

# The Delray Democrat

August 2020



## John Lewis – A Man for All Seasons

*June Sandra Neal*

John Robert Lewis didn't have "the look." At 5' 6", he wasn't physically imposing and, most of the time, he moderated his voice. He lacked the charisma of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or Julian Bond or John Kennedy. Yet, when the moment called, he could rock the room with the soaring lyricism of a Baptist minister. Those who knew him said he emanated courage and righteousness as palpable as heat from a radiator.

Great people like John Lewis have a common denominator; they are all impelled by something larger than the circumference of their daily lives. This poor child of a sharecropper grew to be one of the mightiest voices for justice in America.

It was a jagged journey, as it is for all tectonic social change. He was honored as a keynote speaker at the historic 1963 March on Washington. He was spit upon during the 1965 "Bloody Sunday" march for voting rights, when, in a paroxysm of venality, state troopers, with gas bombs and billy clubs, charged at the crowd. Lewis stood still. The troopers cracked open his skull.

He helped shepherd the Voting Rights Acts into law and was attacked by the Ku Klux Klan. The first black president of the United States placed the Medal of Freedom around Lewis' neck. Then, the antithesis of the justice Lewis struggled for all his life assumed the American presidency. He wept seeing the televised murder of George Floyd but drew sustenance from the rivers of people of all races who took to the streets, and, like Lewis, put themselves on the line.

Through it all, he was steadfast, a man for all seasons. Somewhere among those street protestors, there is another John Lewis, or two, or more who will pick up the torch. Honor his legacy and join the fight. Help Returning Citizens register to vote. Drive a neighbor to the polls. Treat the Republicans' attempts to impede voting rights as the crimes they are.

Lewis told us the battle is not yet won. "Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime."

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# Honor Lewis' Legacy by Allowing Returning Citizens to Vote\*

Nancy Chanin

A day after the U.S. Supreme Court temporarily blocked Returning Citizens from voting, the nation lost a true and steadfast champion of democracy. During an appearance on The Daily Show, U.S. Rep. John Lewis, who nearly lost his life fighting for what he believed in, stated: "I've said it over and over again. The vote is precious. It is almost sacred. It is the most powerful, nonviolent instrument or tool that we have in a democratic society. We should make it easy and simple for everybody to participate."

Unfortunately, such is not the case in Florida. Despite the overwhelming, bipartisan passage of Amendment 4 in 2018, our governor is determined to limit citizen participation in what is touted to be "the world's greatest democracy."

While Amendment 4 stated that returning citizens must "complete all terms of their sentence including probation or parole," Gov. Ron DeSantis took that to mean the inclusion of fines, fees and restitution. The governor claims that that is what the majority of voters wanted as well, but this argument is unsubstantiated.

own budget compels the courts to levy 'user fees' on defendants as they progress through the system . . ."

A document obtained from the Palm Beach County Public Defender's office reveals that "Mandatory Costs" include: \$330 for "County & Circuit Criminal Standard Court Costs" and \$88 for "Criminalized Specialized Court Costs." Under the heading of "Specific Offense Costs," there is a \$50 "Indigent PD (Public Defender) Application Fee" and \$100 in "PD Public Defender Fees." Total? \$668, and that's only the beginning for some defendants. (Please note the irony that forces the economically disadvantaged to pay for being economically disadvantaged.)

The average owed by a returning citizen is approximately \$1,500, according to Desmond Meade, founder of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, a significant portion of these fees are "likely uncollectable."

In addition to funding the court system on the backs

*It's time to honor the legacy of Rep. Lewis and support a more inclusive democracy. We can do so by allowing returning citizens to vote.*

Perhaps it is reasonable to argue that a fine associated with a sentence should be paid and that restitution for a victim should be honored. However, fines and restitution are owed by a relatively small percentage of individuals.

The majority of returning citizens owe what are termed "court costs." The governor has conveniently skirted this issue, as his recent comments on NBC Nightly News illustrate:

"If you were robbed, and someone's convicted of taking, you know \$3,000 out of your house, and they were ordered to pay you \$3,000 of restitution, and they didn't do it, did they complete their sentence?"

