.
- 5. A person of greater age.
- 6. Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group.

**ACROSS:**

- 4. Ending of a policy of racial segregation racial or ethnic group.



## R.I.P. John Lewis

**Born:** February 21, 1940,  
Troy, Alabama

**Died:** July 17, 2020,  
Atlanta, Georgia

Crossword Answer Key: DOWN: 1. Sharecropper | 2. Segregation | 3. Ordain | 5. Elder | 6. Racism ACROSS: 4. Desegregation

## TAKE THE PLEDGE

**I WILL HONOR**  
THE SACRIFICES OF  
MY ANCESTORS.

**I WILL BELIEVE**  
IN ME.

**I WILL PURSUE**  
MY DREAMS.

**I WILL HELP**  
OTHERS ALONG  
THE WAY.