

1991

I was born December 2nd, 1922 at what was called "Women's Hospital, Hancock and Brush, Detroit, Michigan. My Mother was Mayme Jones Diggs, and my Father was Charles C. Diggs, Jr. I was their first and only child, and at that time our residence was 1391 Mullett, at the NW corner of Russell.

(EM) As a child what were your earliest reminiscenses?

Our property was my earliest recollection. There was a picket fence around it, and besides our residence on the second floor, the first floor was a funeral parlor, as my Father was an undertaker. I remember looking through the fence on the Russell Street side, where the local headquarters of the "United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)", founded by Marcus Garvey, was located. I frequently saw people in uniforms, parades and other activity around that building, as The Movement was quite popular.

I also recall frequently riding with my Father in his hearse and cars. When I was 4 years old, we moved to 580 and 584 Frederick. Those buildings were previously the famed Dunbar Hospital, the only such Black facility in Detroit, which they left for larger quarters. Those 2 houses were connected by a 2nd floor overpass. We lived in 584, but crossed through the overpass to 580, where the mortuary was housed. 580 was large enough also to accommodate living quarters for 2 of my Father's brothers, including Uncle Oliver, who had a wife (my Mother's sister) and 2 infant sons, my maternal Grandmother and in the basement a printer named Roberts with his wife and daughter plus his equipment. Across the street was Bethel A.M.E. Church, pastored by Reverend William Peck, one of the community's most prominent Black ministers, and his wife, who founded the highly respected "Detroit Housewives League". Two doors east at the southeast corner of Frederick and St. Antoine was "Children's Hospital", the city-wide focal point for their medical care. (The little finger on my right hand is still deformed after my operation at Children's, following it being smashed by a closing fire door at the 584 residence.)

(EM) What did you do for fun as a child?

Played with kids in the neighborhood. Also there was a music school a few doors west of the funeral parlor, where my Mother enrolled me to learn to play the violin. From that address I later entered kindergarten at Balch Grammar School, which still stands and is utilized at Ferry and St. Antoine. I remained at Balch until grade 6B. Because of my scholarship, they promoted me from the 4th to the 6th grade, passing over the 5th. Moreover, I won the Balch School's Spelling Bee championship sponsored by the Detroit News.

In 1932 Michigan elected its first Democratic Party Governor, and he appointed my activist Father as the state's first Black Parole Commissioner. However, the devastatingly negative impact of The Great Depression at that time prompted my Mother and I to move to Chicago, Illinois, where we had relatives on both sides of our families. First we lived with Aunt Electra, my maternal Grandmother's sister. Later we roomed with private families. I attended Raymond then Farren

grammar schools. Uncle Weston, one of my Father's older brothers, was a Chicago resident married to a beautician/proprietor of 5 "Belle's Beauty Shops, 4 in Chicago and nearby Gary, Indiana plus one in Detroit at Forest and St. Antoine. (Uncle Jimmie, another older brother of my Father, was a truck driver/garbage collector for the City of Detroit, but on St. Antoine just below Forest around the corner from Belle's Beauty Shop, he and his wife, Aunt Bertha, had a shoe repair shop, a repair skill he had learned at Alcorn Vocational School in Mississippi before coming to Detroit.)

Back to Chicago, my Mother worked at one of Belle's Beauty Shops as an assistant and receptionist. I helped sweep up the place. I remember that a shampoo, press and chrogonole curl package was in those days only \$1.25! After my Father settled into his new job with the State in early 1933, he sent for my Mother and me to return to Detroit. For a short while we lived in an apartment at Montcalm and Brush, but then he obtained rental property at 301 E. Warren between Brush and John R., to which we moved and reopened the funeral parlor. Undertaker James Cole was next door, and across the street was the Clemons Dry Cleaners. Mr. and Mrs. Clemons lived in the back of the shop with their 3 very pretty daughters.

