

MARION ORR

AUTHOR • PROFESSOR



MEDIA KIT

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ABOUT MARION



 **MARION ORR**

Marion Orr is a political scientist and the inaugural Frederick Lippitt Professor of Public Policy at Brown University. An award-winning author, his publications include *Black Social Capital: The Politics of School Reform in Baltimore* and *The Color of School Reform: Race, Politics, and the Challenge of Urban Education*. He was awarded the Biographers International Organization's Francis "Frank" Rollin Fellowship for his work on Congressman Diggs.

LONG BIO

Marion Orr is the inaugural Frederick Lippitt Professor of Public Policy and Professor of Political Science and Urban Studies at Brown University. He previously was a member of the political science faculty at Duke University.

Professor Orr earned his B.A. degree in political science from Savannah State College, M.A. in political science from Atlanta University (now Clark-Atlanta University), and a Ph.D. in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland, College Park.

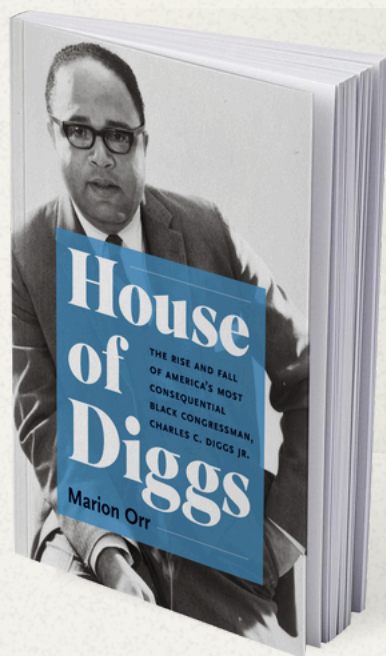
From 2008-2014, Professor Orr served as Director of the A. Alfred Taubman Center for Public Policy at Brown University. He is a former chair of Brown's Department of Political Science and a former director of Brown's Urban Studies Program.

Professor Orr's expertise is in the area of American politics. He specializes in urban politics, race and ethnic politics, and African-American politics. He is the author and editor of eight books. His book, *House of Diggs: The Rise and Fall of America's Most Consequential Black Congressman, Charles C. Diggs, Jr.* (University of North Carolina Press, 2025), is the first biography of Michigan's first Black member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Among Professor Orr's other books, *Black Social Capital: The Politics of School Reform in Baltimore* (University Press of Kansas), won the Policy Studies Organization's Aaron Wildavsky Award and his co-authored, *The Color of School Reform: Race, Politics and the Challenge of Urban Education* (Princeton University Press), was named the best book by the American Political Science Association's (APSA) Urban Politics Section. He is the co-editor (with Domingo Morel) of *Latino Mayors: Political Change in the Postindustrial City*. He is also the author of numerous scholarly articles, essays, and reviews.

In 2019, Professor Orr was awarded the APSA's Hanes Walton, Jr. Career Award that honors a political scientist whose lifetime of distinguished scholarship has made significant contributions to our understanding of racial and ethnic politics. Professor Orr is the recipient of Biographers International Organization Francis "Frank" Rollin Fellowship. He has also held a research fellowship at the Brookings Institution, a Presidential Fellowship from the University of California, Berkeley, and a fellowship from the Ford Foundation.

Professor Orr served as President of the APSA's Organized Section on Urban Politics and as Chair of the Governing Board of the Urban Affairs Association (UAA), an international organization devoted to the study of urban issues. Dr. Orr has also served as a member of the executive councils of the American Political Science Association and the National Conference of Black Political Scientists. He has served, or is currently serving, on the editorial boards of the *National Political Science Review*, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and the City*, and *Urban Affairs Review*.



HOUSE OF DIGGS

The Rise and Fall of America's Most Consequential Black Congressman, Charles C. Diggs Jr.

