

## This Day in History...July 31, 1921

# Happy Birthday, Whitney Young!

Civil rights leader Whitney Moore Young Jr. was born on July 31, 1921, in Shelby County, Kentucky.

Young's father was president of the Lincoln Institute, an all African American boarding school, and also served as president of the Kentucky Negro Educational Association. His mother was a teacher and the first postmistress in Kentucky.

Young attended the Lincoln Institute and graduated as valedictorian in 1937. He attended Kentucky State University where he played on the basketball team and was voted president of his senior class. During World War II Young worked on a road construction crew of African American soldiers that were supervised by Southern white officers. The tensions he witnessed there led him to pursue a career in race relations.

After the war, Young got a masters degree in social work and joined the National Urban League. By 1950, he was president of the Omaha, Nebraska, chapter. There he helped African American workers get jobs that were previously only given to white people. His tenure also saw membership triple.

In the coming years, Young served as dean of social work at Atlanta University and joined the United Liberal Church, which he helped to integrate. He also received a Rockefeller Foundation grant and joined the NAACP, where he befriended Roy Wilkins.



*Roy Wilkins was the 24th honoree in the Black Heritage Series*

In 1961, Young was unanimously voted to become Executive Director of the National Urban League. During his first four years,

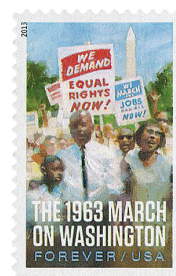
Young expanded the number of employees from 38 to 1,600 and increased the annual budget from \$325,000 to \$6.1 million. Young also pushed for the organization to be more aggressive in its goals. He started new programs to help high school dropouts prepare for college and to aid local African American leaders to address problems in their communities. Young also pushed for major companies to hire more African Americans and served as president of the National Association of Social Workers.

Young helped organize the 1963 March on Washington. He was an advisor to Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, but refused an offer for a cabinet post, believing he could do more good with the Urban League. Young was especially close with President Johnson, who awarded him a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1969.

In 1971, Young was in Lagos, Nigeria, for a conference when he suffered a sudden heart attack and died on March 11. President Nixon delivered the eulogy at his funeral stating that Young, "knew how to accomplish what other people were merely for."



*Young was the fourth honoree in the Black Heritage Series*



*Stamp issued for the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington.*

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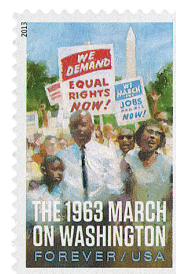
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