In 1934 we moved to 1939 St. Aubin, corner of Maple, back to "Black Bottom", as the lower east side was then known. The property had been a funeral home in the past, and it was where my Father had served his apprenticeship in 1919-21 under George Green, by then deceased. The building was owned by a Black physician, Dr. Nuttall. The funeral home was just part of its southwest side, for the rest of the segmented building contained a pharmacy and several apartments. St. John C.M.E. was across the street on the northwest corner. (When that area was later renovated, the Church moved to Woodward Avenue, where it still stands.) Dr. Nuttall had 3 daughters and one son. One of his daughters is Helen Nuttall Brown, whose attorney daughter won a judgeship in Detroit's last election for the Recorder's Court.

From 1934 to 1936 I was enrolled in Duffield Elementary School across the street from Calvary Baptist Church at 1330 Jos. Campau, which my Father and I attended. I graduated from Duffield in 1936 and transferred to Miller Junior/Senior High School, which still stands on Dubois in the fashionable Lafayette Park area, but now is only a Junior High.

1936 was also the year my Father was elected to the Michigan State Senate; he was the only Black State Senator in the country!

I have 3 significant recollections about the year 1937. First, my Father's Mother, Lillie Granderson Diggs, a widow from Mississippi by way of Lake Charles, Louisiana, was living with her oldest son, James, at 3179 Pennsylvania, where she died. I was in her bedroom with other relatives when she emitted her last breath, which despite having been around dead people all my life has been my only experience like that. She was funeralized at Second Baptist Church on Monroe, where it still stands, and she was buried at Detroit Memorial Park Cemetery, which my Father founded and was its first president many years earlier. That same year my maternal Grandmother, Callie Bradford Jones, died in Charlotte, N.C. and was buried in Knoxville, Tennessee, where my Grandfather, Presiding Elder B.J. Jones, was interred before I was born.

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Thirdly, 1937 was my Father's first Legislative Session in Lansing, which in those days only met every 2 years, and the compensation was just \$3.00 per day. Having been refused rental of a room at the Olds Hotel across the street from the State Capitol because of his race, it further motivated him to introduce legislation banning discrimination in public accommodations based on race, creed or color, the first such proposal in the country. During that Session, I frequently rode up to Lansing with him from Detroit. I remember that the last of his major tactics was to organize entertainers in the Black nite clubs in Detroit and bring them to Lansing for a large, gala show for the Legislature to help favorably influence votes just before consideration of his proposed statute. He was not only the sole Black in the State Senate, but there was not even a Black in the Michigan House of Representatives! He won. The Diggs Civil Rights Bill was passed and signed into law by the Governor. It was the cornerstone not only of his active political career, but the foundation of additional civil rights legislation in other states, including the outlawing of discrimination in employment and other areas ~~but~~ policy changes within the structure and organization of the Democratic Party.

On an official visit/inspection that same year to Eloise (Wayne County General Hospital) in Wayne, Michigan, my Father discovered that burials of decedent former patients in the cemetery on the premises and their transportation to the Wayne Medical School in Detroit was handled by hospital inmates and employees. This was contrary to State law, which requires such functions to be conducted and/or supervised by licensed morticians. After confirming the legal details, the hospital authorities gave my Father the contract to take care of said decedents. Because he was dark brown skin, however, and especially since that was the 1937-38 period, and almost all deceased patients and families were white, my Father delegated his "high yellow" wife and light-skinned son to carry out the contract, occasionally supplemented by John Kendall, <sup>OR LIGHT-SKINNED,</sup> a licensed part-time associate, who lived with his wife and son at our mortuary.

Although I was only 14 years old, I was 5'10" and weighed 150 lbs. I already had a driver's license, which I was permitted to use until I was 16 if accompanied by an adult. Therefore, when the hospital called for our service, I would drive my Mother the some 20 miles from Detroit to their morgue, a red brick building on their premises called the "Round House" because of its shape. Most of the time there were no relatives or friends for the interment. However, when their presence was anticipated, we were notified in advance. On those occasions we would come early, close the decedent's mouth, shave them, comb their hair, etc. we rarely had a female body, because with very few exceptions, females had primary family members who buried them privately elsewhere. Using plain white sheets from the hospital inventory, we would line their plain, wooden box/caskets. If they had clothes, we would dress them. If not, the bodies would be covered with a sheet up to their neck. The cemetery was just a short distance away, but for those in attendance who had their own transportation, we would form a cortege, have them follow our hearse in formation to the graveside and conduct a regular interment ceremony. In the absence of such attendees, we would merely take the boxed decedents to the graveside, and the inmates would just bury them.

