

Black Leaders of the Past

Scores of high schools across the United States are named in honor of these individuals, but have they been forgotten?

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Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass, the greatest of all American abolitionists, possibly the greatest American champion of the cause of equal rights, was born 200 years ago in February 1818.

Perhaps the infant Douglass arrived on Feb. 14, as he liked to think, remembering a morning in his boyhood when his mother, enslaved as he was, walked miles to bring him a modest cake and called him her “little valentine.”

By this now-customary dating, we commemorate Douglass’ 200th birthday Feb. 14 as an opportune moment to reflect on his life, thoughts, and legacy.

To Live Is to Battle

Raised in what Booker T. Washington would call “the school of slavery,” Douglass was a battler.

“To live is to battle,” he believed, according to his writings. “Contest is itself ennobling.”

In particular, the age-old contest for liberty against the forces of tyranny. He presented his own physical battle, as a teen, against the cruel slave master Edward Covey as a great turning point of his life.

“I was a changed being after that fight,” Douglass wrote. “I was nothing before; I was a man now.”

He called his act of resistance to tyranny a “resurrection.”

It was not, however, by means of physical force that Douglass chose to do battle over the course of his great career. The battle with Covey was not the only battle, nor the only moment of rebirth, that he recounted in his autobiographies. No less profoundly formative was his battle for literacy and education.

Education Means Emancipation

When another of his slave masters, Hugh Auld, scolded his young wife Sophia for beginning to teach young Frederick how to read — such learning, Auld said, “would forever unfit him for the duties of a slave” — the alert boy received this lesson as “a new and special revelation.”

From this unwitting instruction, he learned that “‘knowledge unfits a child to be a slave’ ... and from that moment I understood the direct pathway from slavery to freedom.”

It was a lesson he never forgot. In the last major speech of his life, delivered in 1894 at the dedication of an industrial school for the children of former slaves, Douglass advised his audience: “Education ... means emancipation. It means light and liberty.”

Education meant emancipation, for Douglass, because education properly conceived consists in the perfection of our faculties of reason and speech. The degradation of those faculties is instrumental to tyranny and their cultivation is indispensable to liberty.

It is by the possession and exercise of those faculties that we are, and know ourselves to be, free and equal by nature, the bearers of natural and unalienable rights. By the possession and exercise of those faculties, we learn of our own distinctiveness and also of the distinctiveness of the singular nation whose Founders dedicated it at its birth to those fundamental moral truths — the “eternal principles,” the “saving principles,” Douglass called them — in the Declaration of Independence.

Great Is the Power of Human Speech

This is what Douglass meant, at bottom, when he affirmed, “great is the power of human speech.” Thus armed with the power of reasoned speech and the truths he discovered by it, he went forth, in a career extending over half a century, to do battle with those who would replace truth with falsehood and liberty with tyranny as the foundations of American government.

That meant defending the anti-slavery, pro-liberty legacy of the declaration against all who would distort or discredit it. Douglass’ primary adversaries, of course, included those we might now call defenders of the “old regime,” the regime of slavery and its successors, dedicated to the principle of white supremacy or black subordination.

“Slavery,” Douglass remarked presciently a month after the end of the Civil War, “has been fruitful in giving itself names ... and you and I and all of us had better wait and see what new form this old monster will assume, in what new skin this old snake will come forth next.”

As Douglass well understood, the declaration’s principles needed defending not only against the old regime but also against its misguided opponents. Among the latter were some of his old colleagues, followers of his early mentor William Lloyd Garrison, whose abolitionist zeal moved them to renounce not only the U.S. Constitution and the federal union but also, in some cases, to deny the legitimacy of any human government.

The Motive May Be Good, but the Method Is Bad

No less misguided, in Douglass’ view, were those of his black compatriots, emigrationists and other black nationalists, who sought a remedy for race-based injustice in the affirmation of racial identity.

In that final major speech, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education,” Douglass had this to say about such appeals:

We hear, since emancipation, much said by our modern colored leaders in commendation of race pride, race love, race effort, race superiority, race men, and the like. One man is praised for being a race man and another is condemned for not being a race man. In all this talk of race, the motive may be good, but the method is bad. It is an effort to cast out Satan by Beelzebub. ...

I recognize and adopt no narrow basis for my thoughts, feelings, or modes of action. I would place myself, and I would place you, my young friends, upon grounds vastly higher and broader than any founded upon race or color. ...

