



We the People
THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION

Directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress.

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U.S. Representative John Lewis Opens Civil Rights Institute for Educators

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – U.S. Rep. John Lewis (GA-05) will give the keynote address to open “We the People: A Seminar on the Civil Rights Movement” at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 11, at the Tutwiler Hotel. Cosponsored by the Center for Civic Education and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the three-day seminar brings 35 educators from throughout the country to learn about the movement from civil rights leaders, “foot soldiers” and scholars.

“The seminar began in 2002 to provide teachers participating in the Center’s We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution program an opportunity to learn more about the civil rights movement, to see first-hand important landmarks in Birmingham and to interact with civil rights leaders like the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth,” said Robert Leming, We the People program director. “Since then, about 400 educators have visited Birmingham to learn about the history and constitutional issues of the civil rights movement.”

The teachers will attend lectures and participate in discussions at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. They will visit the 16th Street Baptist Church and Kelly Ingram Park. The group will also attend church service at Bethel Baptist. “You cannot truly understand the civil rights movement without understanding the African-American church and its influence on the movement,” Leming said.

Implemented nationally in upper elementary, middle and high schools, We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution teaches students the fundamental principles and history of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. More than 30 million students and 81,000 teachers have

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participated in the program since its inception in 1987. We the People is funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by Congress and is directed by the Center for Civic Education.

Congressman Lewis's involvement in the civil rights movement began in his home state of Alabama, where as a young boy he was inspired to action by the Montgomery Bus Boycott. During the height of the movement, from 1963 to 1966, Lewis served as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which he helped form. By 1963, he was included among the big six leaders of the civil rights movement. (The others were Martin Luther King Jr., James Farmer, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young.) At the age of 23, he was an architect of and a keynote speaker at the historic March on Washington in August 1963.

Lewis, who has represented Georgia's 5th Congressional District since 1987, is joined by other noted speakers:

Donzaleigh Abernathy, author, actress and African-American historian;
Martha Bouyer, social studies specialist, Jefferson County, Alabama, schools;
William Collins, professor of history and political science, Samford University;
Dorothy Cotton, former director of citizenship education, Southern Christian Leadership Conference;
Rev. Wilson Fallin Jr., professor of history, University of Montevallo;
Doug Jones, former United States attorney, Northern District of Alabama;
Janice Kelsey, retired educator and participant in The Children's March;
Robert Leming, director, We the People program;
Carolyn McKinstry, president, Sixteenth Street Foundation;
Ahmad Ward, head of education, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute; and
Rev. Thomas Wilder, pastor, Bethel Baptist Church.

"Teachers leave the seminar re-energized, with new information and methods to teach about this important era in American history," noted Leming. "You can learn about the civil rights movement by reading a book, but in Birmingham you can touch it."

About the Center for Civic Education (www.civiced.org)

The Center for Civic Education is an educational, nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering the development of informed, responsible participation in civic life by citizens committed to the values and principles fundamental to American constitutional democracy. The Center has offices in Washington, D.C., and Calabasas, Calif.

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