



Andrew Jackson Young, Jr.

1932–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ 1973–1977
DEMOCRAT FROM GEORGIA

A senior aide to Martin Luther King, Jr., in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) during the 1960s, Andrew Young had a meditative temperament that shaped his views as a proponent of nonviolent resistance. By the time he was sworn in to Congress in 1973, Young was committed to bringing King’s vision of civil rights to the nation and the world.¹ His experiences in the grass-roots politics of the civil rights movement and his diplomatic perspective allowed Young to take principled but pragmatic stands for his constituents.

Andrew Jackson Young, Jr., was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, to Andrew and Daisy Fuller Young. His father was a dentist and his mother was a schoolteacher. Andrew and his younger brother Walt “grew up as the only black children in a middle-class, predominantly Irish and Italian neighborhood” in New Orleans.² After graduating from Gilbert Academy in 1947, he attended Dillard University for one year and then transferred to Howard University in Washington, DC. Young earned a bachelor of science degree in biology in 1951. After graduating from Howard, Young considered a career in dentistry, but decided to pursue a career in the ministry instead. He attended the Hartford Theological Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut, earning a bachelor of divinity degree from Hartford in 1955, and was ordained a minister in the United Church of Christ. While at seminary, Young met his future wife, Jean Childs, a teacher, in 1952; after a brief courtship, they married on June 7, 1954. They had four children: Andrea, Lisa, Paula, and Andrew III. Two years after his wife died of cancer in 1994, Young married Carolyn Watson, an elementary school teacher.³ After graduating from the seminary, Young served as a pastor, teacher, and civil rights activist in Marion, Alabama, and in Thomasville, and Beachton, Georgia, until he was invited to work in the Youth Work Division of the National Council of Churches

in New York City, where he served as assistant director from 1957 to 1961. In 1961, Young returned to the South to participate in a voter education program sponsored by the United Church of Christ. He moved from New York to Atlanta and joined the SCLC.

Young organized a citizenship training program at the SCLC and collaborated with its members. By mid-1962, he began to work closely with Reverend King’s staff, including civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy. Arrested for training students to register voters, King and Abernathy relied on Young to handle various duties while incarcerated in Albany, Georgia, for seven weeks. Young also served as a mediator between the SCLC and the Albany police. He subsequently volunteered to mediate between the SCLC and white southerners.⁴ His effectiveness multiplied his responsibilities: in 1964, King named Young executive director of the SCLC. In his leadership role, Young provided logistical and legal support for prominent demonstrations and legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

When civil rights activist Julian Bond declined to run in the Democratic primary for the congressional district encompassing metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, and its northern suburbs, Young resigned from the SCLC in 1970 to enter the race. Young suggested his campaign was motivated by the belief that he could initiate change from inside the political power structure, rather than from outside: “There just comes a time when *any* social movement has to come in off the street and enter politics.”⁵ He also benefited from a reapportionment that increased the number of black voters in the Atlanta district to almost 40 percent.⁶ Young advocated what he called the New South Coalition, which he defined as “black votes, liberal votes, [and] white labor votes,” acknowledging, “The problem is to involve those new white voters without





★ ANDREW JACKSON YOUNG, JR. ★

stirring up the dyed-in-the-wool racists in the process.”⁷ The New South Coalition was a base of electoral support that Young and other Atlanta politicians such as Mayor Sam Massell and future Mayor Maynard Jackson relied upon. In the Democratic primary, Young defeated Wyman C. Lowe, a white lawyer, in a runoff election, with 60 percent of the vote.⁸ However, in the general election Young lost to two-term incumbent Republican Fletcher Thompson, who garnered 57 percent of the vote.⁹ Young believed that “if a little more than half of the 35,000 registered . . . who did not vote had gone to the polls, he would have defeated the Republican incumbent.”¹⁰ After losing the general election, he chaired Atlanta’s Community Relations Commission. This position allowed Young to acclimate himself with the political environment of the Fifth District and provided him greater exposure to local constituents.¹¹