To those who are everlastingly prating about race men, I have to say: Gentlemen, you reflect upon your best friends. It was not the race or the color of the negro that won for him the battle of liberty. That great battle was won, not because the victim of slavery was a negro, mulatto, or an Afro-American, but because the victim of slavery was a man and a brother to all other men, a child of God, and could claim

with all mankind a common Father, and therefore should be recognized as an accountable being, a subject of government, and entitled to justice, liberty and equality before the law, and everywhere else.

It is a great and perhaps tragic misfortune of our own day that many of the loudest voices professing opposition to race-based injustice make the same “great mistake,” along with related others, that Douglass denounced.

At the present moment in our country’s history, the anti-racism cause is infused with doctrines of the moral primacy of racial identity, the pervasiveness of racism as a congenital and indeed permanent evil in America, and the need to combat it by the radical transformation of American institutions, including by the suppression rather than the expansion of freedom of speech.

Now no less than in his own day, the nation would do well to attend the wisdom of Frederick Douglass.

Source: <https://fee.org/articles/frederick-douglass-insisted-that-identity-politics-is-not-the-answer/>

Booker T. Washington

It may seem strange to call someone who never held government office a “statesman,” but Booker T. Washington has a claim to that august title. His admirers regularly drew the comparison between Washington and his namesake, George Washington. Andrew Carnegie, for instance, wrote of “two Washingtons, one white, the other black, both fathers of their people.”

Like President Washington, Booker T. Washington had as his primary project the strengthening of fraternal bonds between citizens, believing such bonds to be the necessary foundation for constitutional liberty. In his Farewell Address, George Washington had prayed that “Union and brotherly affection may be perpetual.” [2] Through both rhetoric and policy, the father of our country worked to bind together the various geographic regions of the infant nation. Solemnly, he warned against “every attempt to alienate any portion of our Country from the rest.”

Despite these words of counsel, the Union nearly foundered on the moral and geographic sandbar of slavery. After the Civil War, there was tremendous work to be done, as Lincoln said, “to bind up the nation’s wounds” and “to achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves.” This was the task that Booker T. Washington set for himself. Not only did he put forth a step-by-step solution to the main problem left unresolved by the Founding Fathers—whether and how blacks would become full participants in the American polity—but he also made significant strides in implementing that solution. Washington focused on the economic and educational uplift of his people, nearly all of whom were either emancipated slaves (the four million freedmen “utterly destitute, without learning, without experience, and without traditions”) or members of that first generation to be born unshackled.

Booker T. Washington’s advice to American citizens was the same as George Washington’s. In his Farewell Address, George Washington’s first command was: “Promote then as an object of primary importance, Institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.”

Our greatest statesmen, whether elected or not, are those who have understood this essential connection between our form of government and the education of the individual. Very few have lived this truth as intensely or devotedly as Booker T. Washington. To this end, he firmly believed that the slow process of acquiring homes, businesses, and wealth, underwritten by solid educational attainment (most emphatically including moral qualities), was the best and in truth the only path to establishing racial comity. Mutual respect, he felt, was a precondition for making legal equality and political rights a reality.

As a result of a speaking invitation at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895, Washington was able to bring his message of racial reconciliation and progress to a nationwide audience. Overnight, it seemed, Washington became the successor to Frederick Douglass as the most well-known and highly regarded black man in America. A consultant to four Presidents and an associate of the Northern barons of industry who funded his philanthropic projects, Washington was beloved throughout the rural “Black Belt” where 90 percent of African Americans lived. The “Wizard of Tuskegee” was treated deferentially even by many Southern whites, although there were also prominent figures who vilified and sought to destroy him.

Regrettably, generations of black leadership, from W.E.B. Du Bois to the Black Panther Party, have tried to diminish Washington's reputation. However, recent scholarly treatments of Washington have introduced a more balanced and appreciative view. The day may yet come when Booker T. Washington will be remembered not only for his remarkable personal accomplishments, which no one can gainsay, but also for his redemptive moral vision and subtle statesmanship.

Early Life

By his own testimony, Washington began life in “the most miserable, desolate, and discouraging surroundings.” Like so many slaves, he knew neither the exact date of his birth (scholars now say 1856) nor the identity of his father, other than that he was a local white man with no interest in acknowledging paternity. During the war, he remembered his mother praying for the success of Lincoln and the Union army so that she and her children might be free. As Washington later wrote, “God, Lincoln, and Freedom formed a mysterious trinity in the new awakening of these emancipated people.”