Here's how it really works: According to The Conversation, "Florida's constitution requires the state's courts to finance themselves. Generating their

of poor people, court costs also pay for activities for youth and law libraries, to name a few. While worthy endeavors, it is just plain wrong to finance them in this manner.

That is why U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle described the current situation as a "pay-to-vote system" and declared court costs a tax.

It's time to honor the legacy of Rep. Lewis and support a more inclusive democracy. We can do so by allowing returning citizens to vote — regardless of their ability to pay onerous costs that have nothing to do with a crime for which they have already served their time. Studies show that voter participation reduces recidivism. That's a concept for which we should all be willing to fight.

\*Originally published as a Point of View column in the *Palm Beach Post* on July 22, 2020.

## “I Felt I Was Praying With My Feet” Fighting Racism with Body and Soul

*June Sandra Neal*



*March 21, 1965, The Third Selma to Montgomery march:*

*First Row: John Lewis, an unidentified nun, Dr. Ralph Abernathy, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr. Ralph Bunche, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth*

*Second row: Between Dr. King and Ralph Bunche is Rabbi Maurice Davis*

One champion of human rights was omitted from the movie *Selma*, a man with a wild, white mane and beard in the front row, near Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., looking more like a biblical prophet than a modern-day civil rights activist. That was Abraham Joshua Heschel, an Orthodox rabbi who was considered one of the greatest Jewish theologians and philosophers of his day.

King and Heschel came from alien worlds yet their intersection was inevitable: to both men, faith meant action. A Polish Jew with a distinguished religious heritage who lost his family in the Holocaust, Heschel found himself a maverick among his Orthodox rabbinic peers in America, who worried that his social activism stirred the cauldron of that volatile recipe: religion and politics. King came from a line of Baptist ministers in Georgia, where he attended segregated public schools. Like Heschel, he found opposition among his own. In 1961, he spoke at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, affirming that Christians had a mandate to repair social injustice. The evangelicals didn't like it and many Southern churches stopped donating to the Seminary.

In 1963, Heschel joined King to address the National Conference on Religion and Race in Chicago: “Few

of us realize that racism is man's gravest threat to man, the maximum of hatred for a minimum of reason, the maximum of cruelty for a minimum of thinking.”

In the same year, King joined Heschel to speak at the United Synagogue of America's Golden Jubilee Convention in New York, condemning the oppression of Jews in the Soviet Union: “...injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Dr. King called Heschel “my rabbi.” Heschel gave a eulogy at King's funeral. In 1965, Heschel joined King at the third, and finally successful, attempt to march from Selma to the state capital in Montgomery. The event resulted in the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This was their moment.

Now is ours. The scourge of recent murders of black people by police and civilians has ignited a national call to action not seen in decades, and new voices are in the air.

Short-term empathy is the nutritional equivalent of a candy bar. In *How To Be An Antiracist*, Professor Ibram Kendi says, “We arrive at demonstrations excited...we convince ourselves we are really doing something to solve the racial problem when we are



really doing something to satisfy our feelings...and this fulfillment is fleeting, like a drug high. What if instead of a feelings advocacy we had an outcome advocacy that put equitable outcome before our guilt and anguish?"

Bryan Stevenson, the multi-award-winning social justice advocate, advises we "get proximate," put ourselves into the cause. He created the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. Known as the "Lynching Memorial," it lists the names of

thousands of black people lynched between the years of 1877-1950.

There is much we can accomplish, if use our collective energy to take on the power, not of a demonstration, but of a revolution.

When asked why he went to Selma, Rabbi Heschel said, "I felt I was praying with my feet."

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## Hillary Clinton, Andrew Gillum, and the Amendment 4 Lawsuit

*Michael K. Cantwell*

Donald Trump not only preserved the conservative majority on the Supreme Court; he also "flipped" three of the eleven federal Courts of Appeal during his first term. The Second, Third, and Eleventh Circuits have a majority of judges appointed by Republicans.

