

Mary McLeod Bethune

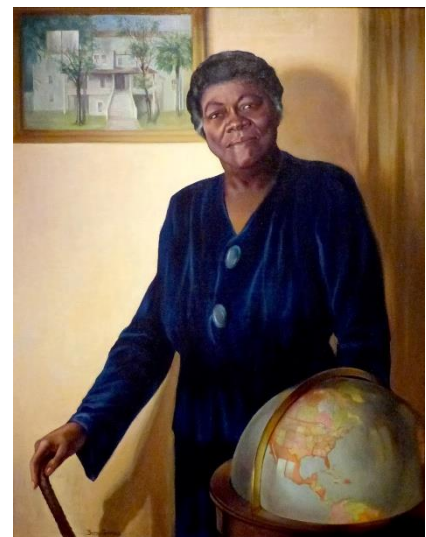
Mary McLeod Bethune used the power of education, political activism and civil service to advocate for racial and gender equality throughout the United States and the world. She had the unusual opportunity to attend school and to receive an education, an opportunity not common among African Americans following the Civil War. Starting her career teaching in the South, Bethune eventually established the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls. In 1931, the school became accredited by the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States, with its name officially changed to Bethune-Cookman College, at which time Bethune became the first African American woman to serve as a college president.



Mary McLeod Bethune and Eleanor Roosevelt were frequent collaborators during FDR's presidency.

Beginning at the state level, Bethune worked to establish programs that would fight to end segregated education, to improve healthcare for black children, and to help women use the ballot to advance equality. Her successes on a local level propelled her to the national stage when the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) elected her its eighth national president in 1924.

As President of a college, a civil rights champion and a leader of women, Bethune gained prominence which brought her national recognition as well as attention from presidents of the United States including Coolidge and Hoover. She served as an advisor to a number of commissions that advised the president on labor and youth employment as well as education. In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called her to Washington and asked Bethune to serve as a Special Advisor to the National Youth Administration. He was so impressed with her work that the following year, he created her own department within the agency and appointed the sixty-one year old Bethune its Director of Negro Affairs, at which time she became the first African American woman to head a federal agency. Also, by creating the Federal Council on Negro Affairs—also called the “Black Cabinet,” she and



Bethune had no physical need for the cane she holds in her portrait. She used it, she said, to give herself "swank."

other council members worked to increase opportunities for African Americans during the New Deal.

- *“It is our pledge to make a lasting contribution to all that is finest and best in America, to cherish and enrich her heritage of freedom and progress by working for the integration of all her people regardless of race, creed, or national origin, into her spiritual, social, cultural, civic, and economic life, and thus aid her to achieve the glorious destiny of a true and unfettered democracy.” - On the founding of National Council of Negro Women*



Bethune and her “boys” that comprised the “Black Cabinet” of advisors during FDR’s New Deal.

- *“There can be no divided democracy, no class government, no half-free county, under the constitution. Therefore, there can be no discrimination, no segregation, no separation of some citizens from the rights which belong to all. ... We are on our way. But these are frontiers which we must conquer. ... We must gain full equality in education ... in economic opportunity, and full equality in the abundance of life.” - Bethune’s response when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in **Brown v. Board of Education (1954)** that segregation of public schools was unconstitutional*
- [The Last Will and Testament of Bethune](#) (Take note of what she leaves to people after her passing.)