In 1972 Young orchestrated a second campaign for the House when the incumbent, Thompson, ran for the U.S. Senate. After defeating three primary opponents with 60 percent of the vote, he ran in the general election against Republican Rodney Cook, a veteran politician who served four terms in the Georgia house and also on the Atlanta board of aldermen.¹² Young opposed highway building and commercial development along the Chattahoochee River, both issues that resonated with Atlanta residents. He also described a four-point plan for improving public education that advocated federal and state grants instead of property taxes for funding, greater community involvement, a curriculum that was relevant to its urban constituents, and racial integration at all levels of the system.¹³ Young ran a savvy campaign that incorporated aggressive voter registration and a media blitz. He also benefited from redistricting that added blacks while reducing the number of conservative white communities.¹⁴ As a result, he achieved victory in the majority-white district, winning an estimated 95 percent of the black vote and 23 percent of the white vote.¹⁵

Young was the first black Representative from Georgia since Jefferson Long’s election a century earlier. Young

and Barbara Jordan of Texas, also entering Congress for the first time, served as the first black Members from the Deep South since Reconstruction. “I consider this victory a little more than just being the first Black man to go to Congress from this deep South state,” Young noted. “I see this as a city-wide mandate of people of both races working together to achieve the kind of representation that this area so badly needs.”¹⁶ During the 93rd Congress (1973–1975), he sought to improve public education and the social infrastructure of his district by serving on the Committee on Banking and Currency and its Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Finance.¹⁷

During his first term, Young developed a record as a liberal advocate who supported governmental solutions to complications arising from social disfranchisement and promoted economic opportunities to benefit society.¹⁸ One of his early initiatives was the Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act, a program to facilitate the building of mass transit systems such as MARTA in Atlanta. Although a public transportation system would help all Atlanta businesses, the Georgia Representative argued that blacks would benefit directly from the \$1 billion in federal support. He also insisted that residents should have a voice in such mass transit development.¹⁹ Young ensured that he visited his district on weekends because he understood the importance of being visible to his constituents, especially newly enfranchised black voters. “[W]e’re terribly cynical about people we don’t see,” Young once remarked. “We don’t read too much about our men in the paper, so it’s their physical presence and accessibility that counts.”²⁰

Young also joined the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), and established a liberal voting record on domestic issues. He rejected cuts in domestic spending for the poor while supporting an increase in wages for workers in the public sector.²¹ Young criticized the Richard M. Nixon administration’s cuts in rural spending by linking the rural poverty with forced migration to urban centers and the problems that ensued. He also



argued that both black and white middle-class families could suffer because of Nixon's economic policies, such as the federal moratorium on financing new housing.²² Throughout his congressional career, both on his own and through the CBC, Young challenged the President to preserve legislation that benefited black constituents. He denounced the Nixon administration for an anti-busing bill and for failing to support mass transit, suggesting that some of these policies could hurt white middle-class constituents as much as black constituents.²³ In a CBC forum called the "True State of the Union," Young declared, "the overall goal [for Congress] must be to return the economy to a system which generates growth and production instead of death and destruction," and to "provide the aggressive leadership in rebuilding an economy of peace and justice."²⁴

Young was able to work successfully with Republicans across the aisle by approaching them one-on-one to discuss political issues. Using negotiating skills he developed in the SCLC—dubbed "the Atlanta style"—he reached compromises with political allies and opponents.²⁵ Although Young clearly staked out his position as a Democratic liberal, he exhibited a shrewd political pragmatism that surprised his allies. It was noted that the Atlanta Representative, "avoids[s] the appearance of doctrinaire politics, while fulfilling the promise implicit in his progression from black civil rights leader to U.S. Congressman—the promise of effective representation for black as well as white citizens."²⁶ In October 1973, Young was the only CBC member who voted for Republican Minority Leader Gerald Ford of Michigan as Richard Nixon's Vice President, despite their political disagreements. Young explained, "I decided that here was a guy I wanted to give a chance. He was certainly better than a Reagan or any of the other alternatives at the time. Besides, Atlanta was going to need to work very closely with the next administration."²⁷

