Dr. William (Bill) H. Cosby Jr.  
2004 Ford Freedom Award Scholar

Dr. Rod Paige

Dr. Benjamin E. Mays
2004 Ford Freedom Award Winner

Dr. Ruth Simmons

Dr. Kenneth S. Burnley

Dr. E. Sharon Banks

Dr. Kenneth S. Burnley

Mary Bethune

Frederick Douglass

Black History
Pioneers in the Classroom

Ford Motor Company Fund

Together, we designed a program that pays tribute to the lives and legacies of African Americans who have made tremendous contributions while facing often-overwhelming obstacles and challenges. Now in its sixth year, the Ford Freedom Award pays tribute to those leaders who helped shape America.

Since 1999, the Ford Freedom Award program has combined prominent African American historical references with contemporary relevance. The 2004 Freedom Award title is “The Educator and the Innovator.” This year’s program honors the late Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays as the Ford Freedom Award recipient. Dr. Mays’ achievements are respected around the world. He served for 27 years as president of Atlanta’s Morehouse College, one of the country’s leading black educational institutions, and he worked relentlessly to provide African American students with academic and social opportunities.

It was at Morehouse College that Dr. Mays taught and inspired the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the college’s most celebrated alumnus; Andrew Young, former mayor of Atlanta; and NAACP Chairman Julian Bond. In addition to his role as president of Morehouse, Dr. Mays taught mathematics, worked for the Office of Education, served as the president of the Atlanta School Board and presided peacefully over the desegregation of the Atlanta Public Schools. Dr. Mays also served as a Baptist church pastor, and was a church historian.

Comedian/actor Bill Cosby will join us this year as the Ford Freedom Award Scholar. Initially a high school dropout, Bill Cosby earned his equivalency high school diploma, bachelor’s, master’s and Ed.D degrees. As one of the most influential and gifted comics of his time, Bill Cosby dissolved racial barriers on television from the 1960s to the 1980s. He was the first African American to star in a primetime television drama series, “I Spy” (1965-68), in which he portrayed a secret agent. His greatest television success came from “The Cosby Show,” a family comedy featuring a doctor (Cosby). He conceived and produced the show, which aired from 1984 to 1992. He also hosted and provided some of the voices on the animated “Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids” and “The New Fat Albert Show.” Both of these series, which he also created and produced, won several awards for their educational value. His most recent effort “Little Bill” for Nickelodeon continues to receive high accolades from educators and critics, while reaching another generation of children. With such an exceptional career, Dr. Cosby is also known for his impressive art collection, humanitarian, civic and community efforts.

About the Museum

Founded in 1965, the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History is the second oldest and largest African American history museum in the United States. In addition, the building is an architectural wonder, a must-see attraction! The museum is home to more than 30,000 artifacts and archival materials. The core exhibition, “Of the People: The African American Experience,” begins its story with the cultural origins in Africa, takes the visitor through the “Middle Passage” and slavery and documents African American life to the present.

Ford Freedom Awards

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court ban on segregation in public schools.

Many victories in the 1960s civil rights movement were based on that May 17, 1954 ruling that declared separate schools for children of different races to be unconstitutional.

So it is fitting that the theme for the 2004 Ford Freedom Awards celebration is “Pioneers in the Classroom: African American Achievers in Education.” The February 19 event in Detroit will honor those who struggled against all odds to gain independence through knowledge.

A program called “The Educator and the Innovator” will honor two brilliant Americans who helped others gain educations: Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, former president of Morehouse College, and comedian Bill Cosby, one of America’s most loved actors and an education philanthropist.

Cosby will give the Ford Freedom Scholar’s Lecture, which is geared toward students, at 11 a.m. February 19 at the Masonic Temple in downtown Detroit. Scholarships are available for tickets and class transportation. Student tickets include a box lunch.

Ticket requests should be faxed to 313-494-5855. A representative from Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History will contact you to work out details. For more information, please contact the Help Line at 313-494-5893 or e-mail rmcmillon@maah-detroit.org.

Previous Ford Freedom Award Winners

Ford Motor Company in cooperation with the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit has honored:

1999 Former Detroit Mayor COLEMAN YOUNG and ANDREW YOUNG, former Atlanta mayor and U.S. ambassador to the United Nations
2000 Actor/singer/dancers SAMMY DAVIS JR. and GREGORY HINES
2001 Writers LANGSTON HUGHES and SONIA SANCHEZ
2002 Baseball greats JACKIE ROBINSON and REGGIE JACKSON
2003 Flight pioneers GENERAL DANIEL “CHAPPIE” JAMES JR., the nation’s first black four-star general, and DR. MAE C. JEMISON, former astronaut
DR. BENJAMIN E. MAYS
2004 Ford Freedom Award Winner

By Kathy Dahlstrom

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. is a role model for many. World leaders look to his life for inspiration and guidance. It’s hard to imagine the civil rights leader as a student seeking guidance from others. But many of King’s ideas came from Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, a college president who spent his life working for equal rights. As a result, Mays has been called “the schoolmaster of the civil rights movement.”

As a student at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, King considered the educator his “spiritual mentor” and “intellectual father.”

Mays headed Morehouse for 27 years. The son of former slaves—who had to fight to earn his own schooling—Mays dedicated himself to teaching others. He saw education as the way African Americans could take their rightful place in society. He told young black students he wanted them to be freer than he was—“freer intellectually, freer politically and freer economically.”

But the powerful speaker’s messages inspired audiences of all races. “The tragedy of life doesn’t lie in not reaching your goal,” he is often quoted as saying. “The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach.”

Benjamin Elijah Mays was born August 1, 1894, in Epworth, South Carolina. His father paid rent for their farm with bales of cotton.

A good pupil, he wanted more education than the four months a year the local school system allowed for African American students. From March through October they worked all day on farms.

Through his Baptist church, which encouraged his speaking ability, he went away to school. Because his father wanted him home working in the fields, he worked as a train porter to support himself.

After graduating as high school valedictorian, he decided to go north to college. He attended Virginia Union for one year and then transferred to Bates College in Maine, graduating in 1920 with honors.

He began graduate work at the University of Chicago School of Divinity but education was not as good as that of white co-workers, Mays devoted much of his career to improving education at black colleges.

In 1935 he earned his Ph.D in Christian theology and ethics from the University of Chicago. At the time he was dean of Howard University’s School of Divinity, which was later named for him.

Mays returned to Morehouse as president in 1940, spending the next three decades improving the school’s education and speaking out against racism. He pushed for schools—both black and white—to open their doors to members of all races.

Among Morehouse’s many famous graduates was King, who met Mays when high tests scores got him into the college at age 15. Not sure he wanted to follow his father into the ministry, King changed his mind after meeting Mays and another Morehouse professor, Dr. George Kelsey.

