



# Walking With The Wind: A Memoir of the Movement

By John Lewis, Michael D'orso



**Walking With The Wind: A Memoir of the Movement** By John Lewis, Michael D'orso

Forty years ago, a teenaged boy named John Lewis stepped off a cotton farm in Alabama and into the epicenter of the struggle for civil rights in America. The ideals of nonviolence which guided that critical time of American history established him as one of the movement's most charismatic and courageous leaders. In "Walking with the Wind", John Lewis recounts his life with the fierce simplicity for which he is known, both in public and private. It began in rural poverty but within the bosom of a loving and resilient family. It has ranged across almost every battlefield in the most dramatic struggles for racial justice -- from Selma to Montgomery to Birmingham and beyond. Lewis's leadership of the Nashville Movement -- a student-led effort to desegregate the city of Nashville using sit-in techniques based on the teachings of Gandhi -- established him as one of the movement's defining figures and set the tone for the major civil rights campaigns of the 1960s, from the Freedom Rides of 1961, during which Lewis was repeatedly brutally beaten and imprisoned; to the 1963 March on Washington, where his fiery speech thrust him into the national spotlight; to his selection as the national chairman of SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), which he helped shape and guide; to the 1965 "Bloody Sunday" attack at Selma, where Lewis suffered a fractured skull during a tear gas attack by Alabama state troopers. Lewis, as a participant in the movement, was to be, and remains, utterly true to his boyhood hero, Martin Luther King Jr., as a believer in the philosophy and discipline of nonviolent social action. In 1966, Lewis was ousted as SNCC chairman by Stokely Carmichael, who represented the emerging militant "Black Power" direction of the movement. Two years later, Lewis joined Robert Kennedy in his 1968 campaign for the presidency. He was with Kennedy moments before he was assassinated. Lewis, committed to the principles of nonviolence, spent the next decade organizing and registering four million voters in the South. In 1986, he sought a United States congressional seat in a campaign against his old friend, comrade, and former SNCC colleague Julian Bond. Lewis won the seat in a great upset and serves in Congress to this day. John Lewis tells his story of struggle in the civil rights movement, of comradeship in that community, of its battles and triumphs, and of his own persevering faith with great charm, candor, and humor.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

John Lewis is an authentic American hero, a modest man from the most humble of beginnings who left a rural Alabama cotton farm 40 years ago and strode into the forefront of the civil rights movement. One of the young people who brought the teachings of Ghandi and King to the lunch counters of Nashville in 1960, Lewis suffered taunts and threats, beatings and arrests. He spoke at the historic 1963 March on Washington and became chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The nation, tuned to the nightly news, watched in horror as state troopers clubbed him viciously, fracturing his skull as he led a march in Selma, Alabama, in 1965. Today, he's the only member of Congress who can be proud of having been carried off to jail more than 40 times. With the help of a collaborator, journalist Michael D'Orso, this remarkable man has written a truly remarkable book. *Walking with the Wind* is a deeply moving personal memoir that skillfully balances the intimate and touching recollections of the deeply thoughtful Lewis with the intense national drama that was the civil rights movement.

#### From Publishers Weekly

Lewis, an Alabama sharecropper's son, went to Nashville to attend a Baptist college where, at the end of the 1950s, his life and the new civil rights movement became inexorably entwined. First came the lunch counter sit-ins; then the Freedom Rides; the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Lewis's election to its chairmanship; the voter registration drives; the 1963 march on Washington; the Birmingham church bombings; the murders during the Freedom Summer; the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party; Bloody Sunday in Selma in 1964; and the march on Montgomery. Lewis was an active, leading member during all of it. Much of his account, written with freelancer D'Orso, covers the same territory as David Halberstam's *The Children*?Halberstam himself appears here briefly as a young reporter?but Lewis imbues it with his own observations as a participant. He is at times so self-effacing in this memoir that he underplays his role in the events he helped create. But he has a sharp eye, and his account of Selma and the march that followed is vivid and personal?he describes the rivalries within the movement as well as the enemies outside. After being forced out of SNCC because of internal politics, Lewis served in President Carter's domestic peace corps, dabbled in local Georgia politics, then in 1986 defeated his old friend Julian Bond in a race for Congress, where he still serves. Lewis notes that people often take his quietness for meekness. His book, a uniquely well-told testimony by an eyewitness, makes clear that such an impression is entirely inaccurate.

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#### From School Library Journal

YA-Lewis was active in the American civil rights movement almost from the beginning. He was there during the lunch-counter sit-ins in Nashville in 1960, took part in the Freedom Rides of 1961, and, as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, spoke at the March on Washington in 1963. The list goes on. Like all memoirs, this one has its biases and limitations. However, for the insider's insights it provides, it is an indispensable resource.

Pamela B. Rearden, Centreville Regional Library, Fairfax County, VA

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**Leonard Parnell:**

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