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Periodically we would be instructed to deliver one or two boxed decedents to the Wayne University College of Medicine on Clinton in downtown Detroit for anatomical use by its students. All materials were provided by the hospital, and a \$35.00 fee was paid to our funeral home for each case, burial or transportation.

That contract was another turning point in my family's life, because despite our modest compensation for these services, the accumulation of those funds helped my Parents purchase 2 houses at 689-693 Rowena (later named Mack Avenue) directly across the street from the north end of the commodious Brewster Public Housing Project. Through my Father's further ingenuity, a brick front was erected across the entire face of the 2 houses, together with a cement/brick front porch of proportionate size, making it seem like one building. 693 was residential for my immediate family plus Uncle Weston Diggs, his wife and Weston, Jr. 689 was the funeral parlor.

Although I was a good ways from Miller High School after our move to Rowena Street, it was still closer than Northeastern and Cass Tech, the 2 others at that level in the regional service area; so I continued at Miller until my graduation in August 1940. In the meantime, I became the school's oratorical champion, 3rd Speaker on the debating team, president of my class and the student council plus editor/publisher of the school newspaper. There were only 3 Blacks on the faculty, Al Loving, our beloved English Literature teacher, debate coach and sponsor of the speech contests, Pope Benjamin, the gym teacher, and Lloyd Cofer, the student counselor. The student population was about one third White.

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(EM) What about Leroy Dues?

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Oh, all this happened before Dues.

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(EM) Do you remember any of the things that you enjoyed doing in terms of playing and just having fun or getting into mischief as a kid?

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well, I had been wearing eye glasses since I was 12 years old, so although I liked boxing, I couldn't see well enough without them, which was very limiting. I played some baseball, but I had little interest in other sports. However, if shooting marbles is a sport, I did a lot of that pretty well.

I only remember getting into 2 mischiefs. First, was "hitching", which was quite popular in those days. I guess because fewer people had cars, at least in most Black neighborhoods. "Hitching" was jumping, unnoticed by the driver, on the back of a truck and just riding a few blocks through the streets. One day, however, a policeman in a car saw me "hitch" a truck, which he stopped, took me off and carried me home. After the policeman left and I started upstairs to my bedroom at 1939 St. Aubin, my Father, who was only 5'6" and weighed about 135-40 lbs., took off his belt and whipped me up the steps to the second floor. I never "hitched" again.

Another time, when we were living on Rowena/Mack, my Mother gave me a dollar to buy some fish on Hastings Street, a half block away

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the mouth of the alley, a group of men were engaged in a "3-card-money" game, in which 3 playing cards are displayed face down on a table; you pick one of the cards, not showing the "dealer" which one; he then shuffles the cards, and turns one face-up; if it's your card, you win, but if not, you lose. I had never seen such a "game" before, and it seemed so easy to win, but, of course, I lost my dollar, and therefore couldn't buy the fish. When I returned home and my Mother asked for the fish, I told her what happened; she told my Father, who led me back over to the "game". He demanded return of the dollar, but when the dealer refused, he began to take off his coat to fight for it. However, one of the dealer's allies quickly intervened, saying, "Hey, man, this guy is Senator Diggs. Give him his dollar back". My Father took the dollar with his left hand, but with his right hit me in the face, breaking my glasses and then ushered me back home. I never played "3-card money" again.

(EM) what did you do about conducting any kind of funeral service"

I started early, because I had joined Calvary Baptist Church where my Father was a member. At age 11 or 12 he began instructing and using me as his first assistant, since I was taller and heavier than he or my Mother, despite my youth. The most famous family belonging to that Church was the one of Heavyweight Champion Joe Louis. His mother lived on McDougall, just a few blocks away in the house the Champ purchased for her with one of his earliest paychecks. Joe's mother had remarried, and her name was Barrow. When Mr. Barrow died, she called us to handle the funeral services. When she died, the family called us to handle her arrangements. It was one of the all-time largest funeral we ever had, and I was my Father's first assistant at that ceremony also, which is why I matured professionally at such an early age.