“Both were ministers, both deeply religious, and yet both were learned men, aware of all the trends of modern thinking,” King later wrote. “I could see in their lives the ideal of what I wanted a minister to be.”

Mays, who is credited with introducing the civil rights leader to Mohandas Gandhi’s ideas of nonviolent protest, spoke at King’s funeral in 1968. During the early 1960s, Mays helped integrate Atlanta by helping students organize peaceful protests around the city. At 75, he was elected to the Atlanta Board of Education and became the first black president to oversee such a large school system.

In his autobiography, “Born to Rebel,” he said he “cannot and would not apologize for being a Negro. We have a great history; we have a greater future ... we have a rendezvous with America.”

Mays, who wrote nine books, died in 1984 in Atlanta. Morehouse honored him by dedicating a Benjamin Elijah Mays National Memorial in front of its oldest dormitory.

“The tragedy of life doesn’t lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach.”

— Benjamin E. Mays
Comedian Bill Cosby isn’t joking when he talks about the value of education. That’s one thing this high school dropout takes very seriously.

Speaking at college commencements, Cosby tells graduates that African American leaders once were willing to give up their lives to learn to read and write.

“You’ve got to understand the power of this education,” he says.

Cosby, who returned to school to get a doctorate and now helps others gain educations through gifts to colleges, is this year’s Ford Freedom Award Scholar. He and his wife Camille have donated large amounts of money to higher education, especially to predominantly black colleges.

Their Hello Friend/Ennis William Cosby Foundation supports programs that help children who learn differently. It honors their late son, who despite dyslexia became a teacher working with special needs students.

Born in 1937, Cosby grew up in a housing project in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His mother raised him because his father was in the U.S. Navy and away for months at a time.

A natural comedian who made his teachers laugh, Cosby was bright enough to be in a class for gifted students. But his schoolwork came second to work and sports.

Instead of repeating 10th grade at Germantown High School, he dropped out. He joined the Navy, where he learned physical therapy and earned his high school equivalency diploma.

After four years in the service, he attended Temple University on a track and field scholarship. But a job telling jokes in a bar led him to drop out again to do comedy.

His television career began in 1965 when he was cast as an undercover CIA agent in the series “I Spy.” Intended for a white actor, the role was the first of many successful black professionals he played on TV.

He won three Emmys and got his own series, “The Bill Cosby Show,” when “I Spy” ended. But he didn’t hit it big again with audiences until “Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids,” an animated children’s show based on his childhood friends.

Worried about children’s television, the father of five went back to school in the 1970s. He earned a doctorate of education, writing a 242-page paper on using “Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids” in elementary school classes.

Over the years he has been outspoken about the quality of kids’ TV. He recalls getting a “dish” antenna that brought movies with violence, sex and people getting drunk into his Massachusetts farmhouse.

“It was cheaper to do a series than to throw out my family’s TV set,” said Cosby, who believes television should be used to educate people.

In 1984, Cosby returned to weekly television as Dr. Heathcliff Huxtable in “The Cosby Show.” The popular show based on his own family lasted until 1992.


After 1997, when his son was killed, Cosby created the “Little Bill” books designed to teach values to children. Over the years, he has written several books offering advice to college graduates, his view of fatherhood, and his latest on aging, “I Am What I Ate … And I’m Frightened!”

Like his comedy routines, the books are based on his own experiences. “We are funny, funny people,” says the 66-year-old, who won the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2002 for his contributions to American culture.
The journey to freedom begins with a single step. And over and over through history, that step for African Americans has been education.

Education can put people on the path to independence. Yet for years it was not easy for African Americans to learn.

In early U.S. history, education was denied African Americans in an effort to hold them back or keep them in the bondage of slavery. After the Civil War, obstacles were thrown up to keep African Americans from schools or opportunities. In the 20th century, local laws and court cases kept African Americans separate and unequal.

Yet African Americans persevered, often against heroic odds, to gain the knowledge they needed for independence. In doing so, they wrote one of the most inspiring stories of American history.

From earliest times African Americans saw education as a valuable tool.

In colonial America, free blacks like Paul Cuffe of Massachusetts started schools for their communities.

In 1818 free blacks in Philadelphia founded the Pennsylvania Augustine Society to educate “people of color” and schools for blacks were given public money and assistance.

At the same time African Americans started getting access to higher education.

In 1824 Dartmouth College opened admission to African Americans, and in 1833 Oberlin College in Ohio was established as an integrated, co-educational institution. By the time the Civil War started Oberlin’s student population was one-third African American.

Yet for every success in early America, there seemed to be an obstacle or setback.

Slave revolts like that led by Nat Turner in 1831 frightened plantation owners and they reacted by limiting information and schooling available to slaves.

When Quaker educator Prudence Crandell started a school for black girls in Connecticut, townspeople tried to burn the building down and gave whippings to girls caught attending.

In 1834 Connecticut made it illegal to provide free education to black students, and in 1838 Ohio made it illegal to educate black children at the expense of the state.

Despite the risks, some slaves and freed African Americans still managed to learn through private teachers, who offered instruction at great personal risk.

After the Civil War some states set up schools for African Americans, and sometimes local governments attempted to establish integrated schools.

The federal Freedmen’s Bureau was established in 1865 to provide help to freedmen for becoming self-sufficient.

Under the direction of the bureau the first black schools were established, including Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Yet all over the country courts and politicians found ways to restrict opportunities for black students.

“Black Codes” and “Jim Crow” laws threw up roadblocks for African Americans in all areas of life.

In a key ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a busing plan for Detroit and its suburbs.

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case of Plessy v. Ferguson that it was all right for railroads to have “separate but equal” facilities for blacks and whites. Many states quickly applied this idea to education.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People—the NAACP—challenged the idea that education could be separate and still be equal.

The most important of these cases was Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. Ruling in that case, the Supreme Court declared in May 1954 that racial segregation in education was wrong.

Yet a follow-up ruling by the high court gave states an opening to ignore its decision. The Court ruled in 1955 that public schools should be desegregated with “all deliberate speed”—but never defined exactly what that meant.

States that did not want to integrate argued that they were being “deliberate” when they were not taking action at all.

Whites in communities that opened public schools to black students created private “desegregation academies” so their children would not have to attend integrated classrooms.

One of the most controversial approaches to school desegregation was the use of busing. Busing plans were developed—often at the direction of federal courts—to bus black children to historically white schools and white children to historically black schools.

The goal was to achieve a racial mix, but the schools often were not in the same neighborhoods and sometimes the bus rides were long.

In cities like Detroit and Boston, battles over whether it was right or wrong to bus children away from neighborhood schools got huge national attention.

Lost in the debate was how good either the white or black schools were in many big city school districts.

And in one of the key rulings, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a busing plan for Detroit and its suburbs, declaring that desegregation plans could not be imposed across school district boundaries.

While busing achieved a greater racial mix in the short term, it increased hard feelings between black and white residents. It also sidetracked discussion of many problems that needed attention and led to a drop in the quality of education.