Young developed a keen interest in U.S. foreign policy, especially concerning Africa, Asia, and Latin America. One of his earliest bills called for barring

U.S. government contracts to companies that practiced racial discrimination in South Africa.²⁸ Young also made congressional visits to South Africa in 1972 and to Zambia, Kenya, and Nigeria in 1975.²⁹ He opposed the Byrd Amendment and testified before the Senate against the nomination of Nathaniel Davis for Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, due to his ambassadorship to Chile during a CIA-sponsored coup d'état against its president in 1973.³⁰

In July 1973, Young and some southern Republicans successfully lobbied for a foreign aid bill provision that authorized the President to cancel aid that Portugal would use for military action in its African colonies. The House passed the amendment.³¹ Young commented "[s]ome of the people I disagree with the most are some of the people I have come to respect the most . . . I can usually swing Democratic support, but unless you can get Republican support, nothing happens around here. I'm not going to ask them . . . to do anything that's going to hurt them politically and they know better than to ask me."³²

Young won re-election to a second term with 72 percent of the vote in 1974.³³ In the 94th Congress (1975–1977), he became the first black Representative appointed to the House Rules Committee.³⁴ Young was also elected treasurer of the CBC and a member of its executive committee. In the summer of 1975 he worked to pass an extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. During deliberations on the House Floor, Young delivered a prepared statement that outlined the successes of the Voting Rights Act: increasing the number of black elected officials in the South, boosting black voter turnout, initiating monitoring by federal examiners and observers, and helping "language minorities," such as Latinos. He believed the Voting Rights Act was necessary to ensure minority participation in voting and argued that the act allowed politicians to appeal to a cross-section of society instead of only to a privileged few. "There was a time, when, in order to be elected from our part of the country, you had to present yourself at your worst," Young observed. "The man who was the chairman of



★ ANDREW JACKSON YOUNG, JR. ★

my campaign . . . had to run as a segregationist when he wanted to run statewide.” Following these deliberations, the House voted 341 to 70 to extend coverage of the Voting Rights Act.³⁵

For the remainder of the Congress, Young continued to seek ways to improve the lives of his rural and urban constituents. He sponsored bills that outlined comprehensive health care plans and testified on behalf of bills that preserved food stamp programs and economic development in his district and in Africa. Young sponsored the Food Stamp Act of 1976, an act that proposed an overhaul of the program.³⁶

During the early 1970s, Young became acquainted with James Earl (Jimmy) Carter, who was the governor of Georgia. Carter’s sincerity and the men’s mutual interest in promoting human rights formed the basis for a strong relationship. The Georgia Representative supported Carter’s bid for the presidency in 1976 with a seconding speech at the Democratic National Convention in New York City and organized voter registration drives in urban areas for the successful Carter campaign.³⁷ In 1976, Young won re-election to a third term in the House with 80 percent of the vote.³⁸ On January 25, 1977, after accepting President Carter’s offer to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Young resigned from Congress.

As the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Young became the initial point of contact for the Carter administration’s foreign policy in Africa and Asia. By using the network of contacts that had been developing since the 1950s, he played an active role in articulating Carter’s position on human rights and liberal capitalism in Rhodesia, South Africa, and Angola.³⁹ Young resigned the ambassadorship in 1979 in the wake of severe criticism following his meeting with Zehdi Labib Terzi, the U.N. observer for the Palestine Liberation Organization. From 1982 to 1990, he served as mayor of Atlanta. He spent a great deal of time traveling nationally and internationally to build Atlanta’s reputation as a financial competitor on the world stage. Young also succeeded in bringing the Olympic Games to the city in 1996. In 1990, he launched a gubernatorial bid, but lost to Lieutenant Governor Zell Miller, who garnered 65 percent of the vote in a runoff election.⁴⁰ He eventually formed a consulting firm dedicated to fostering economic development in Africa and the Caribbean.⁴¹ In 2003, Young considered a run for the U.S. Senate, but declined because winning “would mean I would spend the next seven years in Washington, and Washington is not always the center of action.”⁴² Young remains involved with a number of consulting firms and nonprofit organizations in the Atlanta area.

