



## **Use of John Johnson's Life Story in Conjunction With Other Black Entrepreneurs as Role Models for Potential Black Businessmen**

Curriculum Unit 91.03.04

by Carol L. Cook

### **I. INTRODUCTION/RATIONALE**

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Autobiographies can be used for many different purposes. In one form, the subjects are defined by the causes that they undertake. I would like to study the autobiography of John H. Johnson, a Black man who rose from the welfare rolls of the depression to become the most successful Black businessman in American history. John Johnson founded EBONY, JET, AND EM magazines. He is now a member of the FORBES 400. In 1918, John H. Johnson was born in a tin-roofed house near the river levees in Arkansas City, Arkansas. His determined mother left everything behind to take the train north to Chicago, because that is where her son could get a high school education. His family spent some time on welfare before John was able to go after his dreams with unstoppable energy.

John Johnson was convinced that Black Americans needed positive images to fulfill their potential. And so, he created the magazine, EBONY. He believed then and still believes that you have to change images before you can change acts and institutions. John believes that hard work, strong family support, and a healthy and sound mind and body are needed to succeed.

I want to study the ascent of this Black man to the heights of big business. It appears that in the U.S. Economy, few Black American Businessmen have emerged to challenge white domination. On the other hand, other ethnic groups established some credit associations that immigrants from their group could use. Want of access to this traditional institution has placed all but a handful of American Blacks at a marked disadvantage. Southern-born Blacks who migrated to northern cities were not in a position to organize similar groups. It has also been suggested that another reason that Blacks have not advanced in business is the lack of role models available for them. In addition, as Southern Blacks moved north, they were unable to establish business organizations based on their ethnic interests or regional loyalties.

In general, urban Black communities had to depend on voluntary organizations and the church as the foundation of their social structure, because Old World ties of region, tribe and extended kinship had been torn up by slavery, and had not been subsequently regenerated on a new basis. Thus, in laying foundation for business development, urban Black communities had to employ voluntary organizations. Two organizations were established: The National Urban League devoted itself to the social welfare of urban Blacks; The National Business League oversaw the development of Black-owned business. Both the Business League and the Urban

League were chronically unable to create solidarity on a voluntary basis.

Although Booker T. Washington founded the National Negro Business League to encourage more and more Black people to enter business, its growth did not increase the proportion of Blacks in business. Instead of mutual aid, the Business League touted self-interested individualism.

Caste subordination of Blacks involved shared Black-white conceptions of the proper place of Blacks in a white society. This view did not assign to Blacks a separate ethnic honor but rather deprived them of any valued ethnic identity. So long as these conceptions were shared, there was obviously no room for social conflict between Blacks and whites. But this heritage carried with it manifest disadvantages in the urban North.

I would like to use the life of John Johnson as the main role model for the development of a successful businessman. However, I would like to review the lives of such famous business people as Mary McLeod Bethune, Booker T. Washington and Jake Simmons, Jr., a Fortune 500 oilman to see what pattern emerges in all of their lives. As I review these lives, I am going to point out the role models that each person followed in his/her search for success. I will also compare how each person handled the lack of ethnic credit associations.

Most important, I will explore the ways that each person dealt with caste subordination and prejudice. It is also vital to observe the character traits that led each person to great achievement.

## II. LEARNING GOALS

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Upon completion of this unit, the student will:

1. Know about the lives of Mary McLeod Bethune, Booker T. Washington, John H. Johnson, Jake Simmons. Jr.
2. Be able to identify the characteristics that lead a person toward success in business
3. Be able to see the positive affects of a strong role model
4. Be able to see how successful Black Business people conquered insurmountable problems in their search for success
5. Understand the importance of knowing Black history in their search for self-identify and self-esteem
6. Select a role model for himself/herself and do research on this person's search for success

### III. SUGGESTED TEACHING STRATEGIES

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1. Discussion of lives of Mary McLeod Bethune, Booker T. Washington, John H. Johnson, Jake Simmons. Jr. A. Lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Research
2. Discussion of Characteristics of Success
- A. Lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Demonstration of Characteristics of Success
3. Discussion of positive/negative role models
- A. Lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Speakers
- D. Newspaper/Magazine Articles
4. Discussion of insurmountable problems in business
- A. Lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Case Problems
- D. Speakers
5. Discussion of importance of Black History in search for self-esteem
- A. EYES ON THE PRIZE Series
- B. Discussion
- C. Essay on one of the series
6. Select a role model
- A. Review of books
- B. Review of local businessmen
- C. Research
- D. Presentation of Research
- E. Discussion of each selection

## IV. LIFE OF JOHN JOHNSON

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John Johnson was born on January 19, 1918 in Arkansas City, Arkansas. His mother was the second generation from slavery. She only completed the third grade. She worked hard in the fields and kitchens of Arkansas. Mrs. Johnson was a strong woman who had many dreams for her son. Both John's family and community included many caring adults, who closely monitored the actions of the young. There was much discipline and love all around John.