It is extremely rare that the Supreme Court hears appeals from the federal appellate courts, giving the opinions of those courts the finality of a Supreme Court decision in the states covered by each circuit.

The Eleventh Circuit is currently hearing DeSantis's appeal of Judge Robert Hinkle's decision in *Jones v. DeSantis*. Donald Trump appointed 6 of the 12 judges sitting on this circuit, giving Republican appointees a 7-5 majority.

The court has already issued a stay of Judge Hinkle's decision, which is not a good sign. Had we elected Andrew, there would have been no SB7066 and thus no lawsuit. Had we elected Hillary, she and not Trump would have appointed 6 of the 12 judges hearing the lawsuit.

One of the Trump appointees (Andrew Brasher) recused himself, but two others (Barbara Lagoa and Robert Luck) declined. This is outrageous, given their ties to DeSantis and their promises to Congress.

Both Lagoa and Luck were appointed to the Florida Supreme Court by DeSantis. Both participated in oral argument when DeSantis sought an advisory opinion on whether "all terms of sentence" included fees and fines. And both stated under oath during their Senate confirmation hearings that, if confirmed to the Eleventh Circuit, [they would recuse themselves](#) from cases in which they participated as Florida Supreme Court justices.

While we wait and worry, there is a way we can help make the promise of Amendment 4 a reality for the hundreds of thousands of Returning Citizens unable to afford the poll tax being imposed by Republicans. Go to the website of the **Florida Rights Restoration Coalition** at <https://wegotthevote.org/finesandfees/> and make a tax-deductible donation to help pay the fines and fees owed by Returning Citizens.

### Register to Vote By Mail **Now!**

Even before the coronavirus pandemic the Florida Democratic Party encouraged all Democrats to vote by mail because it is convenient, it greatly increases turnout, and this year it is postage free in PBC.

Today it is no longer solely a matter of convenience. Milwaukee residents waited hours to vote recently because all but 5 of 180 polling stations were closed, and a number of voters [later tested positive](#) for Covid-19. Americans shouldn't have to risk their lives in order to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

Register online at [pbcelections.org](http://pbcelections.org) and follow the prompts or register by phone at 561-656-6208. Registering to vote by mail will not prevent you from going to the polls. It just gives you another option if you are unable to vote in person.

And **most important, DON'T WAIT** to mail in your ballot. Trump is playing games with the Post Office.

## Chomsky Was Right

*Michael K. Cantwell*

Shortly after Donald Trump's inauguration, Professor Noam Chomsky suggested that the Republican Party had become "the most dangerous organization in human history." He immediately acknowledged "it's an extremely outrageous statement" but added, "the question is whether it's true."

What makes the statement outrageous is that human history is littered with savage organizations that might seem infinitely more suitable candidates for the title of "most dangerous." What makes it true is that none of them — not the Nazis under Hitler or the Communists under Stalin or Mao, however odious and murderous — threatened to make vast stretches of the earth virtually uninhabitable by the end of this century. Donald Trump's Republican Party does.

There is simply no debate about the threat posed by climate change or the need to respond urgently. The overwhelming consensus among scientists who have been studying the issue for decades is that human activity is responsible for climate change and that the failure to act quickly and decisively will cause widespread destruction, disease, and death. Has humanity ever faced a more serious threat?

create doubt about what was the clear scientific consensus.

Under an economic system that does not reward moral behavior, it was money well spent to protect the trillions of dollars of assets that lay under the earth and sea. By 2016, only half of Republicans believed climate change was a problem, and only one quarter believed human activity was responsible.

It became an act of political suicide for a Republican politician to even acknowledge the reality of climate change. Candidates in the 2016 Republican primary were either outright climate deniers or refused to address the issue. Donald Trump, infamously and absurdly, called it a "Chinese hoax." And shamefully, the moderators of the 2016 debates between Trump and Hillary Clinton failed to ask a single question about climate change.