Ordinarily, the completion of my high school requirements for graduation would not have permitted me to enter college until January 1941. However, I wanted to enter in September 1940. After consultations with the Miller High principal, because of my scholarship and extra curricular activities, I was authorized to double-up in the January-June 1940 semester and finish my last 12 hours in summer school, readying me for entrance to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in September 1940, where I was enrolled until June 1942.

The biggest problem in Ann Arbor was obtaining <sup>NG</sup> admission to the dormitory system, where no Black had ever penetrated. Out of 25,000 students on the campus in those days, only 50 were Black. All of the Black women stayed at a residence called the "B-House". My Father was still in the State Senate at that time, so when the University monkeyed around about admitting me to the dormitory, he confronted the president of UofM, who then had me assigned to the George Palmer Williams House, the men's dormitory right behind The Union, making me the first Black to break the barrier. In January 1941, John Roxborough, II, who had graduated from Cass Tech in Detroit, was admitted and assigned to the East Quadrangle. John's father was the one-term, first Black Michigan State Senator, but only from 1932 to 1934, because Detroit dramatically turned

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Democratic following Roosevelt first term. John's Uncle John, also a lawyer, was Joe Louis' manager. In September 1941 Fleetwood McCoy, Jr. from Chicago, whose father was a prominent lawyer there, was admitted to Fletcher Hall. Hobart Taylor, a graduate of Prairie View College in Texas, was admitted at the same time to a dormitory within the Law School Quadrangle, where he later obtained his JD degree.

Another interesting thing about those days was a man named Herman Hudson, a graduate of Detroit's Northwestern High, who was legally blind and admitted to UofM in the same class as mine. He and I both entered a university public speaking class. There were 30 such classes, each containing between 30-35 students, but with only us 2 Blacks in that number. Each class had an annual contest within their group, and the winners of those classes met in a semi-final, then a final to determine the university-wide champions. The contests had 2 divisions, oratorical, where a contestant spoke for 10 minutes from a prepared, memorized text, and extemporaneous, wherein subjects for a 10 minute speech ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> passed out about 10 minutes before delivery. I entered on the oratorical side, and Herman on the extemporaneous. I won first place university-wide in my division, and later ~~went to~~ <sup>ATTENDED</sup> the finals for the extemporaneous contest, where Herman was a contestant...and he won! Leaving the auditorium after the contest, I heard a group of mad students exclaiming, "Damn, niggers are winning everything around here!" Many of those students were really racially prejudiced. Most would not even speak to me in the dormitory, except a few when we were in the cafeteria, and they found <sup>ME</sup> a single room in the dormitory, which means I didn't have to have a roommate, which further limited contacts.

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(EM) How did you feel about that?

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I was aware of the resistance to my dormitory admission, but glad my Father forced the policy change. It also alerted me to other such matters, e.g., that the Ann Arbor Black community was generally confined to a limited ghetto area.

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(EM) Who did you socialize with?

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That's an interesting question. I socialized with Blacks, and one day a local guy who was not a UofM student told me about a very attractive young lady student at Ann Arbor High School he had recently met who had just come to town. He was visiting at the school one day when she walked up to him and introduced herself, then asked, "Why don't more of you people speak to me? I'm colored", and she was, although she looked white. Her name was Elsie Miller, and she was from Culver, Indiana. She did not live in the Black community of Ann Arbor. Because although she was a high school graduate, she did not have enough science credits for admission to UofM, which is what she was taking at Ann Arbor High to qualify. To make a living at the same time, she took care of the 2 children of a UofM English professor and his wife, who also had an apartment as part of their home, where she lived. Well, this Black guy introduced me to this lady, and

she WAS very attractive. She became my girlfriend, and we would have been married had WWII not come. Before leaving UofM for Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, I got my Father to get her a job in Detroit with the auto-gas rations office. I also tried to join the Navy, but they rejected my application, saying, "I couldn't see well enough". Of course, that was just an excuse, because they knew my Father was a State Senator at that time, who was very well known, and they were afraid to recruit me, as conventional procedure at that time was to assign all Black recruits to Great Lakes Naval Training Station in Illinois, but their jobs were confined to cooks or laborers swabbing ship's decks or doing other menial tasks. They figured Dad would raise a lot of hell against such discrimination, and he would have. So I entered Fisk in September 1942, but just completed one semester before at age 19 being drafted into the U.S. Army.

