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National Museum of African American History and Culture

Pamphlet: This Is My Husband: Fighter for His People, Political Refugee

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Early Childhood

James Edward Jackson, Jr. was born in the year that World I began-1914, on November 29. He is the only son, the third of five children, two of whom died in the tender years of their childhood from those epidemic diseases which cut down the youth of those days but which modern medicine could completely eradicate if the government put the sciences at the service of the people rather than the atomic war-lords.

He was born in the former capital city of the confederacy, Richmond, Virginia-that state which in its early years produced such stalwarts among men as Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry and was the scene of such glorious deeds as those of the sainted Nat Turner and the noble John Brown. Now, in the present century, it is shameful to record, Virginia owes all of its notoriety to the steady stream of arch-reactionary politicians that it has foisted upon the nation.

A roll call of its modern "statesman" presents a roster of as dangerous a group of stealers of the people's liberties and livelihood as ever disgraced the congress of any government-what with its Harry Byrds, Howard W. Smiths and others. The shame of it is that good men like my husband are made prisoners or fugitives under a law written by such men as the Dixicrat Congressman from Virginia, Howard Smith. This author of the thought-control Smith Act is a self-confessed notorious enemy of the Negro and all laboring people, a democracy-hating poll taxer and millionaire landlord!

My husband knew Howard Smith well. In 1940, as chairman of the Southern Negro Youth Congress Right-to-Vote Campaign, he said, "The bloc of southern congressman are almost without exception united in the forefront of the fight to cut down the living standards of the American people. It was Woodrum and Byrd who led the economy bloc in knifing WPA. And it was Smith who led and still leads the fight against Wages and Hours Law."

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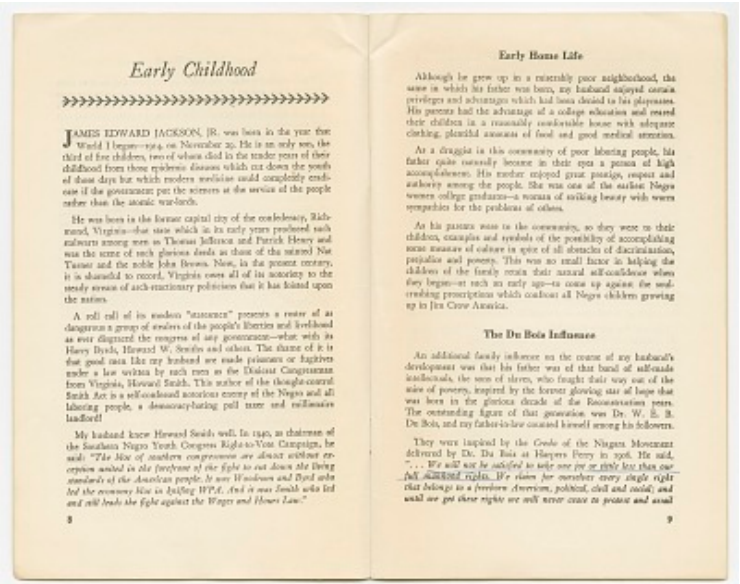
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Early Home Life

Although he grew up in a miserably poor neighborhood, the same in which his father was born, my husband enjoyed certain privileges and advantages which had been denied to his playmates. His parents had the advantage of a college education and reared their children in a reasonably comfortable house with adequate clothing, plentiful amounts of food and good medical attention.

As a druggist in this community of poor laboring people, his father quite naturally became in their eyes a person of high accomplishment. His mother enjoyed great prestige, respect and authority among the people. She was one of the earliest Negro women college graduates-a woman of striking beauty with warm sympathies for the problems of others.

As his parents were to the community, so they were to their children,



examples and symbols of the possibility of accomplishing some measure of culture in spite of obstacles of discrimination, prejudice and poverty. This was no small factor in helping the children of the family retain their natural self-confidence when they began-at such an early age-to come up against the soul crushing proscriptions which confront all Negro children growing up in Jim Crow America.

The Du Bois Influence

An additional family influence on the course of my husband's development was that his father was of that band of self-made intellectuals, the sons of slaves, who fought their way out of the mire of poverty, inspired by the forever glowing star of hope that was born in the glorious decade of the Reconstruction years. The outstanding figure of that generation was Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, and my father-in-law counted himself among his followers.

They were inspired by the credo of the Niagara Movement delivered by Dr. Du Bois at Harpers Ferry in 1906. He said, "...We will not be satisfied to take one jot or tittle less than our full manhood rights. We claim for ourselves every single right that belongs to a freeborn American, political, civil and social; and until we get these rights we will never cease to protest and assail



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