

Ambassador Andrew Young Speaks at School Meeting

March 30, 2018

Andrew Young, who has served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, as a U.S. Congressman from Georgia, as mayor of the city of Atlanta, and as a key adviser to Martin Luther King Jr., addressed a school meeting at Mercersburg March 30 in the Burgin Center for the Arts' Simon Theatre.

Watch a video of Young's talk: <https://vimeo.com/262584144>

See coverage from WDVM-TV in Hagerstown (including interviews with Young and two Mercersburg students): <https://www.localdvm.com/news/pennsylvania/civil-rights-activist-andrew-young-speaks-at-mercersburg-academy/1090092804/>

Young also met with students, faculty, and staff in smaller discussion sessions prior to the school meeting. Five days after his visit (April 4) marks the 50th anniversary of the day King was assassinated in Memphis, Tenn.; Young was with King at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis when the fatal shot was fired that killed the iconic civil rights leader at age 39.

“My experience has been that the best attitude is to take every tragedy, every conflict, and every victory as a teaching opportunity that your mind refines and you relate it positively to your growth and development,” Young told the school community. “In fact, it turned out to be irrelevant to us who killed Martin Luther King. We knew what killed him. So we were focused on changing the things about the society that killed him.

“It’s not what happens in your life—it’s your attitude toward it. You have to make a conscious decision with your own mind. It doesn’t matter what anyone else thinks.”

Born in New Orleans, La., in 1932, Young graduated from Howard University and became an ordained minister after studying at Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut. He worked with the National Council of Churches and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, where he became a close associate of King and was appointed the SCLC’s executive director in 1964. He was influential in two landmark pieces of civil-rights legislation—the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. On April 4, 1968 (almost 50 years ago to the day).

In 1972, Young became the first African American elected to represent the state of Georgia in the U.S. Congress. President Jimmy Carter appointed Young as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations in 1977, and Young served as mayor of Atlanta from 1982 to 1990.

Young, a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, is a past president of the National Council of Churches. The Andrew Young Center for Global Leadership and Georgia State University’s Andrew Young School of Policy Studies are named in his honor.

The Andrew J. Young Foundation, which was founded in 2003, supports and promotes education, leadership, and human rights in the United States, Africa, and the Caribbean.

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