In 1865, in quest of higher possibilities, the family left Hale's Ford, Virginia, for Malden, West Virginia, where Washington soon found himself sentenced to the drudgery and dangers of the salt furnaces and coal mines. Longing for education, he made a deal with his stepfather that allowed him to attend a nearby school: He would work in the mine for five hours before classes began and at least two more after dismissal each day.

Arriving at the schoolhouse without a surname, he demonstrated both his equanimity and his aspirations by christening himself “Booker Washington.” When he belatedly learned that his mother had named him Booker Taliaferro (borrowing the name of one of the first families of Virginia), he incorporated “Taliaferro” as his middle name.

In 1872, the teenaged Washington set out for Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Hampton, Virginia, journeying 400 miles by rail, coach, and foot, and working along the way. Hampton Institute was a coeducational teacher-training (or “normal”) school, founded by former Union General Samuel Chapman Armstrong with the aim of preparing a corps of black teachers who would in turn prepare the millions of former slaves to meet the rigors of freedom. Run with military discipline, Hampton emphasized academic fundamentals, strict morals, and skilled labor (student earnings defrayed the cost of room and board).

Arriving without funds, Washington secured admittance by passing the “broom test.” Instructed by the principal to sweep the recitation room, he did so with scrupulous vigor. Throughout his years at Hampton, he worked as the school janitor while studying rhetoric—especially the speeches of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass—history, and agricultural science. An accomplished debater, Washington shone during the commencement exercises in 1875, according to a New York Times report on the occasion.

Education Toward Freedom

Not yet 20 years old, Washington returned to Malden, West Virginia, to conduct the colored school, offering night classes for adults and also teaching Sunday school. He considered a career in law and then considered the ministry, even leaving Malden for eight months to study at Wayland Baptist Seminary in Washington, D.C. He found he did not care for urban life; even the seminary students showed the corrupting effects, preferring the high life, frivolous expenditure, and “mere outward appearances.”

Invited in 1879 to return to Hampton, Washington took charge of its night school and studied administration and finance with Hampton's treasurer. When General Armstrong was asked to recommend a white man capable of starting a new black school in Tuskegee, Alabama, he replied that he had no white candidate. He endorsed Booker T. Washington as "the best man we ever had here."

Upon his arrival in Tuskegee, Washington found that there was no school building—indeed, not even any land set aside for the school—although there was a \$2,000 state appropriation. From that meagre start, Washington began teaching on July 4, 1881, with 30 students in the log-cabin Zion Negro Church. By 1895, the Tuskegee Institute owned more than 1,800 acres, with 800 students in attendance on its 18-building campus.

By the time of Washington's death, there were 1,500 students, and the Institute had an endowment of \$2 million. In addition, through his partnership with the philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, a school-building program was begun that eventually erected and staffed more than 5,000 primary schools all across the South. For generations, Tuskegee remained a center of black advancement, producing the famed Tuskegee Airmen, the first African Americans to be trained as military aviators during WWII.

Booker T. Washington's educational philosophy can be summed up in his call to educate "head, hand, and heart." Washington perceived that long centuries of slavery had induced both whites and blacks in the South to disdain labor. It was essential for African Americans to experience the "difference between being worked and working." Hence, at Tuskegee, the roads and buildings were all constructed and maintained by students themselves. They acquired hands-on knowledge of numerous skilled trades at the same time that they took a justified pride in the handsome campus. Lessons in the dignity of labor did not need to be preached (although they were): They were lived every day.

Moreover, Tuskegee's brick factory and wagon shop fostered salutary racial interaction as local whites visited the campus to purchase goods and saw for themselves the value of black economic advancement. Washington always insisted that "No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long, in any degree, ostracized."

For Washington, book learning was not a separate, isolated endeavor. His aim was eminently practical: to "put brains and skill into the common occupations of life." Industrial education was a way to develop cognitive sophistication, which Washington recognized as a prerequisite for many emerging fields of endeavor. He wanted to ensure that blacks as a class would not be relegated to purely manual labor (although, of course, he never spoke in derogation of any honest task, however humble). His belief in the need for mindful labor can be seen in Tuskegee's extensive outreach to black farmers throughout the Black Belt, instructing them in crop science and domestic economy.

