



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 11, 2017

Trump Delivers Positive Address at Miss. Civil Rights Museum Despite Boycott of Two House Members

Accepting an invitation extended by  Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant, President Trump spoke at the opening of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in Jackson on December 9. The president was joined at the ceremony by Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson and former Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Reuben Anderson.

Because of the controversy created when two members of Congress from Mississippi, Democratic Representatives John Lewis and Bennie Thompson, announced that they would stay away from the event because of Trump's presence, the opening ceremonies were divided into two separate events. After touring the museum complex, which includes the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and Museum of Mississippi History, the president spoke for 10 minutes at a private ceremony inside the new building. Myrlie Evers-Williams, the widow of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers, spoke at a separate event outside on a public stage.

Evers-Williams did not mention Trump in her remarks. "Regardless of race, creed or color, we are all Americans.... If Mississippi can rise to the occasion, then the rest of the country should be able to do the same thing," she said.

Lewis and Thompson issued a joint press release on December 7, in which they said: "After careful consideration and conversations with church leaders, elected officials, civil rights activists, and many citizens of our congressional districts, we have decided not to attend or participate in the opening of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum." The statement went on to deliver strong criticism of Trump:

President Trump's attendance and his hurtful policies are an insult to the people portrayed in this civil rights museum. The struggles represented in this museum exemplify the truth of what really happened in Mississippi. President Trump's disparaging comments about women, the disabled, immigrants, and National Football League players disrespect the efforts of Fannie Lou Hamer, Henry Aaron, Medgar Evers, Robert Clark, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and countless others who have given their all for Mississippi to be a better place.

Despite the negative remarks directed at the president, portraying him as a man whom they expected to be insensitive to the legacy of the people portrayed in the civil rights museum, Trump expressed appreciation for those it was established to honor and remember. He said, in part:

The Civil Rights Museum records the oppression, cruelty and injustice inflicted on the African-American community, the fight to end slavery, to break down Jim Crow, to end segregation, to gain the right to vote, and to achieve the sacred birthright of equality here. [Applause.] ...

Among those we honor are the Christian pastors who started the Civil Rights movement in their own churches preaching, like Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. — a man that we have studied and watched, and admired for my entire life — that we're all made in the image of our Lord.



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Students like James Meredith, who were persecuted for standing up for their right to the same education as every other American student. Young people, like the nine brave students who quietly sat. And they sat very stoically, but very proudly, at the Jackson Public Library in 1961. And, by the way, I would add the word “very bravely” — they sat very bravely.

And, finally, martyrs like Sergeant Medgar Wiley Evers — [applause] — whose brother I just met at the plane, and who I liked a lot — I have to — stand up, please. Come on. Stand up. You were so nice. I appreciate it. [Applause.] You were so nice. Thank you very much.

Trump went on to say, “For his courageous leadership in the Civil Rights movement, Mr. Evers was assassinated by a member of the KKK in the driveway of his own home.”

The president noted that Evers was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors, where “he lies beside men and women of all races, backgrounds, and walks of life who have served and sacrificed for our country. Their headstones do not mark the color of their skin, but immortalize the courage of their deeds.”

“Their memories are carved in stone as American heroes. That is what Medgar Evers was. He was a great American hero. That is what the others honored in this museum were: true American heroes.”

The contrast between Trump’s tribute to Evers and the other civil rights leaders honored at the museum and the allegations made by Lewis and Thompson that his attendance is an insult to the people portrayed in the civil rights museum is so great that it defies logic. One can only conclude that it is politically motivated.

Last January, shortly before Trump took office as our next president, Lewis went on NBC News and said: “I don’t see this president-elect as a legitimate president.”

In an [article in *The New American*](#) about Lewis’ remark (and others directed against Trump), writer Steve Byas tried to figure out what made Lewis tick. He observed that at the height of the civil rights movement, during the “Freedom Rides,” in which blacks and whites rode together in a bus across the Deep South in protest of state laws dictating racial segregation, Lewis was hit in the head with a wooden crate, which rendered him unconscious. Lewis was among those injured at Edmund Pettus Bridge in Alabama, in the Selma March of 1965.

Since that time, observed Byas, Lewis has made many inflammatory remarks over the years against political opponents, with reactions to those comments being met with accusations that the responder is being somehow disrespectful of Lewis’ courage during his civil rights activities. Noted Byas:

Lewis’ tactic is clear. He gets to attack his political enemies at will, using all sorts of incendiary language, and if someone dares to retaliate, that person is then tarred as, at best, insensitive to the “courage” of Lewis, and at worst, a racial bigot.

While Lewis was an apparently sincere activist during the civil rights movement, he also became engaged in radical organizations. Byas noted that he was a founding member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, which was formed with the assistance of the Democratic Socialists of America. And in the early 1960s, he was a sponsor and vice chairman of a Communist Party USA front group known as the National Committee to Abolish the House Un-American Activities Committee.

In another [article posted by *The New American*](#) last January, John F. McManus, president emeritus of The John Birch Society and former publisher of this magazine, wrote that Lewis is “one of the most liberal members of the entire House and unquestionably one of most consistently Democratic



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congressmen in the Deep South.” Since the [policies of Democrats have hurt the vast majority of blacks nationwide](#), not including politicians of course, Lewis’ motives are suspect at best, in any case.

The ceremony at the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum was not the first time that Lewis boycotted a public event as a form of protest. He also boycotted Trump’s inauguration. McManus wrote about his tendency to stage such protests:

The Georgia congressman obviously knows how to gain publicity. And he doesn’t stick to the truth to get it. He stated that boycotting the Trump inauguration would be the first time in his 30 years in Congress that he wouldn’t be present at such an event. The truth is that he stayed away from the 2001 inauguration of President George W. Bush, saying he didn’t believe Mr. Bush to be the real victor. Then he attacked the candidacy of John McCain/Sarah Palin, accusing them of “sowing the seeds of hatred and division.” Had they won in 2008, it seems likely that he would have boycotted that inauguration as well.

Fortunately, the president did not stoop to responding to Lewis’s insults, but, instead, took the high ground and used the occasion of the dedication of the civil rights museum to deliver a dignified message praising those the museum was established to honor.

Image: [Screenshot of a museum advertisement](#)

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