

## PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

### LUCY CRAFT LANEY

*educator, activist, orator*

*"...the past can serve no further purpose than to give us our present bearings. It is a condition that confronts us."*

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FAIR USE IMAGE

#### Background Information

Born: April 13, 1854; Died: October 23, 1933

Laney was born in Macon, Georgia to formerly enslaved parents. Her father bought both his and her mother's freedom about twenty years before she was born. Although it was illegal for African Americans to learn to read in Georgia at the time, Laney learned to read and write by the age of four. By twelve, she could translate difficult Latin works. She went on to attend Lewis (later Ballard) High School in Macon. In 1869, she entered the first graduating class of Atlanta University (later Clark Atlanta University). She studied to become a teacher and graduated in 1873. Laney taught for 10 years before starting her own school in 1883.<sup>1</sup>

#### Laney's Resistance

After starting her own school, Laney began the difficult process of appealing for funding. This involved traveling to and meeting with the General Assembly of the Northern Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis. While she was denied this funding by the assembly, her presentation moved Mrs. Francine Haines to become a lifelong benefactor. Laney's school offered a holistic education to students. Students that attended her institution matriculated to Howard, Yale, and other prestigious colleges. Additionally, her school served as a cultural center, which hosted lectures, orchestra concerts, and other social events.<sup>1</sup>

Laney was also involved in advocating for civil rights for African Americans. She joined the Niagara Movement, an organization which opposed racial segregation and disenfranchisement, in 1905. She later helped to found a local chapter of the NAACP in 1918. Laney was an active member in the Interracial Commission, as well as the National Association of Colored Women. She also acted to integrate the work done by the YMCA and the YWCA, which were segregated at the time.<sup>2</sup>

#### Achievements

Jimmy Carter selected Laney to be among the first African Americans to have her portrait hung in the Georgia state capitol. In 1992, she was inducted into Georgia Women of Achievement.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Leslie, Kent A. "Lucy Craft Laney (1854-1933)." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. 20 July 2020. Web. 01 October 2020.

<sup>2</sup>"Lucy Craft Laney (1854-1933)". *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 24, 2018.

## Essential Questions

1. How did Laney's unique childhood experiences prepare her for a career in education?

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2. Laney's school focused on holistic education and educating "the whole child".

- a. Should school institutions be responsible for the educational, social, emotional and physical wellbeing of its students?
- b. What type of school would you create to ensure students received their best education?

3. What is an educational injustice that you face?

- a. What is an impactful change you could make to fight injustice in your daily role as a student?

4. ***"...the past can serve no further purpose than to give us our present bearings. It is a condition that confronts us."***

- a. Given what you know about Laney, how does this quote symbolize her resistance?
- b. How history inform your present experiences?

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