On February 19th, 1943 I reported to the Induction Center in Battle Creek, Michigan, and after 3 weeks They sent me to Kessler Field, Salt Lake City, Utah for my basic training. The so-called Mormon capitol was very racially prejudiced in those days. Black theater patrons, even in uniform, had to sit in the balcony.

After basic training I was sent to the Army Administrative School at Atlanta University in Georgia. I was the only one on that shipment. I traveled by train, and once I crossed the geographic line into the south, I was transferred to the coach next to the locomotive, and when I was seated to eat in the dining car, a green curtain was pulled around me technically separating me, even in a military uniform, southern segregation style until my arrival in Atlanta.

My assignment to the Army Administrative School was based on my high Army General Classification score, better known as the AGCT score, the test you are given at the Induction Center to determine your classification, which is the factor that principally is the basis for assignments, promotions, etc. E.g., assignment to the above school gained me my first stripe...as a Private FIRST class (PFC). There are 5 categories for the aforementioned test. The top category is for those who scored between 130 and 160. My grade I test score was 145. From 110 to 129 was grade 2. Grades 3,4 and 5 are obviously lower categories. My roommate, Clarence Finley, finished first in my class; I finished second. (He recently retired as Vice President of Burlington Mills of New York City.)

After finishing the school at Atlanta University, I was sent to the 3rd EAUTC Headquarters, an army engineer's installation, Tampa, Florida. Following a short tenure, I was assigned on "Special Duty" to another Army Administrative School, this time at South Dakota State College, Brookings, South Dakota, where I was promoted to Corporal.

This was my first and only encounter in that little state, and the experience was very revelatory, for it proved that racial attitudes were not confined to the South. Out of a population of 5,000 people in Brookings, only 2 were Black besides me; my roommate and a cook in the local hotel. Whenever we went into town, people would stare and point at us. I remember a little kid at one point tugging at his mother's arm, exclaiming, "Look, ma. there

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are some niggers!" The commanding officer at the school, recognizing such limited environmental conditions, finally told me and my roommate that on the weekends during the 6 weeks course he would give us a pass to visit Sue Falls, where the majority of Blacks in South Dakota resided. After graduation in September 1943, my orders returned me to the 3rd EAUTC Headquarters in Tampa, and shortly thereafter I was promoted to Buck Sergeant, my 3rd stripe. In October I applied for entrance into the Army Air Force Officer Candidate School, at that time located in Miami Beach, Florida. In December I was authorized to go home in Detroit for the Christmas holidays. Upon my return to the installation and arrival at the gate, guys started congratulating me, and innocently I inquired, "What's going on? What do you know that I did? Haven't you heard, man? The orders just came out authorizing your admission to OCS (Officer Candidate School) in Miami! You're the first Negro from here that's made it!"

That was one happy day, and although Miami Beach like Tampa was still in segregated Florida, I reasoned that Miami from a racial standpoint could hardly be worse. For when Blacks were allowed to go into Tampa, they could only congregate on the one street that was perpendicular to the Black USO or within that building. I remember that whenever I visited my school teacher/girlfriend, I had to take a cab to her house while lying on its floor so I would not be seen!

As ordered, I reported to OCS January 1st, 1944. When I arrived at the Miami train station, there was a man in uniform surrounded by reporters. His face was familiar, because he was Tony Martin, the famous movie star and singer. He had just been dismissed from the OCS, where I was headed, with no officer's commission when it was discovered that he originally had a naval officer's commission, which he allegedly obtained through influential "connections" in Hollywood, but <sup>was</sup> taken away from him.

