

Negro Self-Help

Booker T. Washington

Table of Contents

<u>Negro Self-Help</u>	1
<u>Booker T. Washington</u>	2

Negro Self-Help

Booker T. Washington

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.
<http://www.blackmask.com>

FROM time to time in the past a great deal of matter has been furnished to the public, with the praiseworthy purpose of portraying the individual struggles and sacrifices of colored youths to secure an education. These efforts of struggling young men and women, with no inspiration in family tradition and fortune, and with little or no money with which to secure the knowledge they crave, is one of the most encouraging as well as pathetic features I have come across in my educational work during the past twenty years. As a hopeful indication of race character, and I may safely so describe it, it must be of peculiar interest to the average American interested in the Negro people.

On the other hand, much matter has also been furnished the public concerning the aid given the Negro race by philanthropic white people; attention is also frequently directed to the volume of money expended for the education of the Negro by State and municipal governments, the proceeds of land grant funds and of common taxation.

I do not think that the public has been sufficiently informed of what the Negro himself has been doing during the past forty years, and is doing now, toward his own education thru the religious organizations controlled by him.

Before dwelling upon this principal point, however, I wish to direct attention here to several minor ways of more or less importance in which the Negro is constantly displaying the quality of self-help — the most important and significant force in the uplift of any person or race, the absence of which must always be regarded as a fatal defect of character.

First, then, it is well to say that there are very few orphan asylums anywhere for Negro children. Possibly in nine or ten cases Negro families care for the orphans of their race in the neighborhoods where they reside. A child is not left many hours without parents before it strays into some family, or, more often, is sought out by some friend, and, without legal formality, soon becomes a real part of the family. Because of this custom one finds very little suffering among Negro children. In the Southern States the masses know little about hospitals. The sick and unfortunate are cared for by secret and fraternal societies, by the churches or by individuals. A second form of self-help, which is increasing year by year, is the voluntary taxation of Negro communities for the purpose of extending the public school term, often from one to three months; that is, these months are added to the regular public school term.

I could name other forms of self-help that are equally significant and praise-worthy.

But to return to the main point. Of the more than eight millions of colored people in the United States, it is estimated that two-thirds of the adults are members of some church. The great body of them are either members of the Baptist Church, or of some branch of the Methodist Church. The Methodists are divided into four groups or branches, namely: the African Methodist Episcopal, the A. M. E. Zion, the Colored Methodist, and those belonging to the main body of the Northern Methodist Church. Besides, in all the Southern States, and in some States outside of the South, there are Presbyterian, Congregational and Episcopal churches, and a few other denominations — including Catholics — not under the Methodist or Baptist groups, all contributing something toward the expenses of the schools and colleges.

The plan for securing money from the colored people thru their churches varies according to the location and conditions surrounding the people, as well as the customs and laws of the church. For example, in the case of the Baptists, there is at least one institution, usually called college or university, in each Southern State, supported in part or in whole by the pennies and dollars of the masses. In Alabama, for illustration, there is what is known as the Alabama Baptist Colored University, at Selma. Last year the colored people in Alabama contributed to the work of this institution \$9,441.93, exclusive of student board and tuition. The property is owned by colored people; their money created it, with the exception of a few gifts from outside sources. There is at least one such

Negro Self-Help

school in each of the Southern States. The detailed circumstances surrounding them may vary, but the general plan is the same.

In the case of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, there are institutions that owe their existence almost wholly to the small gifts of the churches and individuals of the denomination. Last year \$51,601.86 was raised by this denomination for the purposes of education. The oldest and largest of these institutions is the Wilberforce University, at Wilberforce, O. Altho this institution is now somewhat generously assisted by the State of Ohio, it was for years supported almost wholly by the colored people.

Let me use another illustration as showing what the African Methodist Episcopal Church is doing in the South. There is a school in Atlanta, Ga., called Morris-Brown College, that was organized only a few years ago. It now owns a very valuable property and has a large student body. The college was built and is supported, to a large extent, by money raised by the church membership. For 1904 the institution received from all sources for running expenses, \$15,985.58, of which the churches in that connection in the State of Georgia contributed \$6,200, the third Sunday in September being set apart for the taking of offerings for the educational work; and \$850.50 was raised thru the industrial department. The remainder was contributed thru other channels of the church, and mostly all of it by Negro people.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church has ten institutions of learning, of which Livingston College, at Salisbury, N. D., is the most important. The Corresponding Secretary of Education of the Zion Church reports that the money collected last year amounted to \$20,706.54, which went to all the schools of the church to supplement their other revenues for running purposes.

Thru the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the colored membership contributed for education for the current year, \$19,251.73. For the ten years, 1896-1905, inclusive, \$79,228.13 was contributed.

The Negro Baptists support quite a number of educational institutions, and to carry on the work the churches raised during the past year \$85,888.18.

To sum up, we find that the A. M. E. Church contributed \$51,601.86 for educational purposes last year; the A. M. E. Zion Church, \$20,706.54; the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, \$45,000; the Methodist Episcopal, \$15,926.40; the Baptists, \$85,888.18; making the total, \$218,622.98, for only two branches of the Christian Church. If the contributions of the Negro Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Episcopalians, etc., be approximated, we should have probably an annual contribution for educational purposes by the Negro Christians of \$250,000.

Within the past ten years, it is safe to say, according to these figures, that the Negro in America has contributed at least \$2,000,000 thru his churches toward his own education. This, I think, all fair-minded people will agree, is a pretty good record for a race of people which was in slavery forty years ago. And these figures, of course, do not include the amounts which colored people are contributing constantly to local and independent institutions. The Tuskegee Institute, for example, receives contributions from colored people annually, and the same is true of other institutions which have no direct church connection.

TUSKEGEE, ALABAMA.