

The Honorable John R. Lewis
U.S. Representative of Georgia (1987–2020)

“The Marching Feet of a Determined People”

The Honorable John R. Lewis describes the relationship between social movements and civil rights legislation in the 1960s.

Interview recorded December 11, 2014

I think it was possible for the Voting Rights Act to come along, but without Selma, it could have taken many, many more years. The Voting Rights Act passed because of the urgency that Selma brought about. Dr. King used to say from time to time, “There’s not anything more powerful than the marching feet of a determined people.” The American people couldn’t stand, they didn’t like what they saw in Selma, innocent citizens marching in a peaceful, nonviolent fashion, not disturbing anybody, not interfering with traffic, was beaten, teargassed, left bloody and hurt, and they demanded the Congress and the President to act.