

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

RAYFORD LOGAN

Historian, pan-African activist

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Background Information

Born: January 7, 1897; Died: November 4, 1982

Logan was born in Washington, D.C. to working class parents.¹ He received a scholarship to Williams College, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa. He then joined the U.S. Army during World War I, where he bore firsthand witness to the racism endured by Black soldiers by their white officers.¹ Postwar, he remained in Europe as secretary of the Pan-African Congress.² He then went on to study at Harvard, where he earned his Master of Arts and PhD degrees. Logan spent much of his career as a professor and head of the department in which he taught.²

Logan's Resistance

Logan was an outspoken advocate against Jim Crow Laws. This activism eventually forced him to resign from his job as Professor of History at Virginia Union University, due to his beliefs clashing with the board members of the university. This did not deter him from continuing to speak up, however, as he then went on to publish “The Haze in Haiti,”. The book exposed the conditions in Haiti under American occupation.¹

Remembering his time in the U.S. military, Logan chaired a federal committee on Black participation in the military. He then went on to co-author President Roosevelt's executive order outlawing racial discrimination in government contracts. Logan also persuaded the president to assign more Black soldiers into active-duty military status.³

Logan went on to work with and support the efforts of both Carter G. Woodson and W.E.B. DuBois for four decades. He became involved with Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which is the oldest and largest historical society established to promote African American history. He also assisted DuBois with organizing the Pan African Congress meetings, as well as bringing the attention of African American suffering to the United Nations.¹

Achievements

Logan's wrote the groundbreaking, “Dictionary of American Negro Biography”. In 1980, Logan received the Spingarn Medal, an honor awarded annually by the NAACP.

Essential Questions

1. How did Logan overcome adversity in the workplace and use that to his advantage in advancing civil rights?

2. How did Logan use and reflect on his experience in the U.S. military to create systemic change?
 - a. Has that impacted the U.S. military we see today?
 - b. If so, how would the military be different without his efforts?

3. ***“... this narrative of his life has inspired Negroes and other disadvantaged Americans to believe that, despite the imperfections of American democracy, a self-made man may aspire to greatness.”***
 - a. What did he mean by this?
 - b. Do you believe a person can be “self-made”?

¹Simba, M. (2020, June 09). Rayford W. Logan. Retrieved September 29, 2020, from <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/logan-rayford-1897-1982/>

²Hope Franklin, J. (1983, August 01). Rayford Whittingham Logan. Retrieved September 29, 2020, from <https://read.dukeupress.edu/hahr/article/63/3/596/148726/Rayford-Whittingham-Logan-1897-1982>

³D.C. Historic Sites. (n.d.). Civil Rights Tour: Education - Rayford Logan, Historian. Retrieved September 29, 2020, from <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/963>