

Protesting Peacefully



John Lewis was a leader who fought for equal rights alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. John led many protests against racist laws. A protest is when people get together to show they are upset.

John felt that it was best to protest in a peaceful way. This is called a peaceful protest. A sit-in is one way to protest peacefully. You do this by sitting in one place and not moving. John led many sit-ins. Most of the sit-in protesters were black. The protesters would sit down in places marked “whites-only” and did not move. Sit-ins lasted for hours and, sometimes, for days.

John remembers participating in his first sit-in. He went into a whites-only restaurant and sat down at the counter with a group of protesters. Despite being told things like “We don’t serve your kind here,” John’s group did not leave.

Most sit-ins ended when police were called in to end the protest. The police had to drag the protesters away. The protesters didn’t fight the police. They just simply didn’t move and let the police carry them out like dolls.

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A boycott is another type of peaceful protest. A boycott is when you stop buying or using something. A very famous boycott took place in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955.

The black community of Montgomery started the boycott after police arrested Rosa Parks for sitting in the front of a public bus. In those days, the front of the bus was “whites-only.” This rule was racist. It was also unfair to black people, who paid the same fare as white people.

The black community of Montgomery was angry that Rosa was arrested and fed up with racist laws. To protest, all the members of the community boycotted the bus company. For an entire year, the black residents of Montgomery refused to ride the bus. The bus company lost money because it wasn't selling enough tickets.

The boycott showed the company that it needed its black customers to stay in business. It taught the company that if it didn't treat all its passengers equally, it would not make enough money. The boycott got the bus company to change its rules.

