

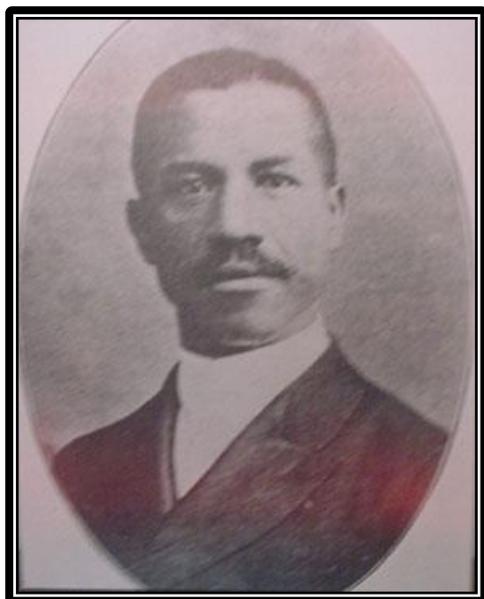
PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

James Robert Lincoln Diggs

pastor, activist, educator

"Proper credit given our people for what of good they really did in those trying days" regarding Reconstruction in America

Page | 1



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Background Information

Birth: unknown, likely between 1865 and 1867

Death: April 14, 1923

It is unknown when exactly Diggs was born and little is known about his early years. He was born in Maryland to John Henry Diggs and Mary Virginia Clark Diggs. In 1886, Diggs graduated from Wayland Seminary, an African American Seminary in Washington, D.C. He then spent four years in Maryland public schools and then returned to Wayland in a teaching position. He then went on to receive a Bachelor's and Master's degree from Bucknell University in Pennsylvania in 1898 and 1899. In 1901, Diggs married Alberta M. Pack in West Virginia and they went on to have six children together.¹

Diggs' Resistance

In September 1899, Diggs was ordained as a Baptist Minister in Richmond, Virginia. He was vocal about his beliefs that Black people should have pride in their African heritage and equality in their current country. He began focusing on national inequalities and met secretly with twenty-eight other Black people in 1905 to begin the Niagara Movement, otherwise known as the beginning of the current National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He was a strong advocate of equal rights, better education opportunities for black people, and ending segregation. In June 1906, Diggs received a PhD in Sociology, the first by a Black man, from Illinois Wesleyan University. In 1908, he became the president of the Virginia Theological Seminary and College, the current Virginia University of Lynchburg, a notable Historically Black College or University (HBCU). Starting in 1911, he moved multiple times ultimately residing in Washington D.C. In his final years, he started his role as a pastor and continued his work in the Niagara Movement as well as his work with the United Negro Improvement Association.¹

Achievements

As an educator, pastor and activist, Diggs used his education to advance the African American experience in the country. Diggs became the first Black man to receive a PhD in Sociology and the ninth to receive a PhD in the United States.¹

