

Good evening,

It is a pleasure for me to make a few remarks on behalf of the Berea College Board of Trustees and a double honor for me to participate in this convocation in recognition of the Black Lives Matter Movement and the life of our dear friend Congressman John Lewis. We also remember that on this day 57 years ago, the March on Washington occurred---the day after W.E.B. Du Bois died in Ghana.

In 1816 John G. Fee was born the son a slaveholder who understood from his up close, personal experience the terribly evils of slavery, which lead to his radicalism and the eventual establishment of Berea College in 1855 as the first interracial, co-educational college in the South. John G. Fee attended Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati where he learned to preach the “gospel of impartial love.” His vision was always for an “equal and just society.”

One hundred and twenty-four years later, John R. Lewis, the son of sharecroppers and the grandson of slaves, understood from his up close and personal experience the evils of the Jim Crow system, a residue of slavery, which lead to his radicalism that would eventually end legal segregation in America. John attended the American Baptist College in Nashville, where he learned and preached that “each generation must do its part to create an even more fair, more just society.”

As we gather for this convocation, we remember and honor two radical men who changed society, and we acknowledge this current generation of young men and women who continue to carry out the radical heritage of John G. Fee and John R. Lewis in the Black Lives Matter Movement.

We also remember the call from Martin Luther King, Hosea Williams and John Lewis to join the three hundred civil rights activists in the March from Selma to Montgomery. Bereans---students, faculty and staff---answered the call and on March 25, 1965 helped swell the ranks of the protestors to over 25,000 as we marched into Montgomery. Later that summer, John Lewis stood next to President Lyndon Johnson on August 6<sup>th</sup> as he signed the new Voting Rights Act of 1965

As we honor Congressman Lewis, I close with his words spoken at the March on Washington: “I appeal to all of you to get into this great revolution that is sweeping this nation. Get in and stay in the streets of every city, every village and hamlet of this nation until true freedom comes, until the revolution of 1776 is complete.”

Thank you.

Berea’s campus is adorned with banners recognizing many notable Bereans and friends of Berea. I am very pleased that there will soon be a banner honoring Congressman Lewis. It’s now my pleasure to turn over the virtual podium to two of Berea’s Vice Presidents, Dwayne Mack and Chad Berry who will unveil that new banner.