Similarly, the education of teachers at Tuskegee prepared them both to provide instruction in the three R's and to establish schools on the Tuskegee model. Tuskegee-trained teachers had to be community organizers, carpenters, fundraisers, and nutritionists. In 1882, Washington founded the Alabama State Teachers' Association to assist black teachers in their mission to elevate the rural population, a task made more daunting by the sharecropping and convict-lease systems that kept blacks mired in ignorance, debt, and peonage.

Finally, Washington believed that real education was a moral project. An education of hand and head without attention to the heart shapes individuals who are only clever at grasping things for themselves. By contrast, Washington argued that "usefulness"—which he defined as "service to our brother"—"is the supreme end of education." The emphasis on character, "thoroughly Christian" but non-denominational, was truly at the heart of Tuskegee.

Even after national speaking tours and fundraising trips took Washington out of the classroom, he continued to give frequent “Sunday Evening Talks” at Tuskegee. These were homilies on such topics as “Helping Others,” “Some Rocks Ahead,” “The Virtue of Simplicity,” “Have You Done Your Best?,” “Don’t Be Discouraged,” “The Gospel of Service,” “Individual Responsibility,” “What Would Father and Mother Say?,” and “Character As Shown in Dress.” While the advice he gave was in one sense timeless, it was also carefully designed to give young black men and women an aspirational and hope-filled image of themselves to counteract the demeaning and viciously anti-black images that proliferated in the popular culture of the day.

It is important to note that Washington’s general views on education were as applicable to whites as they were to blacks. He was acutely and painfully aware that black advancement depended on more than black self-help. White tolerance, if not white assistance, was a necessary supplement. Accordingly, he often encouraged Northern philanthropists to have concern for the large class of poor Southern whites, whose educational deficits were worse than those afflicting blacks because to ignorance they added the toxin of racist hatred.

Developing Mutual Respect Between the Races

In 1895, Washington was given an opportunity to speak to the wider audience on whom racial progress depended. Asked to deliver the opening address at the Cotton States and International Exposition as “a representative of Negro enterprise and Negro civilization,” the first black man to appear on the same platform with Southern whites used the occasion to foster friendship between the races, whose “industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life” could all be “interlaced.”

For the benefit of both races, Washington told a story of a ship lost at sea, its occupants overcome with thirst, who were told by a friendly vessel to “Cast down your bucket where you are” and to their surprise brought up fresh, not salt, water. To blacks, the message was that the surrounding white population need not be regarded as unremittingly hostile. To whites, the message was that the black population was more reliable than immigrants as a work force.

He also conjured up an older, sentimental view of intimate black–white relations—“we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sick bed of your mothers and fathers”—in order to encourage contemporary white support for black education. Then he drew a frightening picture of what would result if whites remained unregenerate, ignoring the “laws of changeless justice”:

Nearly sixteen millions of hands will aid you in pulling the load upward, or they will pull against you the load downward. We shall constitute one-third and more of the ignorance and crime of the South, or one-third its intelligence and progress; we shall contribute one-third to the business and industrial prosperity of the South, or we shall prove a veritable body of death, stagnating, depressing, retarding every effort to advance the body politic.

While Washington disapproved of “the agitation of questions of social equality,” he also insisted that blacks were citizens. He made no explicit reference to suffrage (or its deprivation), but he did assert that “it is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours.” And he ended his Atlanta address with a prayer that there be “a determination to administer absolute justice, in a willing obedience among all classes to the mandates of law.”

Informing every element of the speech, both what he said and what he refrained from saying, was Washington’s hope that the races (and thereby the nation) could break free from the vicious spiral of “sin and suffering.” He offered his audience a new vision of “our beloved South,” where mutual

faith and cooperation could replace both sectional and racial hatreds. The response was thunderously favorable as whites, blacks, Northerners, and Southerners all heard something constructive.

Perhaps inevitably, in some quarters, misrepresentations of Washington's "Atlanta Compromise" took hold. Because he counselled against the path of political protest, and also because he was willing to say that the Fifteenth Amendment, adopted in 1870, had been premature, some whites understood him to be accepting permanent second-class status for blacks. This was patently untrue. His "gradualism," carefully preparing the way psychologically for each step forward, should not be mistaken for an abandonment of the ultimate aim of full political equality.