Since his election, Trump has withdrawn from the Paris Climate Accord, an act of barbarism that met with universal praise by the Republican leadership. He has sought to undermine reporting on climate change, muzzled government scientists, and taken every executive action possible to undermine federal

*The only way to prevent the Hobbesian dystopia that is mere decades away is to complete Donald Trump's destruction of the Republican Party as a brand.*

The ten hottest years ever recorded have occurred since 1998, and the five hottest were the last five years. Extreme weather events are occurring more frequently. Polar ice caps are melting at an alarming rate, sea levels are rising dramatically, and coastal communities are already threatened. Each new report issued by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reveals that the impact of climate change is even worse than the previous report had projected.

None of this is surprising to the fossil fuel industry. Indeed, internal reports from Exxon scientists going back to the late 1970s warned that the burning of fossil fuels was leading to climactic changes that would be catastrophic by 2030. Rather than address the threat, the industry responded by pouring billions of dollars into disinformation campaigns designed to

efforts to limit the release of the pollutants causing climate change.

The only way to prevent the Hobbesian dystopia that is mere decades away is to complete Donald Trump's destruction of the Republican Party as a brand. This goes beyond working to ensure he suffers an overwhelming, humiliating defeat in November, along with his minions, his enablers, and the cowards and hypocrites who allowed him to make a mockery of our institutions, our values, and our democracy.

It means that Democrats, Independents, and Republicans must "vote blue, all the way through" in November. We cannot address the existential threat of climate change while there remains any vestige of Trump's Republican Party.

# Putin's Bounty: Trump Proves (AGAIN!) He Is the Biggest Threat to US National Security

*Rob Resnick*

President Trump is complicit in the Russian bounty paid to the Taliban for killing Americans. He either knew about it and chose to do nothing, which is the more likely scenario, or he willfully chose not to read or discuss the issue, thus trying to hide from it. Either is detestable and further evidence of his gross unfitness to serve. As a proud veteran, I served under four presidents. Despite policy differences, there was never one time where we needed to be concerned about any prior president truly caring about the military or condoning our enemies killing us. Trump is a clear aberration who has no place as Commander-in-Chief.

down” versions of these briefs. He often just ignores it, but he does not get to benefit from his willful ignorance of such a critical issue. He was derelict in this most solemn of duties. Throughout his term, Trump has insisted on remaining ignorant of crucial policies, geopolitical reality, and other essential areas. The only hoax is his presidency.

If the information had been withheld from Trump (which is highly unlikely) the only reason would have been because intelligence officials believed they could not trust Trump with the information. Throughout his term, Trump has inappropriately shared classified

*Trump called it a hoax and fake news (his favorite line when he is caught and lies) . . . The only hoax is his presidency.*

Here is what we know:

1. Russia paid money (bounty) to the Taliban for killing Americans in Afghanistan.
2. President Trump received this information from intelligence officials in February/March of 2020. There is also credible evidence that he was briefed on the bounties in March 2019.
3. U.S. intelligence agencies found this information credible. They shared it with our allies who also had troops in danger. The National Security Council convened to discuss it and develop options and responses.
4. The administration failed to perform its Constitutional and statutory duties, refusing to brief specific Congressional leaders, known as the “Gang of Eight,” until after the story broke.

When the story did break, Trump lied about not being given the information. It defies all logic that intelligence officials would have withheld such serious information. He called it a hoax and fake news (his favorite line when he is caught and lies).

The daily intelligence brief is critical. Every former president read the daily brief and received the verbal briefings that followed it. Trump is unwilling (unable?) to read and understand even the “dumbed

information, including with our adversaries like Russia, thus seriously endangering our intelligence and military personnel.

Trump has previously responded to information concerning Russia in an incomprehensibly incendiary manner because of his ridiculous affection for (or fear of) Putin. Using the old cliché, he truly blames the messenger for providing him facts he does not like or that prove inconvenient.

Ever since taking office (even during the campaign), Trump has actively denigrated and dismantled the intelligence community. He has silenced and sidelined them, replacing desperately needed dedicated, talented career professionals with inexperienced, incapable political hacks. He routinely chose to believe our enemies, even when they lacked all credibility, and he openly attacked our own career professionals for just doing their job. It is despicable and incredibly dangerous. We saw this with all the impropriety and serious questions surrounding the Helsinki Summit, where Trump failed miserably in every way. Incompetent, uninformed, inept, and now disloyal to our own nation. This was his plan – discredit the intelligence community with the American people so they will hesitate to believe the truth in favor of Trump’s dishonesty.

