



Mary McLeod Bethune with girls from the Literary and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in Daytona, circa 1905.

## Mary McLeod Bethune

The fifteenth of 17 children born to former slaves, Mary McLeod Bethune grew up to be the founder of a college, a senior official in Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration, and present at the founding of the United Nations.

**B**ethune grew up in South Carolina and was educated in segregated schools. In 1904, she founded the Daytona Educational and Industrial School for Negro Girls in Florida, which eventually became Bethune-Cookman College. She also served as president of the National Association of Colored Women and founded the National Council of Negro Women.

From 1936 to 1944, Bethune was director of Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration in the Roosevelt administration. She was part of the Black Cabinet, a group of African-American officials who lobbied for advancement for African-Americans. Bethune worked for equal pay for African-American federal workers, African-American participation in New Deal programs, ending lynching and stopping the poll tax, and was a regular speaker at conferences on racial issues. She also served as president of Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

During World War II, Bethune was special assistant to the secretary of war and assistant director of the Women's Army Corps. She left federal service in 1944 but was still president of the National Council of Negro Women, in which capacity she attended the founding conference of the United Nations. Bethune died in 1955.

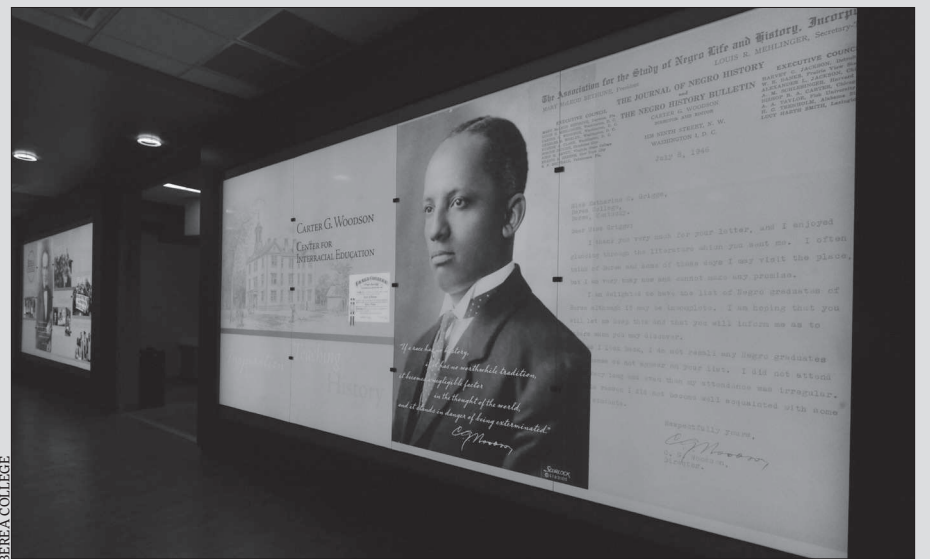
Schools around the country are named for Bethune, and the college she



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founded and which bears her name still exists. A statue of her was erected in Washington, D.C. in 1974, and a crater on Venus is named in her honor. The National Park Service maintains one of her residences, 1318 Vermont Ave., Washington, D.C., as a historic site.

## Black History Month Basics



The Carter G. Woodson Center for Interracial Education in Berea, Ky.

**F**ebruary is Black History Month not only in the U.S., but in the United Kingdom, Canada and the Netherlands. Keep reading to learn more about Black History Month and celebrate important contributions of notable African Americans.

### In America

It started when Carter G. Woodson, a Harvard-trained historian, wanted to raise awareness of African American contributions to society. He founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which announced Negro History Week in 1925 and celebrated the first one in 1926. The week in February was chosen on purpose; it contained the birth anniversaries of President Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

The 1960s brought social change and the Civil Rights Act, as well as

an increased awareness of African-American contributions to culture. In 1976, the U.S. bicentennial, the week was expanded through the month of February. President Gerald R. Ford asked Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history." Since Ford, every American president has declared February Black History Month.

Woodson's group lives on, too, as the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History.

### Outside the U.S.

The United Kingdom celebrated Black History Month for the first time in 1987 through the leadership of Ghanaian analyst Akyaaaba Addai-Sebo. Canada recognized February as Black History Month in 1995 with a motion by the House of Commons.