Many white residents chose to “vote with their feet” on the issue of school desegregation, leaving cities for homes in the suburbs.

Loss of taxes from people who moved increased inequalities that existed between city and suburban schools. In many cities, public school systems now have increasing percentages of minority students.

The problems of public city schools remain some of the hardest to solve.

1999 postage stamp recognized efforts in “Desegregating Public Schools.”

—— Parts of this story were based on the Hollister Kids essay on “Civil Rights” by Leigh Jackson.
Carter G. Woodson held the deep belief that African Americans needed to understand their past in order to be leaders in events of the present. He believed that black Americans should be proud of their heritage and that ALL Americans should understand it.

Because of his lifelong efforts, Americans now recognize African Americans' wide contributions to history and celebrate Black History Month every year in February.

A professor, writer, editor and publisher, Woodson is often called the "Father of Black History," and his idea to hold a week-long celebration of Black History in 1926 led to the Black History Month we have today.

He even was responsible for choosing February for the observance. Because news traveled slowly, he said, that was when slaves actually started hearing that the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution had been signed abolishing slavery in December 1865.

Carter Woodson knew first hand the hardships of African Americans. His parents had both been slaves, and were living in New Canton, Virginia when he was born in 1875.

Neither of his parents had been allowed to learn to read or write, but they gave him strong principles and the drive to succeed.

Although he missed much early school because he was helping on the farm, he mastered basic subjects on his own. When he finally enrolled in high school at age 20, he earned a diploma in less than two years.

Shortly thereafter, he was teaching high school himself, before going on to earn advanced college degrees from the University of Chicago and Harvard University.

In 1915 he founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History because he felt contributions of African Americans had been left out or distorted by history books of the time.

The group’s purpose was to promote black history, preserve historical writings and publish books about black life and history.

In 1916, Woodson started publishing The Journal of Negro History, which provided a leading voice on African Americans for the 30 years he led it.

Over his lifetime, he also served as a dean at Howard University and West Virginia State College and wrote a variety of landmark books, including "The Negro in Our History" and "The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861."

Before his death in 1950, he would credit his unschooled father for influencing his commitment to educating people about Black History.

His father, he wrote, taught him that "learning to accept insult, to compromise on principle, to mislead your fellow man, or to betray your people, is to lose your soul."

W.E.B Du Bois
Pioneer of Social Research
1868 - 1963

If one person could be a symbol of the power of education, that person might well be W.E.B. Du Bois.

Du Bois spent a lifetime thinking, speaking and teaching about the experience of African Americans, and his work made him the leading black opponent of discrimination in his time.

Though he lived more than a century ago, historians still use his pioneering research on black life as the basis for new studies.

A historian, writer, editor and sociologist, Du Bois is now considered the leading African American intellectual of the first half of the 1900s.

As a founder of the NAACP, and editor of its journal The Crisis, he is also a towering figure in U.S. history as an activist and fighter against discrimination.

William Edward Burghart Du Bois (pronounced du-BOYS) was born in Massachusetts 1868, the year that the U.S. Congress first gave African American males the right to vote.

An eager and inquiring student, he was published in his community’s newspaper by the age of 14 and graduated from high school early.

By age 20 he had earned his college degree from Fisk University in Tennessee. In 1895, he earned a Ph.D degree from Harvard University, the first African American in history to do so. His written thesis for that degree was on the slave trade.

Du Bois’ skill at research led to publication in 1899 of “The Philadelphia Negro,” the first sociological case study of a black community anywhere in the United States. In 1900 Du Bois won wide attention by predicting that “the color line” would be the biggest problem of the 20th century.

Three years later, he published his most famous book, “The Souls of Black Folk,” which took the bold view that African Americans should commit themselves to protest and “ceaseless agitation” in their demand for equality.

As Du Bois grew more frustrated at racial progress in the U.S., he became the first black American to express the idea of Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism is the belief that all people with roots in Africa have common interests and should work together to conquer prejudice.

Du Bois also believed in “cultural nationalism, encouraging the development of black literature and art and urging African Americans and others to see “Beauty in Black.”

In late life, Du Bois himself moved to Africa and became a citizen of Ghana. He died there in 1963 at age 95.

Education in the News

Carter Woodson and W.E.B. Du Bois both felt it was important to educate people about the culture and concerns of African Americans. In today’s newspaper, find a story or photo about African American leaders or life. Write a paragraph describing what you can learn about African American life in the community from reading the story or studying the photo.
The goal of newspapers is to educate the public. For a lifetime, Frederick Douglass used “the power of the press” to educate Americans about the injustice of slavery.

He founded an abolitionist newspaper The North Star that urged President Abraham Lincoln to free the slaves, and he won respect for the abilities of African Americans by publishing “The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave.”

He also won fame as a powerful speaker, author and activist for women’s rights. His beliefs about women and minorities were boldly written on the front page of The North Star, which declared “Right Is of No Sex—Truth Is of No Color.”

The man who won fame as Frederick Douglass actually was born Frederick Bailey in Talbot County, Maryland, in 1817.

He was the son of Harriet Bailey, a slave, and a white man. As a child and teenager, he worked as a slave on farms and plantations in the area. At the same time, he realized that the ability to read would be the key to freedom. With help from a master’s wife, black preachers and white playmates, he worked on his own to improve his reading, writing and speaking skills.

At age 21, he borrowed the identification of a free black man and escaped to New York City. Soon after, he was married to a free black woman from Baltimore named Anna Murray and they moved to Massachusetts.

There, Douglass discovered the anti-slavery abolitionist movement and read the abolitionist newspaper The Liberator.

He was recruited by abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and became widely known as an orator and speaker.

After publishing his autobiography in 1845, he fled to England, fearing capture and re-enslavement. As he spoke out against slavery in Europe, English Quakers raised money to purchase his freedom.

He returned home a free man in 1847, founded The North Star in Rochester, New York and ran that city’s branch of the Underground Railroad. When the Civil War began, he argued that its goal should be to abolish slavery.

After the Civil War he worked to pass the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that gave African Americans the right to vote.

He also worked hard to support to the women’s rights movement and backed efforts to achieve world peace.

Today, he is often called “the Father of the Civil Rights Movement”—not just for African Americans but for all Americans.

Hannah Crafts
First Female African American Novelist
18?? - 18??

No one knows much about Hannah Crafts. But when her novel was discovered in an auction in 2001, she created a sensation.

“The Bondswoman’s Narrative” is believed to be the first novel written by an African American woman. The 300-page manuscript of the book was discovered by Harvard African American scholar Henry Louis Gates.

Research and testing of the manuscript’s original inks and paper indicate it was written between 1853 and 1861.

The novel tells the story of a young woman who worked as a house slave in North Carolina before escaping to New Jersey.