Disclosing this latest Russian atrocity, whether in

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March 2019 or 2020, would clearly have thwarted Trump's desire to re-admit Russia into the G-7 (making it the G-8). He already faced stiff opposition, and this would have made it impossible. The good news is now we the people know about Trump's treachery to the nation. There is absolutely no excuse not to condemn Putin and take action against Russia. So, let us see what Trump does. Do not hold your breath, it has been over a month and he has refused to act or say one word

Trump betrayed the trust and confidence owed to service members and families. Despite any disagreement over policy, never before in our history

has a president so violated his obligation as commander-in-chief. He knew about the Russian bounty issue and he did not care. He kept it a secret and did nothing about it. He put his desired personal relationship with Putin above the needs of our own military. When the issue became public, he lied. He continued to refuse to condemn our adversary and their atrocity. He continued to disregard the safety of American personnel. Russia is paying terrorists to kill Americans and our president does not care! Is there a better example of disloyalty to the nation? This must be the final straw. Trump has proven himself to be incompetent, uninformed, and wholly unqualified to serve as President. Now add blatant disloyalty to our military and the nation. Trump himself is the biggest threat to our national security.



Brain Food—our dogs devour *The Delray Democrat*. Here's Chester Harrell enjoying the July issue. Photo by Char Lane.

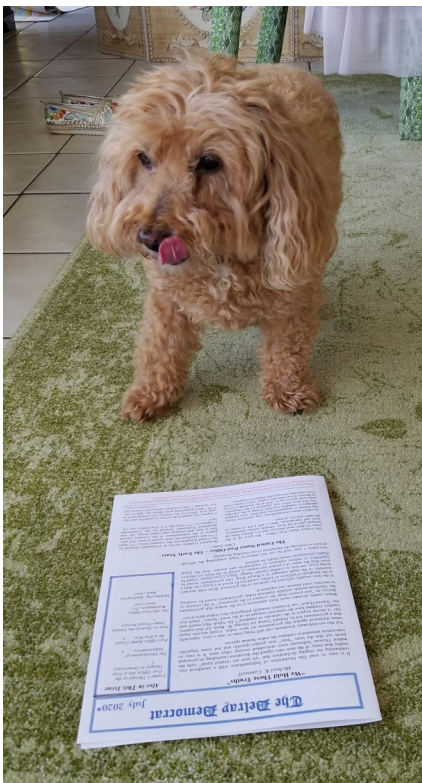
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Indoors or outdoors, our dogs do enjoy perusing *The Delray Democrat*. That's Cio-Cio San Cantwell on the left expressing her appreciation for a particularly tasty article (photo by Michael Cantwell) and Obie Z on the right taking a break from reading to smell the roses (photo by Char Lane). If you live in Rainberry Bay, you can get home delivery—that's Ollie Lieberman, center, starting on his route (photo by Paula Lieberman). Ollie delivers to people as well as dogs. Cats, not so much, which is too bad because cats have an affinity for Democratic politics; they are almost as hard to herd as are Democrats.



## Democratic Club of Delray Beach 2020 Membership Application



Date \_\_\_\_\_ New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Name/names of household members \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Community/Condo Name \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

(E-mail addresses are shared with the Palm Beach County Democratic Party so our members will be kept abreast of the latest County Democratic Activity. If you do not wish to receive this information, please initial here \_\_\_\_\_ and we will not share your E-mail address.).

Preferred method of contact: E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Text \_\_\_\_\_

Send newsletter by: E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Hand delivery \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. Mail \_\_\_\_\_

I/we are in South Florida from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ each year or are a permanent resident \_\_\_\_\_.

Payment: Individual \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ Household \$35 \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to Democratic Club of Delray Beach and mail to P.O. Box 8224, Delray Beach, FL 33484. Thank you and welcome to our Club.