

Young lived for good fight

By A.J. Dickerson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT - He was tough. He was honest. He broke color barriers. He once took on Congress.

Friends and colleagues of former Mayor Coleman Young mourned his death Saturday, remembering him as one of a kind.

"There won't be another Coleman Young," said U.S. Rep. John Conyers Jr., D-Detroit.

Young, a civil rights and labor leader and World War II soldier, was among the nation's first big-city black mayors when he won the first of his five terms in 1973.

"Coleman Young was a legend in his own time - a leader, a fighter, a pioneer in the battle for equal rights and against racial discrimination. His humor, gusto and passion for life will never be duplicated," said Gov. John Engler.

President Jimmy Carter, who returned Young's support in the 1976 presidential election with hundreds of millions of dollars in federal aid for the city, called Young "one of the greatest mayors our country has known."

"With compassion and vision, he provided the leadership that lifted Detroit from a climate of unprecedented violence to one of hope and greater prosperity," Carter said. "Our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time."

President Clinton called Young "not only a great mayor of Detroit but an inspiration to so many city leaders throughout the nation."

"Mayor Young was truly an outstanding public servant who will be missed," Clinton said.

Conyers was a teen-ager when

he met Young, who was active in politics in Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood, as was Conyers' father. While Young was well known for his salty language, he could also be the consummate charmer, the congressman said.

"He has a magnetic presence, a splendid orator. He was a happy-go-lucky guy, but he had a mind like a steel trap. If you're laughing with Coleman for too long, you're going to lose your pants," Conyers said.

Young was "charming, entertaining, humorous, thoughtful," said former U.S. Sen. Donald Riegle Jr.

"I think Coleman, in my mind, is the Jackie Robinson of American electoral politics," Riegle said. "He really broke the color line, by being elected mayor and going on to a number of further re-elections."

"He was a brilliant thinker. He had his own way of expressing himself. He could be blunt, especially if he thought someone was pushing him," he said. "But under all that, was an exceptional intellect."

Mayor Dennis Archer, who succeeded Young, said the city has lost "a great warrior."

"Mayor Young was not one ever to bite his tongue," he said. "His compassion, his intellect, his courage, his wit and even his occasionally sharp tongue were the essential ingredients of a man who tried to lead us to a world as it should be, rather than accepting a world of the past."

The battles Young fought included one before the U.S. House Un-American Activities Committee. His labor organizing earned him a subpoena. Asked if he was a member of

the Communist Party, Young refused to answer. He told the panel he considered its activities to be un-American, he said in his autobiography, "Hard Stuff."

San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown said Young was a pioneer and role model for blacks.

"He had to be the hero of black Americans while at the same time he had to carry the mantle of organized labor," Brown said. "While at the same time, he literally had to be a staunch middle of the road Democrat in order to be successful at all."

Cardinal Adam Maida, archbishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Detroit, said history will judge Young as the "linchpin in the renaissance of Detroit."

"As we approach the millennium, Mayor Young's personality and accomplishments will loom large," he said.

"I think most of us who lived in Detroit - whether we agreed with him or not - really feel that this man was the only person for us at the time he came in," said Gil Hill, the newly elected Detroit city council president.

Even as death clearly neared, Young fought to stay alive, said his cousin, Dr. Claud Young. As the hospitalization dragged into weeks, then months, Young let his family know he was "miffed" at not being allowed to go home, in language that was not always pristine, Young said.

"The adjectives were interesting," he said.

Detroiters mourned him as a good man and a good mayor. "He did a lot for Detroit," said Malika Taylor. "He was strong."

Historian's home falling apart

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. - The Washington, D.C., home of renowned black historian Carter Woodson is covered with boards and graffiti, despite promises to renovate it.

The former Huntington resident started the tradition of Black History Month in 1926 and is credited with legitimizing the study of black history.

His three-story townhouse, designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976, is owned by the Washington-based Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, which Woodson founded.

The National Park Service listed Woodson's home as "threatened" in 1991 because it had been vandalized. But it was then taken off the list because the Park Service was told the building had been renovated.

Irena Webster, executive director of the association, said plans are underway to restore the home but that they are pending approval by the association's board.

Newtha Perry, president of the Carter G. Woodson Memorial Foundation Inc. in Huntington, was distraught about the house's dilapidated condition.

"I just get sick in the pit of my stomach to hear this," Perry said. "There's so much money and so many historians in the Washington area and nobody has noticed this?"

The foundation's vice president, Alan Gould, said, "We will do everything in our power to help. I think one big (fund-raising) dinner in D.C. would do it."

The foundation has established scholarships in Woodson's name at Marshall University.

Russell Adams, chairman of the Afro-American studies department at Howard University, called the home's condition "an embarrassment to scholarship."

Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., the ranking Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, has asked the Interior Department to consider restorations for the home, spokeswoman Ann Adler said.

Rep. Nick Rahall, D-W.Va., also is looking into ways to support renovations. The Park Service is investigating the home's condition to see if it should be relisted as threatened or endangered, said coordinator Susan Escherich.

Woodson was the second black American to earn a doctorate degree from Harvard University, in 1912. Schools across the nation bear Woodson's name.

African culture drives rebirth

By Olu Sarr
PAN-AFRICAN NEWS AGENCY

DAKAR, Senegal - Think of culture and immediately images of dance and song spring to mind, but intellectuals studying this aspect of life say it is much more.

Culture, they say, is the untold force for the economic development of Africa.

"The increasing value of cultural products such as literacy works, art, music, dance and drama, traditional festivals, rituals and ceremonies - as economically saleable commodities and as a foreign exchange earners - has become quite evident," says George Hagan, director of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon.

Hagan said the rising tide of cultural tourism, accessibility to world markets of cultural festivals and visual arts by the electronic media has "added value to traditional cultural goods."

Belief that culture is the basis for development stems from the conviction that development must center on mass participation.

"Otherwise, Hagan says, the target population will just stand and watch outside agents try to implement their

plan. That is why so many development projects have failed in Africa.

The executive secretary of Nigeria's National Institute for Cultural Orientation, Victoria Agoda, says African values must be taken into consideration for people to feel part of any developmental process.

"Be it in health, architecture, housing, education it is very important that African culture is integrated so that there will be committed participation," she said.

"The Chinese and Japanese have shown that a culture is our civilization and that no culture, no civilization is inferior to any and that development should be built based on culture," she added.

So, efforts are being made in Nigeria to reorient the country's cultural distortion. After visiting China in 1994 and seeing culture on display there, her department introduced a national workshop series on culture to Nigerians.

"We have achieved remarkable progress in sensitizing people on the need for cultural orientation," Agoda said. The thrust, she stressed, was different 20 years ago. At that time, the cultural drive from Africa was "black is beautiful. Culture

is now being applied as a science: Cultural strategies, cultural approaches that's what makes the difference," she said.

Hagan said that since independence in the 1960s not many African governments have consciously manifested the conviction that a people's culture could promote economic and political development. He said the first generation of leaders concentrated on creating images designed to return self confidence to the African. Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, in particular, emphasized the importance of the African genius, the African personality.

"That was the best agenda at that stage of Africa's modern development," he said. "The moment economic depressions began setting in there was destabilisation, soldiers took up guns, overthrew more knowledgeable people" and put themselves in power.

"Many of these soldiers have very poor education and have absolutely no understanding of African culture," he added. "In fact, they don't care a hoot about African culture because they have been indoctrinated. They were fashioned to carry out orders. They were fashioned to see things in a certain way, in a European way."

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