Publisher: The University of North Carolina Press

Publication Date: September 16, 2025

Price: Hardcover \$99.00 / Paperback \$ 29.95

ISBN-13: 978-1-4696-8931-9 / 978-1-4696-8932-6

Praise for *House of Diggs*

"The definitive biography of the civil rights legislator we never should have forgotten. This book will change our collective understanding of Charles C. Diggs, Jr., the civil rights era, and the political battles we're still fighting today." – **Van Jones, CNN Host and NYT Bestselling Author**

"Engaging, essential, and meticulously researched. Marion Orr reveals Rep. Charles C. Diggs, Jr.'s pivotal role in the Civil Rights movement, at a time when 'Black politics shifted from protest to elections.' *House of Diggs* details how Congressman Diggs's dogged persistence and a strategically moderate approach to building coalitions changed the landscape of segregated America." – **Tamara Payne, Pulitzer Prize-winning co-author of *The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X***

"An impressive and important book about an overlooked figure in the fight for civil rights. Marion Orr tells the story of Charles C. Diggs Jr. with deep insight, diligent research, and crisp writing." – **Jonathan Eig, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *King: A Life***

"This wonderfully readable biography rewrites the history of Black urban politics and civil rights through one of its most compelling and flawed characters." – **Thomas J. Sugrue, author of *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North***

"A skillfully rendered, scrupulously researched, and highly readable portrait of an important Civil Rights leader, long overdue for recognition." – **James McGrath Morris, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Eye on the Struggle: Ethel Payne, the First Lady of the Black Press***

At the height of the civil rights movement, Charles C. Diggs Jr. (1922–1998) was the consummate power broker. In a political career spanning 1951 to 1980, Diggs, Michigan's first Black member of Congress, was the only federal official to attend the trial of Emmett Till's killers, worked behind the scenes with Martin Luther King Jr., and founded the Congressional Black Caucus. He was also the chief architect of legislation that restored home rule to Washington, DC, and almost single-handedly ignited the American anti-apartheid movement in the 1960s. Drawing on extensive archival research, including Diggs's rarely seen personal papers, FBI documents, and original interviews with family members and political associates, political scientist Marion Orr reveals that Diggs practiced a politics of strategic moderation. Orr argues that this quiet approach was more effective than the militant race politics practiced by Adam Clayton Powell and more appealing than the conservative Chicago-style approach of William Dawson—two of Diggs's better-known Black contemporaries.

Vividly written and deeply researched, *House of Diggs* is the first biography of Congressman Charles C. Diggs Jr., one of the most consequential Black federal legislators in US history. Congressman Diggs was a legislative lion whose unfortunate downfall punctuated his distinguished career and pushed him and his historic accomplishments out of sight. Now, for the first time, *House of Diggs* restores him to his much-deserved place in the history of American politics.

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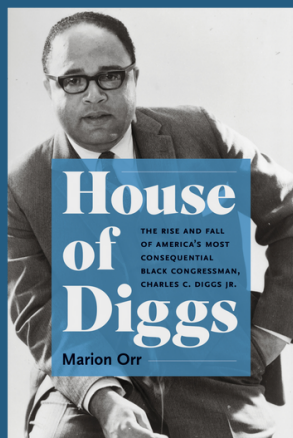
Frederick Lippitt Professor of Public Policy & Professor of Political Science at Brown University



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SPEAKING SUBJECTS:

- The Dynamics of Black Leadership Styles in Congress: Charles C. Diggs, Jr., William L. Dawson and Adam Clayton Powell
- The Formation and Maturation of the Congressional Black Caucus
- Black Politics at a Crossroads: How the 1972 National Black Political Convention Shaped the Future of Black Politics
- Black Representation Matters: How Black Members Represent Black Interests in the US Congress
- The Congressional Black Caucus, Nelson Mandela and the American Anti-Apartheid Movement
- Congressman Charles C. Diggs, Jr., the Rise of Newt Gingrich and the Political Polarization of the US Congress
- The Struggle for Local Democracy in Washington, DC: How Home Rule Happened and Why Home Rule is Threatened