FOR FURTHER READING

DeRoche, Andrew J. *Andrew Young: Civil Rights Ambassador* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003).

Gardner, Carl. *Andrew Young: A Biography* (New York: Drake, 1978).

Young, Andrew. *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996).

“Young, Andrew Jackson, Jr.,” *Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, 1774–Present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=Y000028>.

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

The Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture and History (Atlanta, GA). *Papers*: Dates and amount unknown.

NOTES

- 1 Andrew J. DeRoche, *Andrew Young: Civil Rights Ambassador* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003): xi.
- 2 *Current Biography, 1977* (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1977): 449.
- 3 “Jean C. Young, 61, an Educator and Wife of Ex-Envoy to U.N.,” 17 September 1994, *New York Times*: 12; Nadine Brozan, “Chronicle,” 21 May 1996, *New York Times*: B5.
- 4 DeRoche, *Andrew Young*: 15–19.
- 5 Hamilton Bims, “A Southern Activist Goes to the House,” *Ebony* 28 (February 1973): 84.
- 6 Because of the large number of black voters and liberal white voters, black political leaders in Atlanta believed a black candidate could win the seat. For a detailed discussion about antagonism between rural and urban southerners, see V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984): 378–382.
- 7 Bims, “A Southern Activist Goes to the House”: 84. Young observed, “In 1970, when I ran and lost, we sent white volunteers into certain white areas. It didn’t work. Many of the whites were as resentful of those kids as they would have been of black people banging on their doors. In 1972, we did it a little differently: more low-key, I suppose, and apparently, we succeeded.”
- 8 Bruce Galphin, “Former King Aide Wins Runoff in Ga.,” 24 September 1970, *Washington Post*: A2; Earl Caldwell, “Negro’s Aides Optimistic on House Race in White-Dominated District in Atlanta.” 9 August 1970, *New York Times*: 26.
- 9 *Almanac of American Politics, 1974* (Boston: Gambit Press, 1973): 232.
- 10 Kenneth Reich, “Black Vote Disappoints Ga. Candidate,” 19 November 1970, *Washington Post*: H4. Young cited two reasons why black turnout wasn’t larger. The first reason was the “‘extreme mobility’ of poor black people . . . All of the public housing projects have a high transient rate. . . . People register there, move away, and don’t come back to vote.” The second reason was “a lack of transportation in the black community” and the fact that “many blacks hold down two jobs,” hampering their ability to get to the polls.
- 11 DeRoche, *Andrew Young*: 42–43.
- 12 William L. Chaze, “Atlanta Black Wooing Votes,” 1 October 1972, *Washington Post*: F20; *Current Biography, 1977*: 450.
- 13 “At the Hungry Club, Young Talks of Education Plans for the 70’s,” 12 May 1972, *Atlanta Daily World*: 1.
- 14 Chaze, “Atlanta Black Wooing Votes.” Voter registration drives in black areas also added roughly 5,000 new voters to the rolls.
- 15 *Almanac of American Politics, 1974*: 232; Bims, “A Southern Activist Goes to the House”: 90; “The South’s Black Congressman Reflects on His Stunning Victory,” 18 November 1972, *New York Amsterdam News*: B9.
- 16 “‘Will Work Hard to Deserve Victory,’ for the People, Young Says,” 10 November 1972, *Atlanta Daily World*: 1.
- 17 *Almanac of American Politics, 1974*: 232. Young sat on the following Banking and Currency subcommittees: Consumer Affairs; International Finance; International Trade; and Urban Mass Transportation.
- 18 De Roche, *Andrew Young*: 44; *Current Biography, 1977*: 450.



