

# Chapter Twenty-Five: Rock Star

Chapter Twenty-Five, titled "Rock Star," emphasizes transformation in America post-Obama's inauguration through a poignant account of reconciliation between race and history. Following Barack Obama's election as the first Black president, a piece by journalist Andrew Dys sparked a profound change in Elwin Wilson, a former Klansman who had once assaulted civil rights protesters, including notable figures Albert Bigelow and John Lewis. Wilson recognized his past errors after witnessing the unity during the inauguration and publicly sought forgiveness, asserting, "I need to tell people I'm sorry."

Lewis graciously accepted Wilson's apology, deeming it an act of courage and grace that showcased the progress society had made in overcoming hatred. Wilson's story of regret and reconciliation resonated, symbolizing hope for a more tolerant America. His emotional journey culminated in a historic meeting with Lewis, where they hugged and exchanged words of forgiveness. Lewis has been approached for similar reconciliatory gestures from other racists over the years; he embodied a compassionate acceptance of their transformations.

Despite the hope symbolized by Obama's presidency and Wilson's story, Lewis's experiences reflect the less overt racism that he encountered as an esteemed congressman. Incidents of unconscious biases contrasted with the overt racism he had battled in the past, demonstrating a troubling duality in societal attitudes.

The chapter recounts the tumultuous atmosphere surrounding the Affordable Care Act's passage, revealing the resurgence of overt racial hostility amidst political dissent. Lewis faced this ugliness firsthand, noting that the vitriol he experienced brought back memories of the 1960s. His dignified response to harassment further exemplified his enduring commitment to nonviolence and moral leadership.

As the chapter progresses, it touches on Lewis's participation in the Occupy Wall Street movement, echoing the continued struggle for economic equality in America. As Lillian, his wife, battled health issues, Lewis's resilience as both a politician and a husband shone through. Upon her passing, Lewis found comfort amid personal loss, ultimately cementing his legacy through activism and literary contributions that inspired future generations to continue the civil rights struggle.

Ultimately, this chapter not only highlights Lewis's personal journey but also underscores a broader narrative of struggle, growth, and reconciliation in American society against the backdrop of ongoing racial and economic challenges.