Written with a sharpened goose quill on paper made from linen and cotton, the novel celebrates the quest for freedom and is filled with amazing plot twists and coincidences.

For 50 years, it had been owned by Howard University scholar and librarian Dorothy Porter Wesley, before Gates purchased it at an auction following Wesley’s death.

To make certain it was written by an African American woman and not a white person, Gates had the manuscript studied by experts all over the country.

A key to their conclusion it was authentic was the author’s descriptions of slaves. She wrote about them as people first, and only later talked about their race. White writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe almost always identified slave characters by color in the 1800s.

Published unedited to show the author’s original spellings and revisions, the book was donated by Gates to Yale University.

Gates says additional research will be needed to determine whether Hannah Crafts was the author’s real name. Research has made him certain that she was indeed a former slave.

Phyllis Wheatley
First Published African American Poet
1753 - 1784

Because education was withheld from African Americans, few were able to become writers in early America. One who did was Phyllis Wheatley.

Wheatley, who was captured and sold into slavery when she was just 7 or 8 years old, became the first African American to be published in America.

Her collected “Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral” created enormous excitement when it was published on September 1, 1773.

Born in Senegal, Wheatley was taken to Boston in a slave ship in 1761. John and Susannah Wheatley purchased the girl directly off the ship, and she became their house servant.

Wheatley’s literary career got its start when her masters found her writing on a wall with chalk. Instead of punishing her, they tutored her in reading and writing.

In 1767, her first poem was published in a newspaper. Six years later, after meeting the Countess of Huntingdon on a trip with the Wheatleys to London, her book of poetry was published. Soon after she returned from London, Wheatley was given her freedom. She married, but struggled financially. She became a servant later in life and was very poor when she died at age 31 in 1784.
EARLY SCHOOLS WERE PIONEERS

By Peter Landry

In early America, few people thought it was necessary, or even a good idea, to educate slaves or freed African Americans.

Teachers like John Chavis of Raleigh, North Carolina, risked community opposition—or worse—to teach African Americans the basics of reading and writing.

Chavis ran a secret night school to avoid problems like those of Margaret Douglass, who was imprisoned in Virginia for teaching black children.

Yet some far-thinking leaders saw the importance of offering the opportunities of education to African Americans.

The African Free School

In 1787—the year the young United States adopted its Constitution—the first African Free School was founded in New York City.

The founders were members of New York’s Manumission Society. “Manumission” means the same as “emancipation,” and the society’s goal was to abolish slavery and give slaves their freedom.

These pioneers in black education included two of the giants of early American politics—Alexander Hamilton, who would be the United States first secretary of the treasury, and John Jay, the first chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

The goal of the Free School was to create a “Negro intelligentsia,” according to the online African American Registry, an Internet website. Educating African Americans, the founders believed, would provide leaders for the growing black community, and leaders in the effort to abolish slavery.

Graduates of the school proved them right, becoming active in the leadership of the anti-slavery abolitionist movement in the early 1800s.

The African Free School began in one room, but after a fire it built a larger facility. The second school opened in 1815, and by 1830 it was teaching 500 students. While the first African Free School served only students in New York, others followed in Philadelphia, Boston, Connecticut and Rhode Island. By 1834, there were seven African Free Schools in New York, and eventually they became part of the public school system.

The Institute for Colored Youth

In the history of African American education, the Institute for Colored Youth holds a special place. It was founded in Philadelphia in 1837 at a time when few people supported education for African Americans—and many openly opposed it.

Later to become Cheyney University, the school was first set up as a high school “to instruct the descendants of the African Race in school learning, in the various branches of the mechanic arts, trades and agriculture, in order to prepare … and qualify them to act as teachers.”

Best of all, the school offered qualified black students a classical education free of charge.

The vision—and money—to form the school came from Philadelphia Quaker Richard Humphreys. Born on a plantation in the West Indies, he came to Philadelphia in 1764 and saw how freed African Americans were struggling in competition for jobs with new immigrants.

Quakers generally opposed slavery and supported freedom for black Americans. When race riots broke out in 1829 Humphreys wrote a will setting aside $10,000 to form the Institute for Colored Youth. It was a large amount of money at the time—about $200,000 in today’s dollars and one tenth of Humphreys’ entire estate.

In 1902 the Institute moved 25 miles west of Philadelphia to farmland owned by George Cheyney. The site increased the significance of the institution in African American history.

Like Humphreys, the Cheyneys and later owners the Hickmans were Quakers. Before the Civil War, members of the Hickman family were active in the anti-slavery abolitionist movement and were believed to have used their house as a stop on the Underground Railroad.

In 1913, the name of the Institution was changed to Cheyney State Teachers College. Today the school is Cheyney University and part of the Pennsylvania state system of higher education.

The 10,000 Cheyney alumni include “60 Minutes” TV journalist Ed Bradley, former U.S. Ambassador Joseph M. Segars and Robert Bogle, publisher of The Philadelphia Tribune, the oldest African American newspaper in America.

In October 2003 the school announced it was launching an archaeological survey of its 275-acre campus and buildings to document the site’s role in the abolitionist movement, the Underground Railroad and all of African American history.

EDUCATION IN THE NEWS

Education for African Americans has changed a great deal since the first schools were set up to teach them. Schools for all Americans are constantly changing today. Think about your experience in school over the last three years and write out two changes that have occurred in that time. Then think about things that will change in the next three years and write out two ideas. Finish by writing the beginning of a news story telling what has changed and what may soon change in your school.
As head of the Tuskegee Institute, Booker T. Washington was the nation’s leading black educator of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Yet when he was born a slave in 1856, it was illegal for black children in Virginia to be given an education.

“I had the feeling that to get into a schoolhouse and study would be about the same as getting into paradise,” he would write later.

After the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of the Civil War, Washington would get his chance.

Upon hearing African Americans had been made free, Washington's mother moved with her children to join their stepfather in West Virginia.

The young boy had to work, packing salt at a mine. But he started each day at 4 a.m., so that he could attend classes later in the day. He showed the same determination at 16, when he walked most of the 500 miles back to Virginia to enroll in a new school for black students called Hampton Institute.

Washington believed in hard work and the power of education. But he also believed that every black child should learn an industrial trade as well. Gaining economic skills, he stressed, would lead to independence more effectively than confronting white institutions over civil rights and politics.

Washington's moderate positions on racial politics earned him the nickname “the Great Accommodator,” even though he secretly offered support to anti-segregation groups.

Booker T. Washington was the first African American to dine with a president at the White House—with Theodore Roosevelt—and the first African American featured on a U.S. stamp—in 1940.

He is remembered today for helping African Americans win economic freedom long after they were legally free as citizens.

Mary McLeod Bethune
School Founder & National Leader
1875 - 1955

As a child growing up in South Carolina, Mary McLeod Bethune wanted to be a religious missionary in Africa. But after getting religious training at two Bible schools in the 1890s, she decided her services were needed closer to home.