On the first day after my actual arrival at the OCS, all Black officer candidates were gathered together and officially told that although they could be "hazed" by upper classmen, they could not "haze" lower classmen as they were elevated in the 4-months program prior to graduation. Further, when in formation, marching or otherwise, we were instructed to place ourselves on the inside and to the rear, so we would not be so easily seen. Moreover, we could not have our weekly haircuts on the premises; every Thursday, under the supervision of a Black upper classman, we were trucked into the City of Miami's Black USO and told to have a Black neighborhood barber cut our hair. Since it was usually about midnite before the upper classman returned to take us back to OCS, we had at least 3-4 hours of freedom to circulate in that area as we wanted to, as long as we got a haircut. That gave those of us who had the black OCS patches on our left shirt pocket considerable social advantages over just ordinary soldiers. There were 12 Blacks in my OCS class out of some 1500, and upon graduation as 2nd Lieutenants, we were all assigned to Tuskegee Army Air Field, Alabama, as were all such Black graduates, and stayed there until the war was over in May 1945, except those who re-enlisted in the military.

I returned home and entered Detroit's Wayne University College of Mortuary Science in September 1945. I was an only child, and



I wanted to complete that course and join my Parents in their mortuary business. Actually, my Father had obtained a charter in 1942 to open the Metropolitan Funeral System, a burial insurance company, the only one in the State. The sale of those policies went like wildfire, as so many Black people there at that time came from the south, where there was burial insurance in each state in that region. Obviously, this boosted our funeral business dramatically, and I was very much needed.

In August 1947 at age 24 I married 19 year old Juanita Rosario, birthing a son and 2 daughters before my next major step in 1950 when in September I entered the night curriculum of Detroit College of Law. After only one semester, however, I succeeded my Father in the Michigan State Senate, which terminated me in Law School, as Lansing is 85 miles from Detroit, and the round-trip was too physically exacting to continue.

After 2 term in the State Senate, I ran for Congress in 1954 and was elected for 13 straight terms before my retirement in 1980.

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(EM) I wanted to ask you about the Congressional Black Caucus. You were the founder. What was it, and when was it founded?

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I founded it in 1971 after we had on hand 9 Black members of Congress. we organized to work more effectively as a group to gain our common goals.

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(EM) what about your African trip?

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The first trip was in 1957. I was appointed by President Eisenhower to the U.S. Delegation for the Independence of Ghana June 6th. The Delegation was chaired by Vice President Richard Nixon. Moreover, my paternal Grandfather, who died before I was born, had been a Baptist Missionary to Liberia in West Africa. Both these matters laid the foundation for my keen interest in Africa. So when I returned to the States after that ceremony, I applied in Congress for a change in my Committee assignments. At that time I was on the Interior and Insular Affairs and Veteran Affairs Committees. I had to wait until after the 1958 elections, following which the House Foreign Affairs Committee had 9 vacancies and 18 replacement applications, including mine, which reflected the popularity of such an assignment. Nevertheless, I was unanimously elected to one of the vacancies, becoming the first Black in history on that Committee. I asked for and was also granted assignment to the Subcommittee on Africa, of which I became Chairman in 1969 after the death of my distinguished predecessor, Congressman Barrett O'Hara (D-Ill.)

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(EM) when did you go to South Africa?

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After I became Chairman of the Africa Subcommittee. I had made several applications to visit there before, but they had always turned me down. When I was finally permitted to visit, upon arrival at one of their airports, our U.S. Ambassador to South Africa met the plane, but told me the authorities would not meet

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with me. I then decided to leave immediately, but there were no more flights that day. I had to at least stay over night. My Staff Director, Attorney Goler Butcher, and I then visited Soweto, the huge Black South African ghetto several miles from Johannesburg, where I met the Soweto City Counsel, other activists and spoke to a large open-air crowd.

On another subsequent visit, I was invited to a luncheon at the home of one of the members of the South African Sugar Growers Association, then a very prominent organization. After that affair, upon leaving, I noticed there was a segmented area where that plantation's laborers were housed. Unbeknown to the owner at that time, I visited the laborer's "camp", where the men were paid \$12.00 per month, slept in little, concrete cell-like rooms and their waste disposal was through a hole in the floor. Upon returning to the city, I held a press conference about the "luncheon", but I also described the aforementioned conditions, which were well publicized. The Sugar Growers Association was very upset at such references and held their own conference to blast my criticisms.

