

Margaret Murray Washington

Margaret Murray Washington (March 9, 1865 - June 4, 1925) was the principal of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, which later became Tuskegee University. She was the third wife of Booker T. Washington. She was inducted into the Alabama Women's Hall of Fame in 1972.^[1]

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Biography

Margaret Murray was born on March 9 in Macon, MS, in the early 1860s. Her birth year is unknown as her tombstone says she was born in 1865, but the 1870 census lists her birth year as 1861. She was one of ten children born to sharecroppers; an Irish immigrant father and an African-American mother, a washerwoman and possibly former slave. Her father died when she was seven, and the next day she moved to live with a Quaker couple by the name of Sanders. They encouraged her to become a teacher, one of the few occupations available to women at the time.

As a child Murray spent much of her time reading and quickly excelled in school. By the age of fourteen, she was so advanced in her studies that the school offered her a teaching position. Determined to further her teaching career, at the age of nineteen, Murray enrolled in Fisk University, where she completed the college preparatory course in five years and college in four.

Marriage

It was at Fisk that Murray first met Booker T. Washington. Regarding her as a model student, Washington asked her to take over the position of Lady Principal, formerly held by his deceased second wife. By 1890, Murray was writing to

Margaret Murray Washington



Washington in 1915

Born	Margaret Murray March 9, 1865
Died	June 4, 1925 (aged 60)
Known for	anti lynching activism
Spouse(s)	Booker T. Washington



Margaret James Murray

Washington to express her deep feelings for him. He proposed the following year and, after some hesitation, Murray accepted Washington's proposal and they were married in 1893. Murray and Washington shared a home with Washington's relatives and his children from his previous marriage until "The Oaks", the homestead which was built for their family, was constructed in 1901. Washington was reluctant to share his feelings with Murray, and often left her to tend his children while he was away on business. Though Washington never got over the loss of his first two wives, he believed that Margaret provided a well-ordered household, and the two were generally happy with their marriage. Margaret wrote Washington's speeches and she helped her husband in expanding the school and traveled with him on his tours and speaking engagements.^[2]

Career

During her tenure as Lady Principal of Tuskegee, she also created the Tuskegee Woman's Club and merged local organizations with women clubs to help improve the values and liberation of womanhood in African-American women of the Jim Crow south. In 1895 she gave an influential speech titled "Individual Work for Moral Elevation" at the First National Conference of the Colored Women of America.^[3] She is credited with co-founding the National Association of Colored Women in 1896.^[4] She founded country schools, taught women how to live and attend to their homes, worked for the improvement of prisons, started the Mt. Meigs School for boys and an industrial school for girls at Tuskegee, and constantly worked for the betterment of the poor and neglected. In 1912, she became the fifth president for the National Association of Colored Women.

After the death of her husband in 1915, Washington remained a powerful source in the women's liberation movement and in improving the educational system for African Americans. She became deeply involved in domestic education for mothers in Tuskegee and in supporting schools for children at surrounding plantations.

As with the programs advocated by her husband, Margaret Murray Washington focused on domestic and vocational education. She became involved in interracial cooperation and participated in the path-breaking Memphis Women's Inter-Racial Conference in 1978. [1920?]

Death

Margaret Murray Washington remained at "The Oaks" until her death in 1925. She is buried at the university cemetery, adjacent to her husband's burial site.

Legacy

In 1972, Washington was inducted into Alabama's Women Hall of Fame for her compassion, intelligence and independence of judgement which led her to be among the greatest women and African American leaders of her century.

M.M. Washington Career High School in Washington, DC was named in her honor. The school closed in 2008. Also named for her is a building on the Tuskegee campus.^[5]

Activist for anti-lynching

Around the 1890s early 1900's many black people of the south were being targeted as victims of lynching. With the increasing numbers of lynching going on with blacks many organizations started to form during this period. In 1895 a huge group of black women formed the National Federation of Afro-American Women and Margaret Murray was elected the president.

This organization did an array of jobs from helping women in the south that were trying to buy a house to opening day care giving women an opportunity to go to work. By putting together the NFAA and the Washington Colored League formed the National Federation of Afro-American Women. Washington was a firm believer that many of the racial issues could be fixed through interracial cooperation. She believed that not everyone was out to harm people of color.

