



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on January 17, 2017

Who is John Lewis, the Rep. Who Calls Trump Illegitimate?

“I don’t see this president-elect as a legitimate president,” Representative John Lewis (D-Ga.; shown) said of Donald Trump on NBC News this past Sunday. “I think the Russians participated in helping this man get elected. And they helped destroy the candidacy of Hillary Clinton.”



Not surprisingly, Trump struck back in his inimitable style, tweeting, “Congressman John Lewis should spend more time on fixing and helping his district, which is in horrible shape and falling apart (not to mention crime infested) rather than falsely complaining about the election results. All talk, talk, talk — no action or results. Sad!”

Trump then suggested what Lewis could do, if he really wanted to make a positive difference: “Congressman John Lewis should finally focus on the burning and crime infested inner-cities of the U.S. I can use all the help I can get!”

One would think that the criticism over this exchange would be reserved for Lewis, who is calling the incoming president of the United States “illegitimate.” Yet, most of the negative reaction was directed not at Lewis, but at Trump! And the basis for directing the chastisement at the president-elect instead of Trump seems to be based on what Lewis did — or more accurately, what was done to him — back in the early 1960s.

An ally of the late Martin Luther King, Lewis was assaulted 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. He was hit in the head with a wooden crate, which rendered him unconscious. Most famously, Lewis was among those injured at Edmund Pettus Bridge in Alabama, in the Selma March of 1965.

Since that time, 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’s courage during his civil rights activities.

Regarding Trump’s response to Lewis, Senator Kamala Harris, a left-wing Democrat from California, said, “John Lewis is an icon of the Civil Rights movement who is fearless in the pursuit of justice and equality. He deserves better than this.” Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi implied that Trump was trying to “silence” Lewis, stating, “Let us remember that many have tried to silence John Lewis over the years. All have failed.”

Howard Wolfson, who was the communications director for Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign, also took umbrage at the temerity of Trump to respond to Lewis’s caustic remarks, saying, “John Lewis did more to make America great in one day on the Edmund Pettus Bridge than Donald Trump ever will.”

Not all the negative reaction came from Democrats. Senator Ben Sasse, a Republican from Nebraska,



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but an intense critic of Trump, apparently had no problem with Lewis calling Trump an illegitimate president, but rather took issue with Trump's daring to respond. "John Lewis and his 'talk' have changed the world," he insisted.

On the other hand, Senator Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat, when asked by CNN's Jake Tapper whether Trump was a legitimate president, responded, "Absolutely." Manchin told Tapper that he believed it was time to "move on," and "come together as a country." Even CNN's Anderson Cooper took issue with Lewis's characterization of Trump as an illegitimate president. "I get he doesn't like Donald Trump," Cooper conceded. "I get he doesn't accept the results of the election, but is this helpful in any way?" Cooper noted that if a Republican had said something similar about a President-elect Hillary Clinton, "Democrats would be up in arms."

Appearing on CBS's *Face the Nation*, Vice President-elect Mike Pence was challenged about Trump's response to Lewis. Moderator John Dickerson suggested that Trump should have just let the comments go without a response. Pence defended Trump, while also attempting to be conciliatory. "Donald Trump won this election fair and square," Pence told Dickerson, pointing out that Trump carried 30 out of 50 states, including Lewis's state of Georgia. He called the comments of Lewis "deeply disappointing," yet offered that Lewis was a man he had served with and respected.

"We honor the sacrifice that he made but part of the result of what happened on Bloody Sunday [in 1965] and the courage that he showed was the Voting Rights Act," Pence said. "So for someone of his stature not just in the civil rights movement but in voting rights to make a comment that he did not consider Donald Trump to be a legitimate president, I think, is deeply disappointing."

Lewis's 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. No doubt Pence does not want to be tarred as a racist.

But no one is questioning anything Lewis did on behalf of terminating segregation laws over a half-century ago. Pence's careful response, defending Trump, while conceding his respect for Lewis, demonstrates the effectiveness of the tactic that Lewis and his allies use on a regular basis to advance a left-wing political agenda.

Because of the reputation Lewis earned in getting assaulted during the civil rights battles of the 1960s, his radical record is not properly addressed. For example, when Martin Luther King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech in August 1963, Lewis was another speaker at the same event. His remarks were much more aggressive than King's, and reportedly were moderated before they were delivered. In the speech as delivered, Lewis called for "radical social, political and economic changes."

While some might retort that Lewis was only referencing the need for change to end legal discrimination against African-Americans, the truth is that he has a long record of hard-core leftism. He was a founding member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, which was formed with the assistance of the Democratic Socialists of America. In the early 1960s, Lewis 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 1965, Lewis won the Eugene Debs Award, named for the founder of the Socialist Party of America. In 1967, Lewis called Norman Thomas, the six-time presidential nominee of the Socialist Party, a man who "has symbolized to millions of Americans the ideals of peace, freedom and equality."

