

Reverend Dr. W. J. Hodge

(1920 - 2000)

Rev. Dr. W. J. Hodge became a civil rights activist after he was denied a cup of coffee in a restaurant in 1957, the year he arrived in Louisville. He was a leader of the civil rights movement in Kentucky during the disturbing years before the passage of The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Kentucky Civil Rights Act of 1966. In 1967, he helped lead the movement to open more housing to African Americans. He served the Kentucky and Virginia NAACP in a variety of positions including Urban Program director from 1968 to 1973.

Rev. Dr. W. J. Hodge was an esteemed member of the Jefferson County community where he made many contributions toward the betterment of mankind. He served as pastor of Fifth Street Baptist Church in Louisville for over 30 years. He was a member of the Louisville Board of Aldermen, Tenth Ward, for eight years. He was the first black president of the Louisville Board of Aldermen for one year before his last term ended. He also held other positions including advisor of the Old Louisville School Board; first vice-president of the Council on Religion and Race; president of Simmons Bible College; and dean, director-general, vice-president and president of the Progressive National Baptist Congress of Christian Education where he also served as chairman of the Resolutions Committee.

Rev. Dr. Hodge received many honors for his contributions. His efforts were recognized by the Urban League, AKA Sorority, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Chestnut Street YMCA, Black Understanding Program, City of Hazard, Kentucky, and Green Street Baptist Church. South 21st Street in Louisville was renamed Dr. W. J. Hodge Street in 1990.

Rev. Dr. W. J. Hodge died on December 26, 2000, and was buried in the historical Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville.