In 1920 a National Association of Colored Women Conference was held in Tuskegee, Alabama. The main topic on the agenda was lynching. Many of the recently founded anti-lynching organizations in attendance expressed their support in a bill that defined lynching as an act of "murder", and that the killer had to suffer repercussions for their actions. Two important white women in attendance, Carrie Parks Johnson and Sara Estelle Haskins, from the Southern Methodist Women's Committee, were invited to Washington's home. Both women were shocked at the huge amount of highly educated black middle class women there.^[6]

Black women rising to power supporter

She delivered a speech in 1898 called ""We Must Have a Cleaner Social Morality,""^[7] in this speech she gave advice to black women, especially

- criticism it not always negative it helps black women evolve
- our race needs to be strong
- stop taking yourself out of the group look at the black race as a whole a family
- start building each other up no more tearing each other down
- criticism of motherhood that black women must do a better job of parenting
- the black race must be morally dignified in our actions
- do not judge every white person as being racist; not all are
- get educated
- the alarming rate of increased death rate and the rising number of illegitimate births
- statistics on how most Southern cities' populations of blacks is normally higher than the populations of whites
- awareness of health and family histories with diseases
- being educated on what racial notations to look for in certain situations

Quotes

- *"If we wish to help each other let us not only praise ourselves, but also criticize. Plain talk will not hurt us."*
- *"Praise a child always and he will soon get the point to where he thinks it is impossible for him to make mistakes."*
- *"We cannot separate ourselves from our people, no matter how much we try; for one, I have no desire to do so."*
- *"The condition of our race, brought about by slavery, the ignorance, poverty, intemperance, ought to make use women know that in half a century we cannot afford to lose sight of the large majority of the race who have not ,as yet, thrown off the badge of the evils with which I mentioned."^[8]*

Notes

1. "Inductees" (<http://www.awhf.org/inductee.html>). *Alabama Women's Hall of Fame*. State of Alabama. Retrieved February 20, 2012.
2. "Washington, Margaret Murray (1865-1925) | The Black Past: Remembered and Reclaimed" (<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/washington-margaret-murray-1865-1925>). *www.blackpast.org*. Retrieved 2016-12-07.
3. Neal, Anthony W. (February 18, 2016). "Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin: A pioneer in the black women's club movement Part 2" (<http://baystatebanner.com/news/2016/feb/18/josephine-st-pierre-ruffin-pioneer-black-womens-cl/>). *The Bay State Banner*.
4. "Margaret Murray Washington" (<http://english.illinoisstate.edu/kalmbach/351/hypertext98/hankins/african/Washington.html>). English.illinoisstate.edu. Retrieved October 23, 2017.
5. "Tuskegee University LEED Tour: Margaret Murray Washington Hall | U.S. Green Building Council" (<https://www.usgbc.org/event/tuskegee-university-leed-tour-margaret-murray-washington-hall>). Usgbc.org. 2017-04-26. Retrieved 2017-10-23.
6. Anne Rouse, Jacqueline (1966). *Out of the Shadow of Tuskegee: Margaret Murray Washington, Social Activism, and Race Vindication*. Association for the Study of African American Life and History.

7. ""We Must Have a Cleaner Social Morality,"" (<http://www.blackpast.org/1898-margaret-murray-washington-we-must-have-cleaner-social-morality>).
8. "(1898) Margaret Murray Washington, " We Must Have a Cleaner Social Morality"" (<http://www.blackpast.org/1898-margaret-murray-washington-we-must-have-cleaner-social-morality>). <http://www.blackpast.org/1898-margaret-murray-washington-we-must-have-cleaner-social-morality>. Charleston News and Courier. External link in |website= [help](#)

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- [Washington, Margaret Murray \(1865-1925\) | The Black Past: Remembered and Reclaimed \(http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aah/washington-margaret-murray-1865-1925\)](http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aah/washington-margaret-murray-1865-1925)

External links

- [M. M. Washington Career High School Website \(https://web.archive.org/web/20080506150150/http://www.k12.dc.us/schools/mmwashington/index2.htm\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20080506150150/http://www.k12.dc.us/schools/mmwashington/index2.htm) at www.k12.dc.us

at www.blackpast.org

- [\(1898\) Margaret Murray Washington, "We Must Have a Cleaner Social Morality," | The Black Past: Remembered and Reclaimed \(http://www.blackpast.org/?q=1898-margaret-murray-washington-we-must-have-cleaner-social-morality\)](http://www.blackpast.org/?q=1898-margaret-murray-washington-we-must-have-cleaner-social-morality) at www.blackpast.org

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