In truth, Washington had conceded very little; by the time of his landmark statement, black political power had already been stripped away. To cite just one example, "in the space of two years the number of black voters declined from about 190,000 to 8,000" as a result of limitations on the franchise adopted in Mississippi in 1890. Washington was redirecting the struggle to what was most urgent and most achievable in the restricted circumstances of the 1890s: acquiring the tools (education and economic independence) that would culminate inevitably, albeit slowly, in a regime of equal rights and do so by lessening rather than provoking white resistance.

Freedom and Forgiveness

Despite his disdain for "Indignation meetings in Faneuil Hall, Boston," Washington was not opposed to all forms of political pressure. He was continuously active behind the scenes, planning and paying for legal challenges to discrimination and disfranchisement. He made extensive use of the public relations power of newspapers, sometimes writing letters to the editor himself or arranging for various pro-black campaigns in the press. He worked closely with President Theodore Roosevelt, dispensing the political patronage of the Republican Party. And, of course, he drew attention to injustices in his speeches while at the same time always balancing criticisms with praise for instances of racial harmony. As he explained: "Southern people have a good deal of human nature. They like to receive the praise of doing good deeds." Praise, he believed, was the way to engender more good deeds.

Washington saw that freedom was not the kind of thing that can be given by others. Yes, whites needed to cease and desist from racial wrongdoing, but even were that to happen overnight, blacks would still face the inescapably individual task of readying themselves for freedom. Freedom, according to Washington, is fundamentally internal or spiritual rather than physical or political. Perhaps paradoxically, this meant that blacks possessed certain advantages over whites in the quest for freedom:

And so, all through human experience, we find that the highest and most complete freedom comes slowly, and is purchased only at a tremendous cost. Freedom comes through seeming restriction.... Those persons in the U.S. who are most truly free in body, mind, morals, are those who have passed through the most severe training—are those who have exercised the most patience, and at the same time, the most dogged persistence and determination.

Echoing thinkers from St. Augustine to Friedrich Hegel, Washington argued that the experience of slavery and its aftermath could be a source of insight and strength for African Americans. The white experience of mastery was not similarly redemptive.

Washington very affectingly tells the story of a persecuted black cadet (the only black cadet) at the U.S. Naval Academy, concluding that the training and education the white cadets received "utterly

failed to prepare a single one of these young men for real life, that he could be brave enough, Christian enough, American enough, to take this poor defenseless black boy by the hand in open daylight and let the world know that he was his friend.” This searing criticism of moral cowardice is leavened with earnest sympathy for the damage that whites are doing to themselves. In a dramatic display of pity, Washington says that blacks are merely “inconvenienced” by racial discrimination, whereas whites are positively “injured” by it: “No race can wrong another race simply because it has the power to do so without being permanently injured in morals.... It is for the white man to save himself from his degradation that I plead.”

Remarkably, Washington had transcended bitterness. As he related in his autobiography, he had early resolved to “permit no man, no matter what his colour might be, to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him.” He counselled his fellow blacks to do the same. If they could live by the motto that Lincoln expressed in his Second Inaugural—“with malice toward none, with charity toward all”—then blacks could work their own salvation, both individually and collectively. The path of forgiveness, coupled with patient and determined flourishing, could redeem the nation as well, helping to lift the curse of slavery from the land. Washington called his people to a high destiny:

If the Negro who has been oppressed, ostracized, denied rights in a Christian land, can help you, North and South, to rise, can be the medium of your rising to these sublime heights of unselfishness and self-forgetfulness, who may say that the Negro, this new citizen, will not see in it a recompense for all that he has suffered and will have performed a mission that will be placed beside that of the lowly Nazarine?

Washington may well be the most Christian of black thinkers—Martin Luther King, Jr., not excepted. Those who disparage Washington, as W.E.B. Du Bois did, as a spokesman for “a gospel of Work and Money,” do a serious disservice to the spiritually demanding heart of his message.

Legacy

While Washington published many books describing his ideas and experiences, the most significant is his autobiography *Up from Slavery*, first published in 1901 and never out of print since then. The Modern Library’s list of the 100 Best Nonfiction Books assigns it the number three position.

