

a clerk pulled a dusty file from a shelf with “John Lewis” scrawled across it in pencil.

“I couldn’t believe it because I’d been looking for so long, and I thought these might not exist,” Ewing says. “And the excitement of opening these up and seeing a young Lewis, being photographed for standing up against segregation—it was inspiring. When you see something like that, you get emotional. I was glad these records were found during his lifetime and that he could see them, too.”

Nashville Mayor Megan Barry surprised Lewis, who turns 77 on Feb. 21, with the photos during a speech he was giving at a local high school. The arrest records from 1961 to 1963 were for disorderly conduct, breach of the peace and resisting arrest.

Lewis says he hopes the mug shots will be a “teachable moment”—to show young people that each generation must do its part to stand against injustice when they see it.

“I was deeply moved when I saw those mug shots,” says Lewis. “I had never seen them before. I felt like I looked so young, so innocent. I wondered how anyone could arrest someone who was not harming anyone, who was just peacefully demanding that he be treated with dignity and respect.”

After the first mug shots came dozens more—close to 50 in Lewis’ estimation—as he became a leader in the nonviolent desegregation movement.

The first mug shots, Ewing says, show “when John was a student and nobody knew where the civil rights movement was going. It started at lunch counters here in Nashville and made national figures of these young college students who bravely stood up to segregation.”

Ewing notes that there were five copies of Lewis’ mug shots in the folder. He suspects Lewis was on the FBI’s radar, and the extra copies were on hand to send to police departments across the South to keep a lookout for the young Freedom Rider.

But Lewis never stopped advocating for justice and equality. He’s as busy as ever, inspiring a new generation of young people with *March*, his award-winning graphic novel trilogy about the civil rights movement, and he’s often seen protesting alongside a new generation of activists.

Ewing says Lewis’ mug shots, which he considers the greatest finds of his lifetime, show the power of persistence and research.

“Lawyers are researchers by nature,” Ewing says. “I was going to ask for this until I found it.”

—Liane Jackson

Lawyers Take Pride in Ancestry

Former slave’s skirt tells a family’s story in a national museum exhibit

Attorney Lori Anne Douglass already knew she came from a long line of strong women, starting with her great-great-grandmother Lucy Lee Shirley, who was born a slave. But Douglass, an estate law partner with Moses & Singer in New York City, learned a lot more about her ancestry when one of Shirley’s skirts became part of the “Slavery and Freedom” exhibit at the recently opened Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture.

Douglass says Shirley’s sister made the skirt, and it had been passed down to her grandmother and donated to a museum in New York in the 1970s. From there, the skirt made its way to Washington, D.C.

By any measure, Shirley was a woman ahead of her time. Douglass says she learned from a *Washington Post* story that after Shirley died in 1929, she froze her abusive husband out of her will, leaving him \$1 and her children \$1,650, which would equate to about \$23,000 today. It’s an unusual bequest for a woman in those times—and especially a former slave.

“A wife’s property [back then] automatically went to the husband,” Douglass says. “So she intentionally only left him a dollar and provided for her children.”

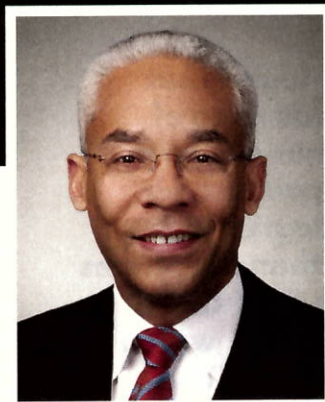
Douglass says it’s impressive that a former slave even had a will and could leave that amount of money to her descendants. Her brother, David Douglass, a litigation partner with Sheppard Mullin in D.C., also takes pride in his great-great-grandmother’s story.

“She was standing up for her own rights in a system that was unfair to women. She left her children a fair amount of money,” he notes.

David Douglass says that Shirley’s pretty flowered skirt, though simple, shows slaves took pride in their appearance when they could, and the same kind of pride was often reflected in other aspects of their lives, such as cooking or farming.

He’s honored that his family will be part of this nation’s history, and what he appreciates most about the museum is

COLLECTION OF THE SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY & CULTURE, PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHEPPARD MULLIN FOR DAVID DOUGLASS, MOSES & SINGER FOR LORI ANNE DOUGLASS



LUCY LEE SHIRLEY'S SKIRT, though a simple garment, helps tell a complicated story in "Slavery and Freedom," an exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture; Shirley's descendants (left) include Lori Anne Douglass and David Douglass.

that it doesn't limit the identity of African-Americans to slavery alone.

The museum celebrates many aspects of the black American story, including exhibits that pay homage to African-Americans and the law. For example, there's a print of Charlye Farris, the first black woman admitted to the Texas bar and the first to serve as a county judge in the South since Reconstruction.

There's also a magazine cover from February 1917 featuring Richard T. Greener, the first African-American graduate of Harvard and a dean of the

Howard University Law School.

"It's all part of telling the story of who we were independent of the condition in which we came to this country," says Douglass, who believes he's also a descendent of famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

Lori Anne Douglass says her great-great-grandmother laid a foundation for her family that has benefited them for generations. And through the National Museum of African American History & Culture, a garment once worn by a slave now represents part of the fabric of the American story. —Cristin Wilson