



Mayor's Office of
International Affairs

Atlanta as a Platform of Change Across the Globe: Celebrating the Lives and Legacies of Rep. John Lewis, C.T. Vivian, George Novak, and Larry Healy

ATLANTA – The Mayor's Office of International Affairs honors and celebrates the lives of four community servants and civil and human rights legends who made their transitions in the past two months: the President of the Hibernian Benevolent Society of Atlanta, Laurence "Larry" Healy (03/23/1939 - 07/01/2020), the Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic, George Novak (09/12/1931 - 06/27/2020), Reverend C.T. Vivian (07/30/1924 - 07/17/2020), Congressman John Lewis (02/01/1940 - 07/17/2020).

From three different nationalities, these four gentlemen had in common the same city as a platform for the promotion of change across the globe. Their legacies reverberated among local authorities and the diplomatic community who expressed their condolences and highlighted their achievements.

George Novak

Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic



The Honorable George A. Novak passed away on Saturday, June 27, 2020, after his year-long battle with cancer. He was born on September 12, 1931, in Brno, Czech Republic. In 1968, Mr. Novak and his family escaped the Soviet invasion by leaving his country and immigrating to the United States. Graduated from Brno University of Technology School of Architecture in 1956, he called Carrolton, Georgia home where worked for Robert Company Architects & Engineers in Atlanta.

When the communist regime was over, Mr. Novak utilized his efforts to support the new democracy and was appointed as the Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic for the district of Georgia. For twenty-five years, he provided assistance to Czech citizens with consular matters in the region and helped Czech-owned manufactured firms to get into the U.S. market. The Czechian Consul General also served as an Olympic Attaché during Atlanta's 1996 Olympics. In a condolence letter, the Mayor of Atlanta Keisha Lance Bottoms remembered Mr. Novak for "his unyielding commitment to building economic and cultural ties and the historic relationship that the helped bridge between the Czech Republic and the City of Atlanta".

Laurence "Larry" Healy

President, Hibernian Benevolent Society of Atlanta

Laurence Pacelli Healy transitioned peacefully on Wednesday, July 1, 2020, at home in Lawrenceville, Georgia. Born in Dublin, Ireland on March 23, 1939, he immigrated to American in 1964. As President of the Hibernian Benevolent Society of Atlanta, a group founded in 1858, Mr. Healy promoted Irish culture and history and strove to pass it on to the youngest generations. The H.B.S.A. has sponsored the annual Hibernian Black Tie Ball, the St. Patrick's Mass, Hibernian activities at Oakland Cemetery. "Larry" also directly assisted the Mayor's Office of International Affairs in the Father O'Reilly Memorial ceremony (Lucas' question: is it an annual celebration?), which celebrates the memory of the Irish pastor who served at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Atlanta during the 19th century.



Reverend C.T. Vivian

Civil Rights Icon

Founder of C. T. Vivian Leadership Institute, Inc.



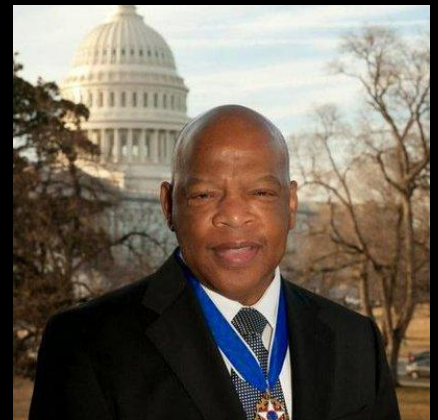
In addition, the city lost two of its civil rights legends on the same day, July 17, 2020. One of them being Reverend Cordy Tindell Vivian (born in Atlanta on July 30, 1924). In the 1960s, C.T. Vivian worked with Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as National Director of Affiliates and strategist for every Southern Christian Leadership Conference (S.C.L.C.) organization. Also, Vivian's work helped enact the Civil Rights and the Voting Rights Bill in Alabama. In 2008 he founded the C.T. Vivian Leadership Institute to educate a new generation of grass-roots leaders inspired to mobilize a constituency. The institute is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia. Four years later, Rev. Vivian was awarded the Nation's highest civilian honor - The Presidential Medal of Freedom. He passed at his Atlanta home of natural causes.

Congressman John Lewis (D-GA)

Civil Rights Icon

U.S. House of Representatives, Georgia's 5th Congressional District

Congressman John Lewis was born in Troy, Alabama on February 21, 1940. Rep. Lewis served in the United States House of Representatives for Georgia's 5th Congressional District from 1987 until his death in 2020 from pancreatic cancer. At just 23, he was the youngest civil rights activists to deliver an address at the March on Washington in 1963, which is best remembered by M.L.K.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. In the same year, was appointed as the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (S.N.C.C.), a position he held until 1966. This organization was primarily responsible for the sit-ins and other students' activities in the fight for civil rights. Before becoming an U.S. representative in DC, Lewis was elected to the Atlanta City Council in 1981. While serving on the Council, he was an advocate for neighborhood preservation and ethics in government. In 2011 the politician received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.



Since Georgia's 5th Congressional District is home to many internationally-recognized universities, businesses, NGO's, and cultural organizations, Rep. John Lewis always emphasized the importance of people-to-people exchanges and maintaining an environment that fosters dialogue and understanding across cultures. For years, Congressman Lewis hosted an annual multicultural festival to highlight members of the international community and to celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the City of Atlanta and neighboring communities.

It goes without saying, Rep. Lewis had a lasting impact not only on Americans, but on people around the world. Since his passing, members of the international diplomatic community, including Atlanta's Consular Corps members, offered their condolences and shared their personal memories of the late Congressman. "Saddened to hear of the passing of C.T. Vivian and John Lewis", Mr. Ard van der Vorst, Consul General of Netherlands in Atlanta, wrote in his Twitter account. "We celebrate the inspirational mark they left on the civil rights movement worldwide", he added. Also on Twitter, the Consul General of Mexico in Atlanta, Mr. Javier Díaz de León, expressed his condolences to those guided by the life of Georgia's Congressman. "His departure brings grief and mourning to all of us in Georgia and in the U.S., but his life and teachings are a guide for a world more equal," he stated.

Talking about Lewis' struggle, vision, and leadership, Mr. Andrew Staunton, British Consul General in the American Southeast, said that his death offered "an opportunity to reflect on the magnificent contribution he made to the life of others. A great man in every respect". Departing Consul General of Ireland, Shane Stephens, remembered that the congressman was loved in his country: "We treasure the memory of his visit to Ireland & his work with our community. He was Grand Marshal of the 2017 Atlanta St Patrick's Day Parade".

Representing our neighbors to the north, Ms. Nadia Theodore, Consul General of Canada, highlighted Lewis's legacy of "good trouble". She continues, "I promise to continue to be bold, brave, and courageous and find ways to get in the way. Rest in Power". Congressman John Lewis' legacy reverberates around the world and will have a lasting impact on generations to come. ♦