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SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. Most people remember Adam Clayton Powell Jr. or William Dawson as the faces of Black congressional leadership in the post–World War II civil rights era. What makes Diggs more consequential in your eyes, so much so that you wrote the first full-length biography of him?
2. If someone only has five minutes to understand why Charles Diggs matters, what’s the one thing you’d want them to know?
3. You describe Diggs as someone who practiced “strategic moderation.” What did that look like in action, and do you think that kind of politics still has a place today?
4. One of Diggs’s first fights in Congress was against segregation in airport terminals, something few people even realize existed. Why was that battle so important to him?
5. You write about Diggs organizing a train of 400 Detroiters to watch his swearing-in. That’s an incredible scene. What do you think it tells us about who he was and how he saw his role as a public figure?
6. Diggs was the only federal official who showed up to the trial of Emmett Till’s killers. How did that experience shape the kind of legislator he became?
7. He took a trip to Ghana in 1958 that seems to have changed everything for him. What happened on that trip, and how did it shift his priorities in Congress?
8. He was also the driving force behind restoring home rule to Washington, D.C., another part of his legacy that’s not well known. What would he think of current efforts to roll that back?
9. During your extensive research for the book, you uncovered something remarkable: Randall Robinson, who later became a major anti-apartheid leader, was the person who secretly reported Diggs’s payroll violations. Tell us about that.
10. You also show how a young Newt Gingrich used Diggs to launch his own national profile. Was Diggs caught in a larger shift happening in American politics?
11. The detail you shared about Diggs’s chairman portrait—paid for with illegal funds and now stored in a D.C. government closet—is so symbolic. What do you think should happen to it now?
12. You had access to Diggs’s personal papers, presidential archives, and even his FBI file. Was there anything that genuinely surprised you during your research?
13. You’re a scholar, but this book clearly aims for a broader readership. How did you approach writing it in a way that would connect beyond the academy?

PUBLISHED BOOKS

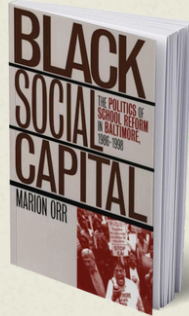
Book Title: Black Social Capital:
The Politics of School Reform in
Baltimore, 1986-1999

Publisher Name: University
Press of Kansas

Publication Year: 1999

Price: Paperback \$24.99

ISBN: 978-0700609826



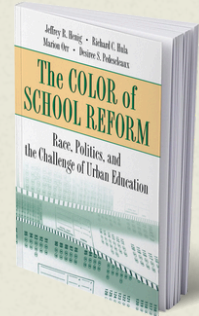
Book Title: The Color of School
Reform: Race, Politics, and the
Challenge of Urban Education

Publisher Name: Princeton
University Press

Publication Year: 2001

Price: Paperback \$64.00

ISBN: 978-0691088976



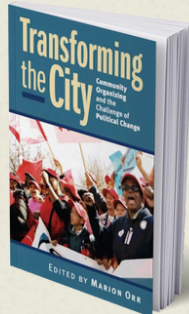
Book Title: Transforming the City:
Community Organizing and the
Challenge of Political Change

Publisher Name: University
Press of Kansas

Publication Year: 2007

Price: Paperback \$22.53

ISBN: 978-0700615148



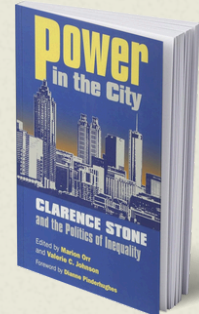
Book Title: Power in the City:
Clarence Stone and the Politics
of Inequality

Publisher Name: University
Press of Kansas

Publication Year: 2008

Price: Paperback \$37.99

ISBN: 978-0700615735



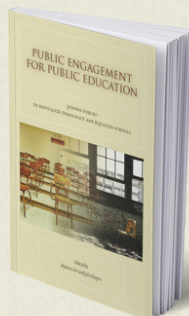
Book Title: Public Engagement for
Public Education: Joining Forces
to Revitalize Democracy and
Equalize Schools

Publisher Name: Stanford
University Press

Publication Year: 2010

Price: Hardcover \$120.00

ISBN: 978-0804763554



Book Title: Latino Politics en
Ciencia Política: The Search for
Latino Identity and Racial
Consciousness

Publisher Name: New York
University Press

Publication Year: 2014

Price: Paperback \$39.00

ISBN: 978-0814768983



Book Title: Latino Mayors:
Political Change in the
Postindustrial City

Publisher Name: Temple
University Press

Publication Year: 2018

Price: Paperback \$10.35

ISBN: 978-1439915431