She said she came to realize that “Africans in America needed...school just as much as Negroes in Africa. ...My life work lay not in Africa, but in my own country.”

In that life work, Mary McLeod Bethune would provide inspiration and education for African Americans and women throughout America.

She advised four presidents. She became the first African American woman to head a division of a federal agency. She formed the National Council of Negro Women and became a national spokesperson against discrimination.

Most of all, she established a school and education programs that continue to teach and reach young African Americans.

Mary McLeod Bethune was born in the Deep South in 1875. Her parents had been slaves before the Civil War and were not well off. Yet they saw that she got an education.

Eventually, she became a teacher, and after her husband died in 1904, she moved to Florida.

With just $1.50 in her pocket, she decided to open an institute to teach African American girls. She collected chairs and desks from the trash of Daytona Beach, and helped early students make ink from berries and pencils from burned sticks.

The school grew and succeeded, and in 1923 it merged with the Cookman Institute to form Bethune-Cookman College. She served as the college's president for two separate terms, while helping on such national issues as integrating the Red Cross relief agency.

On a statue in Washington, D.C., her own words sum up what she gave others:

“... I leave you a thirst for education,” she said. “I leave you respect for the use of power. ... I leave you the desire to live harmoniously with your fellow man. I leave you, finally, a responsibility for our young people.”

Charles Reason
Groundbreaker in College Teaching
1818 - 1893

When Charles Reason was 14, he was so advanced in math that he began teaching at the African Free School in New York City. With the salary he earned he hired tutors to enrich his education further, eventually graduating from McGrawville College.

Reason believed that advanced education was very important for African Americans, preparing them to become “self-providing artisans vindicating their people from the never-ceasing charge of a fitness for servile positions.”

In 1849, Reason became the first African American to hold a professorship at a predominantly white U.S. college—he taught Greek, Latin, French and math at New York Central College.

He left the position to become the first principal of Philadelphia’s Institute for Colored Youth. The school is now known as Cheyney University.

In 1855, Reason returned to New York to be a teacher and administrator, where he successfully led a campaign to outlaw school segregation in the city.

Education in the News

Mary McLeod Bethune opened up opportunities for hundreds of African American girls when she started her first school in Florida and became a role model for African American women everywhere. In the pages of newspaper, find an African American woman who is teaching or providing opportunities for others today. Design a newspaper public service ad to honor this woman and educate the public about her achievements. Display ads on a bulletin board and discuss.
**Tuskegee University**

Tuskegee University is the only institution of higher learning in the United States to be designated a National Historic Site and operated as a unit of the National Park System. That alone confirms the national significance of this university and its leaders.

Tuskegee rose to national prominence under the leadership of its founder, Booker T. Washington, who headed the institution from 1881 until his death at age 59 in 1915. Tuskegee was established in 1880 by act of the Alabama State Legislature and officially opened as the Normal School for Colored Teachers on July 4, 1881.

The date was symbolic for the independence Washington hoped to achieve for newly emancipated African Americans.

In 1882, Tuskegee contracted to purchase 100 acres of farmland, which formed the nucleus of the current campus. Tuskegee today is a state-related, independent institution of higher learning, offering degrees at the bachelor’s, master’s, professional and doctoral levels.

It gained university status in 1985 and has served students from more than 45 states and 29 foreign countries.

Tuskegee gained national attention under the leadership of Washington, who was a highly skilled fund-raiser as well as a counselor to American presidents.

In 1935 Dr. Frederick D. Patterson became president and oversaw the establishment of the Tuskegee’s School of Veterinary Medicine. Nearly 75 percent of black veterinarians in America are Tuskegee graduates.

Patterson also brought the Tuskegee Airmen flight training program to the Institute. The all-black squadrons of Tuskegee Airmen were highly decorated World War II combat veterans and pioneers in the struggles for civil rights for African Americans.

Patterson also is credited with founding the United Negro College Fund, which to date has raised more than $1 billion for student aid.

**Lincoln University**

In 1863 Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves, giving them independence and the opportunity to succeed. Since before Lincoln was president, Lincoln University has been giving African Americans education and the opportunity to succeed.

The university in southeast Pennsylvania was chartered in 1854, six years before Lincoln was elected president. First called the Ashmun Institute, the university was renamed Lincoln University in 1866 after the nation’s 16th president was assassinated.

The university, according to its eighth president, was the first founded anywhere specifically to provide college level “higher education in the arts and sciences for male youth of African descent.” Yet it has always enrolled non-black students as well, and since 1952 has admitted women.

Students trained at Lincoln have gone on to be leaders in all fields, all over the world. Thurgood Marshall, the first African American named a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, graduated in 1930. The poet Langston Hughes was there at the same time, graduating in 1929.

The first presidents of Nigeria and Ghana were Lincoln graduates in the 1930s, as was the first African American woman named a rear admiral in the U.S. Navy.

Seven alumni have gone on to found universities of their own, 35 have become college or university presidents, and during its first 100 years Lincoln graduated fully 20 percent of all black physicians in America.

Lincoln today is formally affiliated with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a state-related university with an enrollment of about 2,000 students.

**Morehouse College**

Morehouse College was founded just two years after the Civil War ended in the Deep South city of Augusta, Georgia.

First called the Augusta Institute, it was housed in the basement of Springfield Baptist Church, the oldest independent African American church in the United States (1787).

Not surprisingly, its early purpose was to prepare black men for the ministry and teaching.

Today, Morehouse College is the nation’s largest, private liberal arts college for African-American men and enjoys an international reputation for producing leaders who have influenced national and world history in all fields.

Prominent graduates include the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., filmmaker Spike Lee, former U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, and Maynard H. Jackson, the first African-American mayor of Atlanta.

Augusta Institute was founded by the Rev. William Jefferson White, a Baptist minister and cabinetmaker. In setting up the school, he drew guidance and support from Richard C. Coulter, a former slave from Augusta, and the Rev. Edmund Turney, organizer of the National Theological Institute for Educating Freedmen.

After operating in several sites, the college moved to its current campus in Atlanta in 1885. The campus, which has grown from 14 to 61 acres, includes a Civil War historic site at which Confederate soldiers resisted Union forces during the siege of Atlanta.

The appointment of John Hope as president in 1906 brought dynamic change to the college. The college’s first African American president, Hope expanded academic offerings and increased physical facilities, while challenging the view that education for African Americans should emphasize vocational and agricultural skills.

Under Hope’s leadership, the institution adopted the name of Morehouse College in honor of Henry L. Morehouse, the corresponding secretary of the Atlanta Baptist Home Mission Society.

Morehouse today enrolls approximately 3,000 students and confers bachelor’s degrees on more black men than any other institution in the world. It is the only historically black colleges or universities to produce three student winners of the prestigious Rhodes Scholarships.
When Ruth J. Simmons was a child in Texas, she remembers watching her mother iron “mountains of clothes” for others to help pay the bills.