Despite this, his reputation has suffered abuse and neglect over the past century at the hands of more militant activists. Beginning in the later part of his life, a new generation of black leadership emerged that took to denouncing him as “accommodationist”—a term that, like “appeasement” or “collaborator,” was meant to connote conciliation to the point of abject submission. The success of the attack, spearheaded by W.E.B. Du Bois, did a tremendous disservice to Washington’s life and legacy, especially when the attacks became increasingly unfair and vulgar. During the Black Power era of the late 1960s and ’70s, Washington was routinely dismissed as an “Uncle Tom” or worse. It is long past time for the record to be corrected.

Nonetheless, his story has remained an inspiration to readers around the world. Even more, his basic approach to self-development continues to yield results, whether those who follow it have learned it from Washington or, more likely, from parents and teachers devoted to the thankless discipline of character-building.

Scholars too are beginning to admire Washington’s achievements. In the words of Adam Fairclough, he “addressed the most pressing needs of black Southerners and showed them a way of coping with

their situation, and even prospering, in a climate of extreme racism. Using a combination of flattery, persuasion, and guile, he gradually wore down Southern white opposition to black education.” Through his focus on steady, incremental gains, Washington, like Moses in the desert, prepared his people for “a better day comin’.”

Washington’s massive contribution to the educational and economic advancement of the black population was crucial for the political transformations that finally came about in the second half of the 20th century. In 1865, illiteracy was nearly universal among blacks. By 1900, a majority of blacks (55 percent) were literate. By 1940, nearly 90 percent were literate.

Booker T. Washington was right that education is the sine qua non of democratic citizenship. He belongs in the canon of American political thinkers and statesmen, for he offers all Americans a deeper understanding of the nature and requirements of freedom securely grounded in self-respect and mutual esteem.

—Diana J. Schaub, PhD, is professor of political science at Loyola University Maryland.

Source: <https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/booker-t-washington-and-the-promise-racial-reconciliation>

George Washington Carver

Meet George Washington Carver – scientist, agriculturist, scholar, inventor, but, contrary to popular belief, not the inventor of peanut butter. Although none of his hundreds of peanut products achieved commercial success, Carver’s accomplishments have landed him an irreplaceable part in history for revolutionizing agriculture in the United States and overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles to become a highly esteemed, African-American faculty member of the Tuskegee Institute in a time of extreme racial tensions.

George Washington Carver was born into slavery in Missouri to Mary and Giles, a slave couple owned by Moses and Susan Carver. The exact date of his birth is unknown, but it is estimated to be in the mid-1860s. Sadly, at approximately one-week old, George, his mother, and sister were kidnapped by farm raiders to be sold in Kentucky. George was located and returned to Moses Carver’s farm, but his mother and sister were not found.

Moses and Susan Carver decided to keep and raise George and his brother. Because no schools accepted black students, Susan taught them to read and write at home. George valued learning from a young age, and enrolled in a school for black children about ten miles from the Carver Farm. When he enrolled, instead of continuing to be referred to as “Carver’s George,” he adopted the name “George Carver.” George pursued his education and graduated from high school in Kansas, but was denied admission to Highland College because of his race.

George enrolled in the botany program at the Iowa State Agricultural College as the first black student at the school. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree and, in 1896, a master’s degree, establishing himself as an exceptional botanist in the process. In 1896, Booker T. Washington, president of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, took notice of George Carver’s outstanding accomplishments and hired him as the head of the institute’s agricultural department. Carver’s research and work focused heavily on creating alternative uses of common crops, especially the peanut and sweet potato. He developed products from these plants for a myriad of purposes (over 300 products from peanuts and over 100 products from sweet potatoes!), such as paints, plastics, flours, shaving cream, glue, and even a form of gasoline. He is mistakenly commonly credited with the invention of peanut butter, but in reality, peanut butter made from ground peanuts date as far back as the 15th century by the Aztecs and Incas – centuries before Carver was even born.

Carver remained adamantly passionate about education. Due to his very humble beginnings, he spent his entire life helping poor farmers, especially African-Americans, improve their crops and get out of poverty, always refusing compensation for his advice. Carver promoted various methods of crop rotation, which is a large part of why peanuts became a large source of his innovations. He promoted the growing of crops that fixed nitrogen, promoting sustainability of nutritious soil and, therefore, healthy crops. Carver lived frugally and used his fame to promote scientific causes. He also started a mobile classroom known as the “Jesup wagon” that visited various farms to educate the farmers about agricultural techniques. He wrote for a newspaper column and traveled around the country, speaking about the importance of agricultural research and innovation. For ten years in 1923-1933, he spoke in support of racial harmony when he visited white colleges in the South for

the Commission on Interracial Cooperation and the YMCA. Although he never spoke out directly against racist social and economic injustices of the time, his scientific success and open-minded demeanor still earned him great respect and admiration from both African-American and Caucasian people.

