

# Richard Levick – Speak Truth With Love, Not Anger



*“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.”*

– Nelson Mandela (born July 18, 1918)

The anniversary of Nelson Mandela’s birth would, by minutes, have been the same day as John Lewis’ death, separated by 102 years. As one light goes out, others must rise.

It was the last thing I remember reading before falling asleep

late Friday night, the sad news that John Lewis, the conscience of a generation, had passed away. A few hours later at 3 a.m., I read the daily essay by the brilliant Boston College historian, Heather Cox Richardson, commemorating Congressman Lewis. Her daily essays are as powerful as she is indefatigable, and this one, as always was well worth the read, made all the starker by the early hour.

In a *Washington Post* interview, after Congressman Lewis's last public appearance at Black Lives Matter Plaza across from the White House on June 7, just over four miles from my home, he summed up the #BLM movement by saying, "I can do something. I can say something." So can we all.

As if on cue, nearly 12 hours later, as I sat in a rocking chair in the backyard, facing Rock Creek Park reading, the passionate *New York Times* editorial board remembrance, "**John Lewis Risked His Life for Justice,**" on came "When," from the late Richie Havens, a soft but powerful song about a deeply challenged future ("I don't have a future, cried the children in the streets"). God does indeed work in mysterious ways, even if it means Pandora finding exactly the right song – one out of roughly 100,000 possible songs – at precisely the right moment.

We are at a crossroads, again. America's original sin; 1855-64; 1963-72; and right now. We are in the midst of another great Civil Rights movement. For those on the far right who would deny it and claim it is anarchy; for those on the far left who want to intimidate through cancel culture and cultural appropriation shaming; and for those in the middle who would choose to ignore it, this. is. it. The great arc of history will judge us by *what we do next*.

## A path forward

Over the past week, we recorded three broadcasts to provide companies and executives with insights on actions we can take

to lead:

For companies investing in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) efforts (if not now, when?), Paul Anderson-Walsh, co-founder of The Center for Inclusive Leadership in London, in a powerful broadcast, reminds us to “speak truth with love, not anger.” This is a time for “radical acceptance, not judgment.” So many of us are entering the conversation on race as if we are in a bad marriage, fearful of every word so that we stutter rather than embrace, we judge rather than listen. I could have spent the day with Paul, with his voice radiating acceptance and his wisdom providing pathways. We will have him on again but these 40 minutes help us on the journey. **We all need to listen.**

For those reviewing their CSR through fresh eyes, we interviewed DC SCORES and America SCORES (the official charitable partner of DC United and the Washington Spirit, respectively), including recent alumni and Morehouse College rising freshman DeAndre Walters, whose poem, **“Letter to the Movement”** he reads on air and will cut you to the quick. He concludes with these lines:

“I don’t wanna be hashtag

I wanna be remembered”

DC Scores calls them “poet athletes,” teaching the most beautiful game at the same time they teach how to nurture a beautiful mind.

CSR can make a difference in people’s lives – lives that enrich and empower.

In a broad ranging conversation via Wake Forest’s Center for the Study of Capitalism, called **Doing the Right Thing: How Companies Lead in the New Age of Diversity and Inclusion**, a panel including former Monsanto GC and Akerman partner Bill Ide; Neil Foote, CEO of Foote Communications and President of

the National Black Public Relations Society; Kurt Bardella, a contributor to MSNBC, *USA Today* and NBC; Chris Jackson, of the global polling company Ipsos; and Derede McAlpin of LEVICK, explore specifically what companies can do. We will follow this soon with more articles and checklists to help companies build long term, institutionalized efforts.

All of us need look as much in the mirror as we do with judgment. We need to be the change we want. This is a moment about holistic justice, not personal power. For those still insistent on blaming the “other” rather than embracing the other, remember the futility of ostracism and that it often backfires. Emperor Nero blamed an obscure religious cult for the Great Fire of Rome in 64 AD. That obscure cult? The Christians.

***“You have to have the capacity and the ability to take what people did, and how they did it, and forgive them and move on.”***

**– John Lewis**

Embrace the journey.

Come take the next step with us.

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