Not surprisingly, then, the Democratic Socialists of America Political Action Committee endorsed



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Lewis's 1996 congressional campaign.

Some of the activities of Lewis were even left of the democratic socialists, however. In 1965, he wrote an article for *Freedomways*, a Communist Party USA publication, favorable to Paul Robeson, a member of the Communist Party USA, and a noted admirer of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. In the article, Lewis said that he and other civil rights activists were "Paul Robeson's spiritual children." History has shown that communists have often used legitimate social grievances (such as segregation laws) to advance their own nefarious goals, and if grievances do not exist, they work to create them.

As recently as 2003, Lewis wrote an article for the *People's Weekly World*, a magazine of the Communist Party USA.

Lewis's vitriolic attacks upon political opponents have not been limited to Trump. For example, he has insinuated that Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.), Trump's pick for attorney general, is a racist. "Those who are committed to equal justice in our society wonder whether Senator Sessions' calls for law and order will mean today what it meant in Alabama when I was coming up back then. The rule of law was used to violate the human and civil rights of the poor, the dispossessed, people of color," Lewis said recently.

He was a leader in organizing the sit-in on the floor of Congress, calling for stricter gun control legislation. "We have been quiet for too long," he insisted.

Lewis's use of the race card is not reserved for Trump or his political appointees. During the 2008 election, Lewis attacked Republican nominee John McCain, hardly a staunch conservative. "What I am seeing reminds me too much of another destructive period in American history. Sen. McCain and Gov. Palin are sowing the seeds of hatred and division," stated Lewis. In 2012, he compared Republican nominee Mitt Romney to the segregationists of the 1960s. "I've seen this before, I lived this before ... Brothers and sister, do you want to go back?" Lewis asked, implying that a Romney administration would return America to the days of racial segregation.

And, of course, Lewis returned to the same theme in last year's presidential campaign, when he compared Trump to segregationist Governor George Wallace of Alabama. "Trump reminds me so much of a lot of the things George Wallace said and did."

Lewis is not above using such rhetoric against members of his own political party, if necessary — including even the most leftist of its members, such as Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who is an open socialist. He even challenged the civil rights credentials of Sanders, saying, "I never saw him" during the civil rights struggles. Actually, Sanders was arrested in a civil-rights protest in Chicago, but Lewis was supporting Sanders' opponent for the Democratic Party nod, Hillary Clinton, and he is used to not being challenged, regardless of what negative things he says about political opponents — at least not until Trump came along.

During the 2010 congressional battle over the adoption of the Affordable Care Act, Representative Andre Carson (D-Ind.), a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, claimed that "Tea Party" protesters made racial insults against Lewis. Carson charged that "hundreds of people" were chanting "Kill the bill," and using the "N-word." Carson said that as they walked from the Cannon House Office Building, Capitol Police were forced to protect them from Tea Party members, who were there to protest the passage of ObamaCare. Representative Emanuel Cleaver (D-Mo.), another black member of Congress, even claimed that he was spat on by a protester, and the police arrested the person. Yet, Sgt. Kimberly Schneider of the U.S. Capitol Police said no arrests were made. None of the videos made of the walk over to the Capitol provides any evidence of the claims made by Carson and Cleaver, yet Lewis



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has not said anything to challenge their version of events.

Three black members of the Tea Party protest said they also did not hear any racial slurs. When asked if she had witnessed or heard any racial comments, Tea Party member Charlene Freedman, an African-American, said, "Absolutely not ... I've heard nothing about racism ... nothing at all." Jay Jarbo of Atlanta, another black Tea Party member protesting the Affordable Care Act, perhaps summed it up the best: "I just want to see them follow the Constitution, and they're not doing that. Anyone that tries to throw around the racial thing, just squash it, because this has nothing to do with race. I haven't heard anyone say anything about race at any of these events. Honestly, this is the type of thing people bring up to distract from the real issues, and it's always about race in this country, and it's always the last card in the deck that everyone plays."

Actually, when it comes to Congressman John Lewis, the race card appears to be the *first* card in the deck that he always plays. Regardless of what Lewis did back in the 1960s, it does not entitle him to say whatever he wishes, true or false, without being challenged.

Speaking of cards, Lewis apparently has gotten used to Republican politicians such as Bush, McCain, and Romney, who will not respond to Lewis's vicious attacks, and tend to fold even while holding a Royal Flush. Now, however, Lewis is in a new game, where he has to deal with a *Trump Card*.



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