

Life lessons can be learned from the late John Lewis

By Linda Wilk

I am in awe of the capacity the late United States Rep. John Lewis had to forgive. I will admit I had no idea the depth of his personal suffrage until recently.

As Lewis’ life has been memorialized, I was especially taken by the fact Lewis was nearly beaten to death as part of a march for civil rights on May 4, 1961 in Rock Hill South Carolina and then beaten again on March 7, 1965, suffering a fractured skull in Selma Alabama.

Yet he was quoted as saying, “You have to have the capacity and ability to take what people did, and how they did it, and forgive them and move on.”

I am not sure I would have that same capacity or ability



A SLICE OF LIFE

Linda Wilk



if I encountered all the adversarial attitudes and physical attacks, Lewis suffered. Although I am thankful for people like Lewis who stood the challenge and served our

country as a United States House of Representatives for Georgia’s 5th congressional district from 1987 until his death in 2020 from pancreatic cancer.

It humbles me to think of the occasional strife I suffer and how I react. It also reminds me that no matter what the obstacle or adversarial comment that might be made against me, I need to have the capacity to forgive and move on.

This thinking was compounded by a recent conversation I was part of during an informal outdoor gathering of friends recently. While the frontline workers were not being subjected to physical violence, they were being routinely battered with public’s negative words and attitudes for things the

employees had no control over.

Those who worked regularly with the public, expressed frustration on how rude, demanding and downright entitled people’s attitudes seems to be right now.

I am not sure if this attitude has always been there and the pandemic has just brought it to a head or if for some reason, we now believe we have a right to act disrespectfully to one another.

Trust me, there are days my patience is challenged. For example, as I wait at the local pharmacy for a client’s medication – I have learned to insist that staff call and make sure the prescription is ready before just going to the pharmacy because the client says the medication should be ready.

That has helped with my ability to remain calm and patient.

Another piece of advice I was given once by a retired receptionist was to always think about what the person who is short with you might be going through. It could be that the other person just lost a loved one or a job, or even just found out that due to the Corona virus they cannot go on that long-awaited vacation.

Again, that does not mean

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The late John Lewis Former U.S. Representative

we give those who are less than kind to us a free pass to treat us as a doormat. It however, does, hopefully give both parties pause to think before we act. And sometimes, just asking, is there anything I can do for you, just might put that other person off guard enough that they re-adjust their attitude and even apologize.

If it is possible to be a little kinder during your interactions with others who are trying to do their job, let us do that. Let us remember that we are all in this pandemic together.


How different would each of our lives be if we took Lewis’ advice today – not to imply we should accept when someone truly wrongs us, not just inconveniences us.

If it is an inconvenience,

we need to stop and adjust our attitude before we speak or give attitude. If, however, you are truly wronged, let us right the wrong and then move on, not letting that action tear us down, which is what I believe Lewis would say.

So as you find yourself confronted with controversy or your words or actions twisted, remember what your intent is and focus on how you can persevere for good, letting go of the negative or when possible just ignoring it. And if the situation requires action, do your best to have a well thought out plan that lifts you up and doesn’t bring your adversary down more than is necessary, so that as Lewis said, you have the ability to forgive and move on.

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