

MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE

July 10, 1875 – May 18, 1955

"The whole world opened to me when I learned to read."

Background

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune was born in Mayesville, South Carolina. The daughter of former slaves, Mary was one of seventeen children. She worked hard to help support her family and fought with determination to get an education while living in a segregated society.



Life's Work

Determined to succeed, Mary went on to pursue higher education and graduate from college. She became a teacher and dedicated her life to providing rigorous education for African American girls like herself, whom she lovingly called her "Black Roses." With very limited resources, Mary founded a school that eventually grew into what is now known as Bethune-Cookman University, to help them achieve university degrees. Her Black Roses would often sing, "Who built the school? Sister Mary built the school!"

Virtue

Perseverance

"A determined and proactive attitude that drives steady, sustained effort toward a goal, even in the face of difficulties, obstacles, or failure."

Accomplishments

Mary became a renowned national leader, advising U.S. Presidents and First Ladies, holding an important government position, and leading the National Association of Colored Women. She worked tirelessly to improve educational and employment opportunities for her community.

Lasting Impact

Mary's relentless commitment to education changed lives and advanced civil rights. Today, her marble statue stands in the United States Capitol, the first African American to be thus honored. Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune teaches us that determination can overcome obstacles and create a brighter future for all.



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