

## Good Morning and Happy Friday Memphis!



### **If not us, then who? If not now, then when?**

United States Representative John Lewis was a man of dedication who spoke truth to power when it mattered most. During the 1950s and 60s, when African Americans were forced to endure oppression at the hands of their fellow citizens, local, state, and federal government alike, Representative Lewis' voice trumpeted the call for change, despite risks posed to his life.

In 1965, at the age of twenty-five, his courage was on full display as he led over 600 marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama in the fight for equal rights under the law. Despite utilizing non-violent activism, the crowd was beaten by law enforcement officers who employed bullwhips, nightsticks, tear gas, and rubber tubing wrapped in barbed wire to quash the peaceful demonstration. Lewis, in particular, received repeated blows to the head from an Alabama State Trooper, and yet *did not fight back*.

The tyrannical assaults were captured on film, and subsequently aired around the world.

Consequently, the events changed public opinion regarding the American Civil Rights Movement, which then galvanized Congress to pass the historic Voting Rights Act of 1965 four months later.

Unfortunately, Selma would not be the only time Representative Lewis faced brutality at the hands of officials who were intent on maintaining Jim Crow-era power imbalances. Nonetheless, he persisted, speaking up, getting into what he famously called "*good trouble*."

Lewis keenly understood that his efforts *must continue* for African Americans to experience true freedom, and for our nation to reach a greater estimation of itself in the long-term. Therefore, when commenting on his view of moral obligation, Lewis was quick to remind others that "when you see something that is not right, not just, not fair . . . say something, do something;" his mantra being: "*Never stop fighting*."

Sadly, Representative Lewis passed one week ago at the age of 80.

Through his death, our country has lost a commanding voice in the ongoing struggle to ensure equal justice for all. However, his legacy remains, providing guidance on how we should each utilize our voice, energy, and abilities for the betterment of our communities, and ultimately for the benefit of the underserved and underrepresented who call these places home.

As we reflect on his life and contributions, join me in honoring the late United States Representative John Lewis. Let his actions influence our present, and future, endeavors.

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This week, the Memphis City Council met to discuss measures focused on moving Memphis forward. If you were not able to participate in the meeting via live-stream on the Council website, via YouTube, or via 88.5 FM (WQOX), a full review is provided, [here](#).

### **Resolutions remembering the life and contributions of the late United States Representative John Lewis and Reverend C.T. Vivian:**

Oftentimes, the Council has seen fit to recognize the heroic acts of American citizens who have devoted their lives to the advancement of society. The late U.S. Rep. John Lewis and Rev. C.T. Vivian represent such figures. Both fought tirelessly to eradicate discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. On Tuesday, the Council unanimously approved separate resolutions remembering the life and contributions of both civil rights stalwarts, as their unflinching determination has improved our city, state, nation, and world.

## **Establishing the City Council Renaming Commission:**

In keeping with the equity-minded efforts of leaders like the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis and the late Rev. C.T. Vivian, the Council remains committed to community-based reform within the City of Memphis. In June we began to address criminal justice-based issues by approving resolutions aimed at championing change in the areas of (1) public safety transparency, (2) use-of-force policy, and (3) inclusion as it relates to the selection of leaders appointed to protect and serve.

This month we expanded our activities to include sociopolitical-based issues such as the historic exclusion of certain Memphis citizens within the decision-making processes used to officially name streets, parks, and public places within our various neighborhoods. Looking back, the lack of diversity within the discussions of *who*, as well as *what*, we choose to honor from a governmental perspective is problematic, and indicative of the long-standing practice of discrimination we intend to eliminate going forward.

The first step in that process involves establishing a body, as well as a setting, to encourage said progress. Therefore, on Tuesday, the Council approved by resolution the formation of an advisory committee regarding City of Memphis street, park, and place names. Officially named the **"City Council Renaming Commission,"** the body will consist of fifteen members approved by the Memphis City Council and tasked with providing recommendations to the legislative body regarding the renaming of specific public streets, parks, and places whose titles represent actions that should be condemned and removed from prominence within our revered public spaces, places, and venues.

In all, the Council is excited for the Commission's work to commence, as we believe this measure will work toward securing community-driven outcomes that are reflective of our *entire* community, a reality that for too long has evaded our reach.

## **Installing ADA Curb Ramps within the City of Memphis:**

The Council is also aware of the need to improve sidewalk access within our neighborhoods for *all* citizens, regardless of their level of physical ability. As such, on Tuesday, a resolution was approved to provide \$675,941 for the construction and installation of 300 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant curb ramps within the City of Memphis. When coupled with existing projects to improve City sidewalks and resurface City streets, Tuesday's action moves us all forward as the Council works to address the state of vehicle, bike, foot, and wheelchair access throughout all Council districts.

### **Providing the Division of Fire Services with Infrastructure and Equipment:**

On Tuesday, the Council approved a resolution appropriating \$4,000,000 in CIP FY21 funds for construction efforts at City of Memphis Fire Station #5. Additionally, \$555,625 was appropriated for fire-fighting turnouts/fire protective gear. Finally, \$48,375 was appropriated for personal protective equipment, self-contained breathing apparatus, and related accessories. Taken together, the action will ensure that the Division of Fire Services is equipped with quality infrastructure and equipment as they continue to provide high-level service to all Memphis residents.

### **Maintaining Memphis Pumping Systems:**

The City of Memphis' Public Works blueprint is extensive, and must be maintained for the benefit of all Memphians. Therefore, on Tuesday, the Council appropriated \$424,522 for the electrical rehabilitation of the Ensley Pumping System.

### **Honoring Memphians Who Serve:**

When worthy circumstances arise, the Council has moved to honorarily name certain public roads for citizens who have served this community. On Tuesday, one Memphian was recognized with a street name change as a result of his legacy of leadership.

**Bishop William S. Wright, Sr.** founded Liberty Church of God in Christ in 1990, and in thirty years has grown the ministry's footprint to include two locations and over 700 congregants. A dedicated man of service, Bishop Wright has revolutionized the world through preaching within his community by insisting that the church serve as a welcoming, safe environment for all. Under his direction, Liberty Church of God in Christ has established nearly 30 ministries, four Sunday worship services, and one mid-week studies class for men, women, children, and families to attend. In his spare time, Bishop Wright has even reached out to those in need of an uplifting word via his radio broadcast on WBBP 1480 AM and television broadcast on Good News TV Channel 23. In all, Bishop Wright's faith-driven works and acts of compassion have served to benefit citizens across the City of Memphis. As a result, on Tuesday, the Council unanimously approved a resolution designating Alice Drive between East Raines Road and Shirley Drive as "**Bishop William S. Wright, Sr. Boulevard,**" in appreciation for his continued acts of benevolence.

## **Protecting Yourself and Others during the COVID-19 Pandemic:**

As we move forward, the Council will continue to reiterate its call for your cooperation as we work together for the purpose of keeping all Memphians safe. *Remember:* wash your hands, maintain six-foot social distance, and **wear a mask**.

### ***Looking Forward:***

As we move ahead, I am and will always be honored to serve you each day as part of a thirteen-councilmember team working to transform our great city into a place of opportunity for all. Stay tuned for future Council updates as we keep you informed regarding the activities taking place here at City Hall.

With earnest appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrice J. Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P" and "R".

Patrice Jordan Robinson  
Chairwoman, Memphis City Council  
District 3