

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

WHITNEY MOORE YOUNG JR.

educator, veteran, professor, civil service worker

"I am not anxious to be the loudest voice or the most popular. But I would like to think that at a crucial moment, I was an effective voice of the voiceless, an effective hope of the hopeless."

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Background Information

Born July 31, 1921; Died March 11, 1971

Young's parents were well connected to education and government as high-ranking officials. Influenced by his family, Young went to Kentucky State Industrial College and worked as a teacher after college. Young then served in the Army during World War II and acted as a mediator between Black troops and white commanding officers, often diffusing racial tensions. When he returned home from the war, he received a master's degree in social work from the University of Minnesota¹. Young continuously focused on racial integration and Black economic empowerment throughout the 20th century.

Young's Resistance

Young joined the National Urban League to focus on integration in the corporate workplace. Young also supervised the fieldwork of social work students at University of Minnesota and Atlanta University. Between 1950 and 1954, he taught at University of Nebraska and Creighton University, while working as the executive secretary of the Omaha, Nebraska, Urban League. Continuing fight for the rights of Black Americans, he became dean of the Atlanta University School of Social Work. While there, he focused on expanding the school and leadership. Young also became the co-chair of the Atlanta Council on Human Relations and focused on desegregating the public library system.

He went to Harvard University at age 41 for a postgraduate year and became the executive director and president of the National Urban League. He expanded the League while promoting it as a serious, vital organization for the Civil Rights Movement. He supported the Civil Rights Movement without alienating White leaders, which helped grow the League and support activism, even though progressive activists criticized Young for this move.²

Achievements

Young was a close advisor to President Lyndon Johnson and helped shape numerous federal policies. In 1968, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He significantly supported the rights and equality of Black Americans through policy and activism. His work continues to influence society today.

¹ Whitney Young Jr. (2019, July 1). Retrieved from <https://www.biography.com/activist/whitney-young-jr>.

² Young, Whitney Moore, Jr. (1921-1971). (2017, March 15). Retrieved from <https://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/biographies/whitney-moore-young-jr/>.

Essential Questions

1. Does someone need to be radical in their beliefs and actions to make a difference?
2. What qualifies an individual as being an activist?
3. *“I am not anxious to be the loudest voice or the most popular. But I would like to think that at a crucial moment, I was an effective voice of the voiceless, an effective hope of the hopeless.”*
 - a. Who do you think the voiceless and hopeless are today, and what can you do to be a voice for them?