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(EM) During the period when you finished school and the times that you were in the (Michigan) Senate and up to about 1967, are there highlights of that period that you'd like to share?

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In answer to previous questions I have already cited most highlights in my life during that period. The following are others:

First was the birth of 5 of my 6 children: Charles C. Diggs, III, born October 28th, 1948, Denise Diggs Taylor, born April 11th, 1950, Alexis Diggs Robinson, born June 14th, 1951, Carla Diggs, born April 8th, 1967 and Douglass Diggs, born January 4th, 1964.

Another was my first trip to Mississippi in 1955. The Black Movement down there at the time, headed by a Physician in Mound Bayou, where he practiced medicine, invited me to make the main speech at their annual convention in Issaquena County, where my Father had been born and where the Baptist Church founded and pastored by his Father, who died before I was born, was located. Of course, my Father came to the rally attended by a crowd of 10,000 people who had come to see and hear Michigan first Black Congressman, only the 3rd in Washington at that time, joining William Dawson of Chicago and Adam Clayton Powell of New York City. It was a thrilling experience, and it was the first time I saw my Father cry.

In 1956 I had a twice-a-week radio program in Detroit that was very, very popular. The Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott had been started, and through a fund raiser sponsored by solicitations on the radio program, I collected \$10,000.00, which I took down there to give to the young preacher, who was heading The Movement, at a rally at his Church. His name: Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. ! He never forgot that presentation, the first in the history in Montgomery which followed and was the seminal motivation of his distinguished career. In 1962 he came to Detroit and was the principal at a testimonial for me, THE ONLY TIME HE EVER DID THAT FOR ANYBODY ELSE. Another highlight of that visit was to discover that the Treasurer of the boycott Movement was Moses Jones, who by then had become a prominent, activist physician. He was a

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Chemical Warfare Lieutenant at Tuskegee, just 40 miles away, when I was there in 1944-45, but went to medical college after WWII.

Another highlight during that period was in 1959 before I was reassigned to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. I had been on the House Interior Committee since 1955, and the most important legislation we considered were the 2 bills authorizing "Statehood" for the 2 U.S. Territories, Alaska and Hawaii. Finally, after all the protracted arguments, the 2 bills were combined, because Alaska was determined to lean Republican and Hawaii to lean to the Democratic Party, which neutralized the impact of their elected Senators and U.S. Representatives to Congress. Anticipating one would off-set the other, they became the 49th and 50th States in The Union. (Without a similar off-set, it will very, very difficult for the overwhelmingly Democratic District of Columbia to become a "State".)

A final highlight in 1959 was the appointment of a special delegation by President Eisenhower to investigate racial discrimination in the Armed Services. As a 3rd term Congressman, I headed the Delegation; the other 2 members were Air Force Lt. Colonel "Chappie" James and Attorney Franklin Whittaker, a civilian employee of the Department of Defense (DOE). The appointment of this Delegation was prompted by my consistent criticism of said discrimination based on reports from Blacks in the military, confirmed by civil rights and civil liberties organizations, plus remembrances of my direct, personal experiences from February 1943 to June 1945.

The survey and investigation was limited to our Pacific Area Command (PAC-AF), beginning at Hickam Air Field, Honolulu, Hawaii and terminating at Kakchakawa Base, Tokyo, Japan.

In between we visited military installations in the Phillipines, plus Wake and Okinawa Islands.

Arrangements were made for us to speak to Black soldiers in groups and in individual interviews.

Upon return to Washington, we submitted our report to President Eisenhower, which generated tighter regulations and closer scrutiny of military racism. Eisenhower's successor, President Kennedy, established a permanent commission to continue this supervision and processing. (Lt. Colonel James, with whom I had been stationed at Tuskegee, where he had become one of our famed pilots, later was appointed as the first Black Air Force 4-Star General.)

END OF TAPE

6 December 1991

Typed personally; corrections made personally; mailed to Elaine Moon, Detroit Urban League, 208 Mack Avenue, Detroit, Michigan re: 1992 Detroit Urban League's Distinguished Warrior Honor Roll.  
Requested photograph mailed directly to above by Moorland Spingarn Collection, Howard University, Washington, D.C.