★ ANDREW JACKSON YOUNG, JR. ★

- 19 Carl Gardner, *Andrew Young: A Biography* (New York: Drake, 1978): 181; *Congressional Record*, House, 93rd Cong., 1st sess., (3 October 1973): 32796; “Grants Revealed for 5th District,” 19 January 1973, *Atlanta Daily World*: 1.
- 20 *Current Biography*, 1977: 450; Bims, “A Southern Activist Goes to the House”: 84.
- 21 “Young Urges Pay Hike for Maids, Youths,” 17 June 1973, *Atlanta Daily World*. Young argued that domestic work “is a profession that has never been given the respect of a profession. If you do not believe it, just stay home one day and try to clean house from top to bottom, wash and iron all the clothing, take care of the dishes and the children, and then you will realize what a significant accomplishment it is when someone can do this systematically and routinely, and what a contribution this makes to one’s home.” Subsequently, the House “voted to include domestic workers and youth in a bill to increase the federal minimum wage and extend its coverage to 6 million additional workers.”
- 22 Gardner, *Andrew Young*: 181. Young “pointed out that the moratorium hurt more white people than black through its effect on the building trades and the savings and loan association.”
- 23 *Ibid.*, 181–182.
- 24 *Congressional Record*, House, 93rd Cong., 1st sess. (22 February 1973): 5077.
- 25 *Congressional Record*, House, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess. (11 April 1974): 10793.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Current Biography*, 1977: 451.
- 28 “Young Seeks Biased Firms Funds Halt,” 16 February 1973, *Atlanta Daily World*: 8.
- 29 DeRoche, *Andrew Young*: 53, 59.
- 30 Murray Marcer, “Role in Chile Haunts Pick for State Job,” 20 February 1975, *Washington Post*: A2.; DeRoche, *Andrew Young*: 44–45, 54–55. The Byrd Amendment of 1971, sponsored by Harry Byrd of Virginia, allowed the United States to import chrome from Rhodesia. After Prime Minister Ian Smith declared Southern Rhodesia’s independence from Great Britain in 1965, the United Nations imposed sanctions. The Lyndon B. Johnson administration supported the U.N. sanctions. After the passage of the amendment, the United States joined Portugal and South Africa in accepting Rhodesian chrome. According to DeRoche, Young and the CBC were ahead of their time, calling attention to an issue that was not addressed by the House until 1974.
- 31 Gardner, *Andrew Young*: 182.
- 32 *Congressional Record*, House, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess. (11 April 1974): 10794; Gardner, *Andrew Young*: 182; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1973 (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1974): 826.
- 33 *Current Biography*, 1977: 451.
- 34 DeRoche, *Andrew Young*: 54; John S. Lewis, Jr., “3 Blacks Named to Powerful Congressional Committees,” 21 December 1974, *New Pittsburgh Courier*: 1.
- 35 *Congressional Record*, House, 94th Cong., 1st sess. (3 June 1975): 16774; John W. Lewis, Jr., “Black Congressmen Wage Fight For Extension of Voting Rights Act,” 14 June 1975, *New Pittsburgh Courier*: 1.
- 36 “Young Introduces Bill for Health Care of All People,” 2 May 1975, *Atlanta Daily World*: 5; “Young Defends U.S. Food Stamp Program,” 17 October 1975, *Atlanta Daily World*: 5; “Young Reports MARTA Grant, Africa Development Fund,” 19 December 1975, *Atlanta Daily World*: 2; “Young Introduces Bill Revising Food Program,” 1 April 1976, *Atlanta Daily World*: 2.
- 37 *Current Biography*, 1977: 451.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 450.
- 39 For a detailed articulation of Young’s humanitarian and political pragmatism toward Africa, see Andrew Young, “The Promise of U.S. Africa Policy,” 17 May 1976, *Washington Post*: A21.
- 40 Jim Barber, “Young Loses Democratic Gubernatorial Primary,” 7 August 1990, United Press International.
- 41 DeRoche, *Andrew Young*: 151–159; “Ex-UN Envoy Andrew Young Replaces Leon Sullivan as Summit Chair,” 20 August 2001, *Jet*: 16; Sheila M. Poole, “Catching Up With Atlanta’s Mr. International,” 30 October 2002, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*: 2.
- 42 Dick Pettys, “Young Rejects Bid for Senate, Send State Democrats Scrambling,” 4 October 2003, *Chattanooga Times Free Press*: B1.



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YOUNG ONCE REMARKED.