It was tiring work, and boring, yet her mother paid careful attention to every detail. Every shirt collar, every button, was carefully pressed, because work wasn’t worthwhile unless she did her very best.

The values Ruth Simmons learned from her mother, and from her sharecropper father, set her on the road to education history.

Though no one her family knew had gone to college, she graduated summa cum laude from Dillard University in New Orleans, earned master’s and doctorate degrees from Harvard and was chosen the first African American to be president of an Ivy League university.

She was named president of Brown University in Rhode Island in November 2000, after five years as head of Smith College, one of the nation’s top women’s schools.

“I was intent on doing something productive and on being everything my parents taught me to be,” Simmons wrote in an essay about her childhood in 1998. “Their values were clear: Do good work; don’t ever get too big for your breeches; always be an authentic person; don’t worry too much about being famous and rich because that doesn’t amount to too much.”

Ruth Simmons overcame great odds to become one of the leading educators in the country.

She was the 12th child born to sharecroppers in the small East Texas town of Grapeland. She moved to Houston with her parents when she was old enough to go to school. Her father went to work in a factory and her mother worked as a maid and took in laundry.

Moving to Houston opened up education opportunities for Simmons and her brothers and sisters. In sharecropper communities, children often had to miss school to help their parents at harvest time.

Yet Simmons had high goals. She was such an outstanding student her high school teachers helped pay for her education at Dillard, and even gave her clothes to wear.

She chose to study the literature and culture of other countries in an effort to understand the prejudice she had experienced growing up in the South in this country.

“The neighborhoods I grew up in were brutally segregated,” she would write. “... The boundary between black and white was absolute.”

As a college educator, Simmons has worked tirelessly to open higher education to disadvantaged minorities and to celebrate African American culture.

In the 1980s she was director of African American studies at Princeton University, and she served two years as provost at African American Spelman College in Atlanta. At Smith she started Meridians, a journal focusing on the concerns of minority women.

Increasing opportunities for disadvantaged minorities at top colleges, she says, is “a matter of national salvation” for the future.

And she backed her words with action.

One of the first things she did at Brown was to install a blind admissions policy, so that all qualified applicants could attend regardless of their ability to pay.

**United Negro College Fund**

The motto of the United Negro College Fund is perhaps the most powerful message in all of African American education.

“A mind,” the motto declares, “is a terrible thing to waste.”

To promote black achievement and education, the Fund has spent more than 60 years raising money for deserving African American students.

It is the nation’s oldest and most successful minority assistance organization for higher education and to date has raised more than $1 billion for student aid.

The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) got its start in 1943, when the president of the Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) wrote an open letter to the presidents of the nation’s private black colleges.

President Frederick D. Patterson urged the presidents to “pool their small monies and make a united appeal to the national conscience” on behalf of black students.

Patterson’s idea struck a chord, and on April 25, 1944, the UNCF was incorporated with 27 member colleges.

Today the UNCF raises operating funds for 39 member colleges and universities, provides financial assistance to deserving students, and works to increase access to technology for students and faculty at historically black colleges and universities.

Member institutions include Bethune-Cookman College in Florida, Clark Atlanta University in Georgia, Fisk University in Tennessee, Morehouse College in Georgia, Spelman College in Georgia, Stillman College in Alabama, Talladega College in Alabama, Tuskegee University in Alabama, Wilberforce University in Ohio and Xavier University in Louisiana.

**Education in the News**

The motto of the United Negro College Fund is a strong message about the importance of education. In teams, brainstorm a list of possible mottos describing the best or most important things your school offers. Pick the one you like best and write a letter to the editor of the newspaper urging the school to adopt your motto. Make sure your letter is in the proper form for a business letter.
In the history of African Americans, laws passed by legislatures and local governments have had a huge impact on education opportunities. Early laws made it difficult or impossible for African Americans to learn, while later laws and court rulings opened doors that had been closed for generations. The skill of lawyers helped both advance and hold back African Americans. In 1741, for example, a law in South Carolina prohibited teaching slaves to write, and one passed 10 years later prohibited slaves in the state from learning about medicines. In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln freed slaves in southern states, and in 1865 the U.S. Congress established the Freedmen’s Bureau that led to the creation of black schools in areas that had never had them. That same year, however, Southern state governments started passing “Black Codes” laws restricting rights of freed African Americans. In 1883, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Civil Rights Act of 1875 and declared that the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution did not prohibit discrimination by private individuals or businesses. This later led to segregation in public education. Other court rulings established or endorsed discrimination. An 1899 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a Georgia school board’s decision to close a free black public school due to budget problems, while continuing to operate two free white public schools.

In 1908 the nation’s High Court upheld a Kentucky law forbidding interracial instruction at all schools and colleges in the state, and in 1927 it ruled that a Mississippi school district could require a Chinese-American girl to attend a segregated black school rather than a white school. Two of the most famous Supreme Court decisions in history affected black education for years. The 1896 the court ruling in the Plessy v. Ferguson case established the “separate but equal” idea that kept many schools racially segregated for more than 50 years. In 1954, the Supreme Court reversed that ruling, declaring that separate schools had not given equal opportunity to African Americans, but had been a way for communities to discriminate.

Two of the most famous Supreme Court decisions in history affected black education for years. The 1896 the court ruling in the Plessy v. Ferguson case established the “separate but equal” idea that kept many schools racially segregated for more than 50 years. In 1954, the Supreme Court reversed that ruling, declaring that separate schools had not given equal opportunity to African Americans, but had been a way for communities to discriminate. In more recent times, laws promoting “affirmative action” have increased college and job opportunities for African American students—and caused debate and controversy when white students claimed this was “reverse discrimination.”

Homer Plessy was a shoemaker, but he became one of the most important civil rights activists in U.S. history. More than 60 years before Rosa Parks, Plessy challenged racial segregation on public transportation and launched a case that defined racial attitudes for more than half a century. When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against Homer Plessy, it gave a powerful weapon to those who wanted to keep whites and blacks segregated by race. The Court’s endorsement of the principle of “separate but equal” was used across the country to hold African Americans back in education, jobs and opportunities. Homer Plessy’s case began in 1892 when he was arrested for sitting in a whites-only railroad car run by the East Louisiana Railroad Company. Plessy’s refusal to “retire to the colored car” challenged an 1890 law passed in Louisiana that required public transportation be segregated by race.

The 29-year-old Plessy had been chosen to challenge the law by Louisiana’s Comité des Citoyens—or Citizens Committee—an organization of prominent African-Americans who had already raised funds for his legal defense. The mixed-race Plessy was chosen by the committee, New Orleans writer Keith Weldon Medley would explain later, because he was “white enough to gain access to the train and black enough to be arrested for doing so.”

