On Campus

John Lewis Speaks at SIPA's 70th-Anniversary Celebration

Summer 2017



John Lewis (Susan Cook)

John Lewis ’97HON, the civil-rights icon and longtime Democratic congressman from Georgia, delivered a rousing speech at the School of International and Public Affairs’ annual David N. Dinkins Leadership and Public Policy Forum in April, held as part of a weekend-long series of events celebrating the school’s seventieth anniversary.

Addressing hundreds of alumni, faculty, and students in Miller Theatre, the seventy-seven-year-old Lewis explained how growing up a child of black sharecroppers in the Jim Crow South instilled in him a lifelong commitment to combating social injustice. He described his role in organizing the Freedom Rides and the march over Selma’s Edmund Pettus Bridge in the 1960s, and his ongoing work on behalf of the millions

of Atlanta residents he has represented in Congress since 1986.

Lewis’s political awakening came early; when he was a young child, he said, his elders told him segregation was just “the way it is” and advised him to avoid trouble with whites. By the time he was in high school, however, he had decided “to get in the way, to get in good trouble — necessary trouble. And I’ve been getting in trouble ever since.”



Guide to school abbreviations

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