George Carver became so well-known for his work that president Franklin Delano Roosevelt looked to him for advice on agricultural matters. In 1916, Carver became a member of the British Royal Society of Arts, which is a very rare honor given to Americans.

George Washington Carver passed away in 1943 at the age of 78. He is buried next to his friend and colleague Booker T. Washington. President Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated \$30,000 for a monument to be constructed in Carver's honor, located west of his hometown of Diamond, Missouri. This is the first national monument dedicated to an African-American. Carver's epitaph summarizes his beliefs and the humble philosophy by which he lived his life: "He could have added fortune to the fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world." To this day, he remains an icon of African-American achievement, scientific achievement, and the transformative power of education.

Source: <http://www.science-delivered.org/blog/2017/5/1/meet-a-scientist-george-washington-carver>

Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can only be done by projecting the ethic of love to the center of our lives.”

Although Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929–April 4, 1968) used Christian social ethics and the New Testament concept of “love” heavily in his writings and speeches, he was as influenced by Eastern spiritual traditions, Gandhi’s political writings, Buddhism’s notion of the interconnectedness of all beings, and Ancient Greek philosophy. His enduring ethos, at its core, is nonreligious — rather, it champions a set of moral, spiritual, and civic responsibilities that fortify our humanity, individually and collectively.

Nowhere does he transmute spiritual ideas from various traditions into secular principles more masterfully than in his extraordinary 1958 essay “An Experiment in Love,” in which he examines the six essential principles of his philosophy of nonviolence, debunks popular misconceptions about it, and considers how these basic tenets can be used in guiding any successful movement of nonviolent resistance. Penned five years before his famous Letter from Birmingham City Jail and exactly a decade before his assassination, the essay was eventually included in the indispensable *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* — required reading for every human being with a clicking mind and a ticking heart.

In the first of the six basic philosophies, Dr. King addresses the tendency to mistake nonviolence for passivity, pointing out that it is a form not of cowardice but of courage:

It must be emphasized that nonviolent resistance is not a method for cowards; it does resist. If one uses this method because he is afraid or merely because he lacks the instruments of violence, he is not truly nonviolent. This is why Gandhi often said that if cowardice is the only alternative to violence, it is better to fight... The way of nonviolent resistance ... is ultimately the way of the strong man. It is not a method of stagnant passivity... For while the nonviolent resister is passive in the sense that he is not physically aggressive toward his opponent, his mind and his emotions are always active, constantly seeking to persuade his opponent that he is wrong. The method is passive physically but strongly active spiritually. It is not passive non-resistance to evil, it is active nonviolent resistance to evil.

He turns to the second tenet of nonviolence:

Nonviolence ... does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding. The nonviolent resister must often express his protest through noncooperation or boycotts, but he realizes that these are not ends themselves; they are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of nonviolence

is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.

In considering the third characteristic of nonviolence, Dr. King appeals to the conscientious recognition that those who perpetrate violence are often victims themselves:

The attack is directed against forces of evil rather than against persons who happen to be doing the evil. It is the evil that the nonviolent resister seeks to defeat, not the persons victimized by the evil. If he is opposing racial injustice, the nonviolent resister has the vision to see that the basic tension is not between the races... The tension is, at bottom, between justice and injustice, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness.... We are out to defeat injustice and not white persons who may be unjust.

Out of this recognition flows the fourth tenet:

Nonviolent resistance [requires] a willingness to accept suffering without retaliation, to accept blows from the opponent without striking back... The nonviolent resister is willing to accept violence if necessary, but never to inflict it. He does not seek to dodge jail. If going to jail is necessary, he enters it “as a bridegroom enters the bride’s chamber.”

That, in fact, is precisely how Dr. King himself entered jail five years later . To those skeptical of the value of turning the other cheek, he offers:

Unearned suffering is redemptive. Suffering, the nonviolent resister realizes, has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities.

