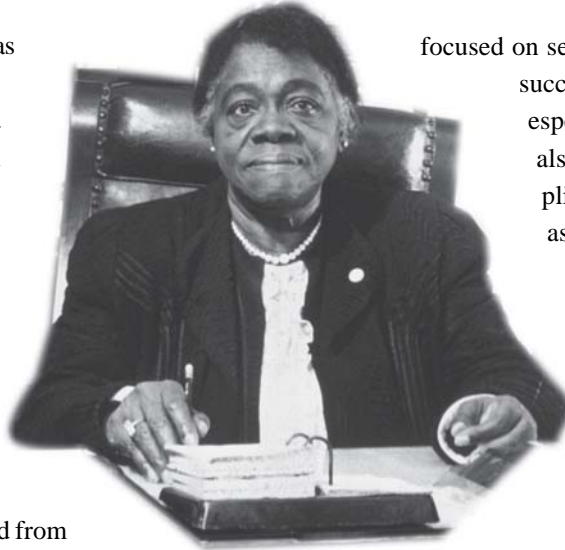


# Mary McLeod Bethune

**Educator**

**Mary McLeod Bethune** was born in Maysville, South Carolina, on July 10, 1875. As a child, she worked in the cotton fields with her 16 siblings and her parents. Bethune had a passion for education, and even as a young child she knew that she wanted to be a teacher. She was a dedicated student and received a scholarship to Scotia Seminary in North Carolina. In 1895, she graduated from



Chicago's Moody Bible Institute. She also married her husband and had a son. The family moved to Florida, where Bethune focused on her lifelong dream of starting a school.

In 1904, Bethune realized her dream and opened the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls. This school is now known as Bethune-Cookman College. Bethune was the school's president from 1904 to 1942 and 1946-1947. In this leadership role, she was a tireless and passionate fundraiser for the school.

Bethune was also a social activist. In 1935, she started the National Council of Negro Women. This organization

focused on securing rights and opportunities for success for all African Americans, especially women. She and the Council also became deeply concerned with the plight of the Jews in Nazi Germany and asked President Roosevelt to intervene.

In addition, Bethune was the president of the National Association of Colored Women as well as a representative to various national education, child welfare, and home ownership conferences.

Bethune gained the respect and admiration of many U.S. presidents. She became an adviser to five presidents and counted President Franklin Roosevelt among her personal friends. She served in many different capacities at the national level, including Special Consultant to the National Youth Administration, Director of Negro Affairs for the National Youth Administration, Consultant to the U.S. Secretary of War, and Consultant on Interracial Affairs and Understanding for the United Nations.

Bethune died in 1955 at the age of eighty.

## Activities

1. Imagine that you were Mary McLeod Bethune and that you were giving advice to President Eisenhower about what he should do regarding civil rights for African Americans in the 1950s. What would you tell him?
2. Imagine that you were able to start your own school as Mary McLeod Bethune did. Write a one-page description of your school. Where would it be located? What kinds of teachers would you hire? What kinds of courses would be taught at your school? What kinds of students would be allowed to attend? Discuss why you made the choices that you did.