



American College of Trial Lawyers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Sarah Stokes
Phone: (949) 752-1801
Email: sstokes@actl.com

HONORABLE JOHN LEWIS RECEIVES THURGOOD MARSHALL EQUALITY AND JUSTICE AWARD POSTHUMOUSLY FROM THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF TRIAL LAWYERS

Lewis is the inaugural recipient of the award

NEWPORT BEACH, CALIF., October 13, 2021 -- The American College of Trial Lawyers (the College) presented its inaugural Thurgood Marshall Equality and Justice Award posthumously to the Honorable John Lewis during the 2021 Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois. The Thurgood Marshall Equality and Justice Award Committee was conceived by the College to recognize those who have stood steadfast in the fight for equality and justice. The impetus for the College's action is best described by the words of Regent Joe R. Caldwell and Secretary Richard Deane, Jr., who were both involved in the formation of this committee.

Those words are: "Recurring issues of race and inequality are again at the forefront of our public discourse. Both the United States and Canada have long grappled with these issues through much of our history. Now the tragic deaths of George Floyd and too many others have again put a spotlight on injustices and inequalities that continue to plague our pursuit of equality and justice for all. The College wishes to recognize champions who have fought for equality and justice and against racism and in keeping with the standards for such an award to be established by the College."

The Committee's mandate for the award reads: The Thurgood Marshall Equality and Justice Award, named for the revered lawyer, civil rights advocate and first Black Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, is to be given from time to time to an individual who has been a champion of justice and equality in all forms, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation or other form. The candidate must possess vision, courage, and fortitude, and must have stood steadfast in the passionate and effective pursuit of equal justice under the law.

At its July 16, 2020, video conference, the committee unanimously selected Congressman John Lewis as the Inaugural recipient of the Thurgood Marshall Award unequivocally. Further, when it was reported that Congressman Lewis was in failing health, the committee agreed that in the event the Congressman did not survive, he should nevertheless be named as the award recipient posthumously. Sadly, the College learned the following day that Congressman Lewis had passed. His family issued a statement which read, among other things:

He was honored and respected as the conscience of the US Congress and an icon of American history, but we knew him as a loving father and brother. He was a stalwart champion in the on-going struggle to demand respect for the dignity and worth of every human being. He dedicated his entire life to non-violent activism and was an outspoken advocate in the struggle for equal justice in America. He will be deeply missed.

Current Committee Chair Gregory Wells said, in presenting the award posthumously to his son, John-Miles Lewis, "His entire life's work was, as we all know, dedicated to justice and equality, for which he earned many honors, to include the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation Profile in Courage Award, 'For his extraordinary courage, leadership and commitment to civil rights,' and of course, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. We are honored and humbled today by the Lewis family's acceptance of the College's Thurgood Marshall Equality and Justice Award and we are equally honored that probably the most important and significant part of his legacy, his son, John-Miles Lewis, is here today to accept."

In his acceptance remarks, Mr. John-Miles Lewis said, "One of my father's favorite quotes from Thurgood Marshall [is], 'I wish I could say that racism and prejudice were only distant memories. We must dissent from the indifference. We must dissent from apathy. We must dissent from the fear, the hatred, and the mistrust. We must dissent because America can do better, because America has no choice but to do better.' My father was living proof of this and he was living proof that this can be possible."

About The American College of Trial Lawyers

The American College of Trial Lawyers is comprised of the best of the trial bar from the United States and Canada and is widely considered to be the premier professional trial organization in North America. Founded in 1950, the College is an invitation only fellowship. The College thoroughly investigates each nominee for admission and selects only those who have demonstrated the very highest standards of trial advocacy, ethical conduct, integrity, professionalism and collegiality. The College maintains and seeks to improve the standards of trial practice, professionalism, ethics, and the administration of justice through education and public statements on important legal issues relating to its mission. The College strongly supports the independence of the judiciary, trial by jury, respect for the rule of law, access to justice, and fair and just representation of all parties to legal proceedings. Learn more at www.actl.com.

Photo Available:

A photo of ACTL President Rodney Acker, presenting the Thurgood Marshall Equality and Justice Award posthumously to the Hon. John Lewis's son, John-Miles Lewis, during the General Session on Saturday, October 1, 2021, at the College's Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois is available. Please contact Sarah Stokes.

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