The fifth basic philosophy turns the fourth inward and arrives at the most central point of the essay — the noblest use of what we call “love”:

Nonviolent resistance ... avoids not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. The nonviolent resister not only refuses to shoot his opponent but he also refuses to hate him. At the center of nonviolence stands the principle of love. The nonviolent resister would contend that in the struggle for human dignity, the oppressed people of the world must not succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter or indulging in hate campaigns. To retaliate in kind would do nothing but intensify the existence of hate in the universe. Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can only be done by projecting the ethic of love to the center of our lives.

Here, Dr. King turns to Ancient Greek philosophy, pointing out that the love he speaks of is not the sentimental or affectionate kind — “it would be nonsense to urge men to love their oppressors in an affectionate sense,” he readily acknowledges — but love in the sense of understanding and redemptive goodwill. The Greeks called this *agape* — a love distinctly different from the *eros* , reserved for our lovers, or *philia* , with which we love our friends and family. Dr. King explains:

Agape means understanding, redeeming good will for all men. It is an overflowing love which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless, and creative. It is not set in motion by any quality or function of its object... *Agape* is disinterested love. It is a love in which the individual seeks not his own good, but the good of his

neighbor. Agape does not begin by discriminating between worthy and unworthy people, or any qualities people possess. It begins by loving others for their sakes. It is an entirely “neighbor-regarding concern for others,” which discovers the neighbor in every man it meets. Therefore, agape makes no distinction between friends and enemy; it is directed toward both. If one loves an individual merely on account of his friendliness, he loves him for the sake of the benefits to be gained from the friendship, rather than for the friend’s own sake. Consequently, the best way to assure oneself that love is disinterested is to have love for the enemy-neighbor from whom you can expect no good in return, but only hostility and persecution.

This notion is nearly identical to one of Buddhism’s four brahmaviharas , or divine attitudes — the concept of Metta , often translated as lovingkindness or benevolence. The parallel speaks not only to Dr. King’s extraordinarily diverse intellectual toolkit of influences and inspirations — a high form of combinatorial creativity necessary for any meaningful contribution to humanity’s common record — but also to the core commonalities between the world’s major spiritual and philosophical traditions.

In a sentiment that Margaret Mead and James Baldwin would echo twelve years later in their spectacular conversation on race — “In any oppressive situation both groups suffer, the oppressors and the oppressed,” Mead observed, asserting that the oppressors suffer morally with the recognition of what they’re committing, which Baldwin noted is “a worse kind of suffering” — Dr. King adds:

Another basic point about agape is that it springs from the need of the other person — his need for belonging to the best in the human family... Since the white man’s personality is greatly distorted by segregation, and his soul is greatly scarred, he needs the love of the Negro. The Negro must love the white man, because the white man needs his love to remove his tensions, insecurities, and fears.

At the heart of agape , he argues, is the notion of forgiveness — something Mead and Baldwin also explored with great intellectual elegance . Dr. King writes:

Agape is not a weak, passive love. It is love in action... Agape is a willingness to go to any length to restore community... It is a willingness to forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven to restore community.... If I respond to hate with a reciprocal hate I do nothing but intensify the cleavage in broken community. I can only close the gap in broken community by meeting hate with love.

With this, he turns to the sixth and final principle of nonviolence as a force of justice, undergirded by the nonreligious form of spirituality that Dani Shapiro elegantly termed “an animating presence” and Alan Lightman described as the transcendence of “this strange and shimmering world.” Dr. King writes:

Nonviolent resistance ... is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice. Consequently, the believer in nonviolence has deep faith in the future. This faith is another reason why the nonviolent resister can accept suffering without retaliation. For he knows that in his struggle for justice he has cosmic companionship. It is true that there are devout believers in nonviolence who find it difficult to believe in a personal God. But even these persons believe in the existence of some creative force that works for universal wholeness. Whether we call it an unconscious process, an impersonal Brahman, or a Personal Being of

matchless power of infinite love, there is a creative force in this universe that works to bring the disconnected aspects of reality into a harmonious whole.

A Testament of Hope is an absolutely essential read in its totality. Complement it with Dr. King on the two types of law , Albert Einstein's little-known correspondence with W.E.B. Du Bois on racial justice , and Tolstoy and Gandhi's equally forgotten but immensely timely correspondence on why we hurt each other .

Source: <https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/07/01/martin-luther-king-jr-an-experiment-in-love/>