After his arrest, Plessy went to court, claiming the state law violated the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, which banned slavery and gave African Americans rights as citizens. When Judge John Howard Ferguson ruled against him, the case was appealed to higher courts.

In 1896 the case reached the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled against Plessy by an 8-1 majority. The resulting doctrine of “separate but equal” institutionalized segregation in the United States until 1954, when it was overturned by the case of Brown v. Board of Education. The case was especially important to education, because it allowed communities to establish separate schools for black and white students. Though the ruling called for “separate but equal” facilities, black schools often were underfunded and more poorly equipped than those offered whites.

Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan had predicted that in 1896. Harlan, who was the only justice to vote in Plessy’s favor, argued that forced segregation labeled African Americans as inferior and violated the principle of equality under the law. After the ruling in his case, Plessy fell out of public view and worked as a life-insurance collector. He died in 1925 at the age of 61.
Brown v. Board of Education

The case we know as Brown v. Board of Education is the nation’s most significant milestone for African American education.

In it, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the principle of “separate but equal” discriminated against African American children in U.S. schools and violated the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

As a result, it was ordered that America’s public schools be desegregated with “all deliberate speed.”

In the field of public education, the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place,” Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in the court’s unanimous ruling. “Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”

The landmark decision was handed down 50 years ago this spring, in May 1954. The debate over schools had been building for years before that.

At the center of discussion was whether the Supreme Court had been correct when it ruled in the Plessy v. Ferguson case that segregation of the races did not violate the 14th Amendment’s guarantee of equal protection under the law.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the NAACP had decided to challenge that idea in a series of court cases.

The effort was led by Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall, who later would make history as the first African American to be appointed to the Supreme Court.

As early as 1935, the NAACP had begun challenging segregation in graduate schools, colleges and secondary schools, winning several key successes.

Marshall believed that the fight against discrimination would be most effective if it focused on education.

In 1948 the NAACP endorsed that idea. In 1949, Marshall and the NAACP filed suit challenging the segregation in public schools in Clarendon County, South Carolina, and in 1951, the Brown suit was filed against the School Board of Topeka, Kansas.

Those cases would eventually be considered jointly by the Supreme Court with suits from Delaware, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

The court’s decision to join the cases was significant, for it recognized that school segregation was a nationwide issue, not just one in the South.

The Brown suit reached the Supreme Court after a three-judge panel of the U.S. District Court unanimously ruled that “no willful, intentional or substantial discrimination” existed in Topeka’s schools.

In 1952 the U.S. Supreme Court announced it would hear arguments in the case and the four others on school segregation.

After two rounds of arguments, the Court ruled in 1954 that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

School districts in some states began desegregating schools almost immediately. State legislatures in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina and Virginia, however, adopted resolutions that declared the court’s decision “null, void and no effect.”

In May 1955 the Supreme Court ordered that schools be desegregated with “all deliberate speed,” but disagreement about what that meant allowed some southern states to delay putting it into effect.

The delays were one of the reasons the civil rights movement gained strength in the late 1950s and 1960s.

Affirmative Action

Affirmative action programs were created in the early 1970s to increase the number of minorities and women in schools and jobs from which they were previously excluded.

More recently, however, the policy has been criticized by some white Americans as “reverse discrimination” that treats non-minorities unfairly.

In 2003, cases involving the admissions policies of the University of Michigan and its law school brought the issue before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The nation’s highest court ruled that colleges could continue considering race as they seek diversity in the students they accept, but struck down a point system that was used to give minorities a numerical preference.

The Supreme Court previously had ruled that universities could not use quotas to set aside an exact number of places for minority students.

The newest rulings supported the idea that promoting diversity through admissions is a good thing for colleges and universities. They allow universities to consider race each year when choosing which high school students they will accept. But they prohibit setting exact numbers when rating or accepting students.

Affirmative action programs were first set up to correct past injustices that denied African Americans and women opportunities to attend top universities, or to work in certain professions.

While promoting diversity in schools and jobs is considered a benefit to America, so is ensuring fair competition in situations where performance, merit and achievement can be measured.

In the Michigan cases the Court said that the university violated the U.S. Constitution because it denied them admission while accepting black and Hispanic students with similar or lesser records.

Lawyers for the three students said that admitting the minority students in an effort to increase diversity among undergraduate and law classes violated the rejected students’ constitutional right to equal protection under the law.

While the Supreme Court upheld the goals of affirmative action, the vote for non-specific consideration of race was close at 5-4.

The vote against an admissions point system was 6-3.

The division on the court reflects the division on affirmative action throughout the country.

Opponents vow to continue challenging the issue in court.

Education in The News

For decades African Americans and women were denied chances to work in certain professions or to attend universities.

Affirmative action programs were established by the government to correct past injustices. But does giving preference to women and minorities discriminate against white and male candidates? Stage a class debate, and then vote on the issue. Write a newspaper editorial expressing your view.

Fairness is at the base of the civil rights movement. Look through the newspaper for a story that shows fairness being achieved, or not achieved. Write a paragraph stating how fairness was achieved, or could be achieved, based on the story.
Before Rod Paige took over as dean of education at Texas Southern University, he wasn’t afraid to get down and dirty when it came to team-building.

He was the university’s head football coach as well as a classroom professor.

The skills he learned from football at the historically black university would serve him well in a career that made him the nation’s highest ranked educator.

“A lot of being a coach is the ability to get people to work as a team and go in one direction,” one friend explains. “The goal is always to win.”

As U.S. Secretary of Education, Paige had the challenge of getting all of the nation’s schools to work together to make learning more effective for children.

As education secretary, he had the job of making the No Child Left Behind program a success.

The program promoted by President Bush seeks to improve student achievement, tighten up testing, empower parents and find new and talented teachers to lead the nation’s classrooms.

It was a huge task, and it fell squarely on Paige’s shoulders.

Not that the 70-year-old Paige had ever shied away from a challenge.

Before taking the secretary’s position, he was superintendent of the Houston Independent School District in Texas.

The Houston district is the seventh biggest in the country, and when Paige took over it had some very big problems.

In his seven years there, he tackled student achievement, school accountability, racial divisiveness and dropout rates, just for starters.

He won support from both parents and the business community and used his position to push his belief that education is a civil right as important as the right to vote or to be treated equally.

In Paige’s life, his family did not always have its civil rights.

He was born in Monticello, Mississippi, in a time when racial segregation kept African Americans and white residents apart.

His father was a school principal and his mother a librarian, so he quickly came to value education.

After high school he earned a bachelor’s degree from Jackson State University in Mississippi and master’s and Ph.D. degrees from Indiana University. He has been a teacher, a school board member and a college dean.

He is the first school superintendent ever to serve as U.S. Secretary of Education and the first African American.

The National Education Association is the most powerful voice for teachers in America.

