

## Lewis rips immigration law

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U.S. Rep. John Lewis slammed Georgia's new anti-immigration law in Athens on Tuesday, saying the act passed by the state legislature smacks of the kind of Jim Crow laws whites used to keep down blacks in places like Georgia and South Africa decades ago.



Mary Frances Early talks with U.S. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., on Tuesday during the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Mary Frances Early Lecture at the University of Georgia. (David Manning)

Georgia's new law authorizes state and local police to arrest illegal immigrants and sets penalties of up to a \$250,000 fine and 15 years in prison for anyone who uses a fake ID to get a job.

The law reminds him of the passbook laws in South Africa under apartheid, Lewis, D-Atlanta, told an audience in the University of Georgia Chapel on Tuesday.

"We can be arrested and taken to jail until we prove who we are," said Lewis, one of the leaders of America's civil rights struggles 50 years ago and now in his 25th year in the House of Representatives.

"This is a recipe for discrimination. We've come too far to return to the dark past."

Lewis also warned that some federal lawmakers also are targeting the poor, the hungry, the disabled and elderly for cuts, while more privileged citizens get discounts, he said.

“For the most vulnerable, there’s no room in the inn,” Lewis said.

Lewis was in Athens to deliver the annual Mary Frances Early lecture, named for the longtime Georgia music educator who was the first black to graduate from UGA.

Lewis praised Early as a fellow foot soldier - someone with the courage to stand up as Lewis, Early and others waged their peaceful battle for equal rights.

“I feel more than lucky and very blessed to be in your company,” Lewis told Early, who sat in the front row.

Early, who also spoke briefly, had her own story to tell about the UGA Chapel: When she was a graduate student in music at UGA, she was a member of a chorus that gave a concert in the summer of 1961. Early stood on the stage, but UGA administrators would not allow her family or friends to come hear her sing.

Not just UGA, but Georgia and the world are much better places now than in 1961, Lewis said as he looked out on an audience of many races.

But the gains he and Early fought for are in danger today, he said.

“It is strange to me,” Lewis said.

Humans have learned how to fly in the air like birds, swim like fish in the sea, even to walk on the moon, he said.

“But we have not learned how to live together as brothers and sisters,” he said.

Lewis urged the students in the audience to take up the struggle for civil and human rights, which still goes on.

“Ours was a struggle of a lifetime,” he said. “Now it’s your turn to be maladjusted. Find a way to get in the way. Do it. It is your turn to get into trouble” as he and Early did in the 1960s, Lewis said. “In the final analysis, we all live in the same house.”