

## Rededicating John R. Lewis High School

Remarks by School Board Member-at-Large Karen Keys-Gamarra

*“...John Lewis’ light is shining on us today and inspiring us to fight on, to prepare every student to thrive in our schools and to choose to serve in their communities just as he did.” –Karen Keys-Gamarra*

**April 23, 2021 (Springfield, VA)** - Today, in this renaming ceremony, we have the privilege of honoring the civil rights icon, John R. Lewis. He exemplified the principle that the light and love in the heart of one man can change the world. From the kind words he spoke as a boy when he preached to chickens, to the humility it took to follow those who led him into his destiny, this light—this love in one man allows us to celebrate today.



His was a life dedicated to recognizing not just his own needs but those of his community, his people, and his nation. Like a well-seasoned prophet, he foresaw that someone would need to not just see the fight, but run to it. He not only was a man of faith who prayed on bridges, but he became a bridge to the very hope that we all cherish.

John Lewis knew the words of the equal protection clause that says that we are not to deprive a person of life, liberty and property or due process of law or equal protection under the law. These were the words that he knew were not yet realized for everyone who resides in this nation. And so he ran to that bridge in Selma because he saw what was needed. He was there for you. He was there for me. He was there for my three African American sons. He was there for our children’s children because he had the foresight to know that “getting into good trouble” was both his burden and his privilege.

In many ways, he foresaw what we all trembled through earlier this week, as we anxiously awaited for the Chauvin trial to end in the verdict. When John Lewis crossed that bridge in Selma, he did it so that we could all learn to see humanity in our neighbors and to abolish the hatred that could cause blindness in this nation. It is his light that now allows us to celebrate, as we consciously turn our backs on a past that only valued some and we purposefully look toward a promising future for all of us.

If Congressman Lewis were here today, I believe he would be celebrating with us. And I believe that he would ask us—all of us—to ensure that we make not just this place but Fairfax County a place for our students from all over Fairfax County to learn how to make good trouble through an Academy that would be established to prepare students to dedicate their lives, as he did, to the noble cause of public service; and that those students would be allowed to focus on developing

leadership skills, understanding government, learning the process of developing public policy and fighting for Human Rights.

I truly believe that John Lewis' light is shining on us today and inspiring us to fight on, to prepare every student to thrive in our schools and to choose to serve in their communities just as he did. I hope to work with all our leaders—local representatives, state, federal, the business community—toward that goal. I know that the students of this school and Fairfax County will continue with our support to make us proud. Congratulations!