With 2.7 million members, this national teacher union plays a large role in every debate about public education.

That suited NEA president Reg Weaver just fine.

For more than 30 years Weaver has been speaking up and battling for better public schools, especially those in low-income areas.

As NEA president, he is now one of the country’s most prominent African American labor leaders as well.

Reg Weaver, who was elected NEA president in 2002, has never avoided tough assignments.

When he decided to enter teaching, he focused on special education for the physically challenged as his college major. When he moved on to the classroom, he chose to spend most of his career teaching science in middle school—one of the most challenging age groups to reach.

He never let it get him down. With a big and enthusiastic personality, he earned success with students and honors like Ebony Magazine’s Influential Black Educators Award.

Today he is a nationwide ambassador for public education, and head of the nation’s largest professional employee organization.

He speaks on behalf of teachers on such issues as innovation in the classroom, the No Child Left Behind program and the need for parents to play a strong role in their children’s schools.

He writes an education column carried in newspapers across the country and is a prominent presence on the Internet.

A native of Danville, Illinois, Weaver is just the fourth African American to serve as president of the 147-year-old NEA.

While that gives him a special place in NEA history, his views are very much like those of the organization’s founders in 1857, before the Civil War.

The goal of the NEA, the founders declared, was to “elevate the character and advance the interests of the profession of teaching.”

In words and actions, Reg Weaver has been doing that for a lifetime.

Reg Weaver earned his undergraduate college degree at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois, and his master’s degree at Roosevelt University in Chicago.

**Education in the News**

Rod Paige and Reg Weaver are national leaders and spokesmen on education issues. Who are the top leaders in education in your area? Find and read a story about an education leader in today’s newspaper. Then draw an editorial cartoon offering your opinion about what the leader is doing, or what you would like to see the leader do. Give your cartoon a creative title and share.
RHODES SCHOLARS: LEADERS OF THE FUTURE

African Americans always have used education to become leaders in the past. Young African Americans today are using education to become leaders of the future.

Some of the most promising future leaders are honored each year by selection as Rhodes Scholars. The finest college students in America compete for these scholarships, which offer two years of study at Oxford University in England. African American students are making their mark in this worldwide program in remarkable and inspiring ways.

Here are some recent African American Rhodes Scholars:

**Christopher Elders, Morehouse College**
**B.A. Degree, Political Science**

Named a Rhodes Scholar in 2001, Elders studied politics all over the world before heading to Oxford to study international relations. While in London his junior year, he volunteered for the British Labour Party and he later traveled to Taiwan to study East Asian politics. He also interned at the U.S. State Department in the office of the deputy secretary and won a National Science Foundation fellowship to study urban youth violence. He was an active member of Morehouse's Student government and hopes for a career in foreign policy or elective office.

**Jasmine Marie Waddell, Brown University**
**B.A. Degree, Political Science**

As an African American woman, Jasmine Waddell wanted to learn all she could about the influence of race on politics. As a college student she won a grant to work on urban studies and was selected to make a presentation at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education. While at Brown University she was elected president of the student body and honored for service to the community. Chosen a Rhodes scholar in 1998, she studied the politics of South Africa after apartheid during her time at Oxford. She plans a career in civil rights, law or public policy.

**Julian J. Harris, Duke University**
**B.A. Degree, Medical Ethics and Health Policy**

Julian Harris wants to make a difference in the health of the world's people. He is fascinated by how different cultures deliver health care and how they determine what is appropriate treatment or practice. While in college he learned to speak both Spanish and Kiswahili so that he could travel to Guatemala and Tanzania to research the differences in medical practices in the two cultures. While in Tanzania he also volunteered on the pediatric and internal medicine wards of a local hospital. Named a Rhodes Scholar in 1999, he said he planned to study politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford. He hopes for a career in international or U.S. health, medical ethics or human rights work.
As a University of Michigan track and field star, Kenneth Burnley had to keep running when things got tough.

Today that’s what the former coach hopes Detroit Public School District will do as it struggles with change.

“We’ll get where we need to be but only if we also stay the course and work the plan to save our children,” the district’s chief executive officer said in his 2003 “State of the School District” address. “All of our children. Not just some.”

Despite dropping enrollment and cuts in state aid, Burnley is moving ahead with plans to improve Detroit schools. He is determined to “build brighter futures” for the district’s 160,000 students.

“Our mission is to create an environment where Detroit students can truly reach their highest potential with the help of involved parents,” he says.

Once a Detroit student himself, Burnley graduated from Mumford High School in 1960.

While on a full athletic scholarship at the University of Michigan—where he earned bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degrees—he set records as a sprinter and quartermiler. In 1968 he became an assistant coach at the university, working with student athletes and Olympic runners.

After teaching in several Michigan districts, Burnley became a school administrator in the public schools of Ypsilanti. He was assistant superintendent for the Waverly Board of Education and superintendent of Fairbanks, Alaska schools.

In Colorado in 1993, he was named the National Superintendent of the Year as superintendent of Colorado Springs District No. 11 Public Schools.

His three years as CEO in Detroit have not been easy. But change takes time, Burnley asserts.

“We’ll all reap the rewards of all the hard work we’ve undertaken together, if we stay the course and don’t waver,” he says firmly.

It was hard for African Americans to get teaching jobs when John W. Porter graduated from Albion College in 1953. So he took a job as a janitor in a Lansing, Michigan, school, worked on his master’s degree and waited.

Before the year was out, the district changed its hiring policy and he was teaching junior high English and social studies.

“When one is trying to beat the odds, you have to work harder and be better prepared than the people you are competing against,” said Porter, who went on to become Michigan’s superintendent of schools and president of Eastern Michigan University.

“You have to be prepared when the door opens.”

Porter opened many doors during his distinguished career in education. He was the first black professional hired by the state education department, starting out as a researcher and becoming the nation’s first African American superintendent of schools.

His many accomplishments include setting up the Guaranteed Student Loan Program for college students and the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), which is used to test students throughout the state.

Meanwhile, he attended Michigan State University, earning a master’s degree in counseling and guidance, then went on to earn a doctorate in higher education administration.

For 10 years he was president of Eastern Michigan University, where the College of Education building is named for him.

In 1989 he was asked to help out Detroit Public Schools as temporary superintendent. Porter balanced its budget and came up with an improvement plan for the struggling district.

He retired to head the Urban Education Alliance, a nonprofit foundation set up to help urban school districts increase student achievement and school effectiveness. He later closed the foundation to work on a book about his ideas on education reform.

An award-winning college basketball player who wanted to be an architect, the Indiana native is glad he dedicated his life to schools instead.

“Education is the central piece of a quality life,” Porter said.

Dr. John W. Porter made history in education. Porter was the nation’s first African American superintendent of schools. In the newspaper, find an African American today who is making a mark in education or another field. Write a short paragraph explaining the significance of what this modern African American pioneer is doing.