John attended Arkansas City Colored School through the eighth grade. Then, there was no more schooling available in Arkansas City. John's mother heard that Chicago offered education, good jobs and freedom. She, therefore, worked extra jobs to get enough money together to go to Chicago. Since John's stepfather refused to move to Chicago, his mother had to make a decision. Although she loved her husband very much, she decided that freedom and education for her son were most important. She and her son moved to Chicago alone.

For one thing, Chicago offered many Black role models for John Johnson. Many Black Chicagoans had a history of political and economic independence. For instance, Oscar De Priest from Chicago was the first Black Congressman in the United States. There were many Black teachers who were outstanding role models. These teachers believed that Black students as well as white could do anything that they wanted to do.

John ran into many obstacles as a young man. However, he soon found that a negative in your life can soon be switched into a positive. For instance, his fellow students found his accent very funny. Every time he opened his mouth, they would laugh at him. John, therefore, decided that he must do something about this. He spent many hours in front of his mirror while he practiced speaking properly. As time went on, he volunteered to speak in school so that he could further improve his presentation of himself. This talent would help John Johnson during his whole life.

John also spent much of his time reading self-help books. Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People" was one of his favorites. In addition, he read all the Black literature that he could get his hands on. UP FROM SLAVERY by Booker T. Washington was one of his favorites. John's skill in speaking won him the junior and senior class presidencies. He was also editor of the school newspaper.

In 1933, John's mother, stepfather, and sister all lost their jobs. They had to apply for welfare but got turned down. Mrs. Johnson wrote to President Roosevelt and got some results. This quality of never giving up was a quality that John inherited from his mother. Being on welfare was a great embarrassment to John. One he never forgot!

Soon, John got a job with the National Youth Administration. Mary McLeod Bethune was another strong woman and a powerful role model to John. She helped John to get a scholarship to the University of Chicago.

At an Urban League luncheon for outstanding students, one of John's heroes, Harry H. Pace, President of Supreme Liberty Life Insurance Company (a Black Business) spoke. When John told him that he didn't have enough money to go to college, Pace offered John a job. Pace served as a mentor to many young Blacks.

John Johnson was so fascinated by what he was learning at Supreme that he dropped out of college. Harry Pace believed in teaching the young Blacks about the many successful Blacks in history. In many cases, Black entrepreneurs were confined to Black consumer markets. It had been the hope of most Black people that

Black entrepreneurs participate at everyday level in all economic institutions. These words of Booker T. Washington were ingrained in John Johnson: “One farm bought, one house built . . . one man who is the largest taxpayer or has the largest bank account, one school or church maintained, one factory running successfully . . . one patient cured by a Negro doctor, one sermon well preached, one office well filled . . . these will tell more in our favor than all the abstract eloquence that can be summoned to plead our cause.”

Soon, John was made an editor of the newspaper at Supreme and he learned a great deal in this position. As his professional life began to build, he met a charming young woman from a wealthy Southern Black family and he married her. As part of his job, John had to collect news about Black Americans. This gave him an idea. Why not put together a magazine that would include all of this information? He would call this magazine NEGRO DIGEST. Why not use the list from Supreme in his advertising campaign for this magazine?

John would constantly draw on his personal strength when things would seem impossible for him. When he tried to find a distributor for his magazine, he was turned down. He didn't give up, however. He had some of his friends go to all of the news stands and ask for the magazine until the distributor decided the he needed to have the magazine. He wanted to have Mrs. Roosevelt write an article for his magazine, and he wrote to her. She answered that she was just too busy. He kept asking until she finally agreed.

Johnson forbid anybody around him to mention the word, failure. It was not in his vocabulary. His mother told him “Whenever you're trying hard, you're never failing. The only failure is failing to try.”

After John's success with NEGRO DIGEST, John's associates convinced him that an entertainment magazine was needed. Thus, EBONY began. In this magazine, Johnson built up the idea that “Black is beautiful.” He showed good looking Black men and women: bright Black people; successful Black people. After EBONY, Johnson and his wife developed the EBONY FASHION SHOW, which now travels through the U.S. In addition, he developed “Fashion Fair Cosmetics,” a company with cosmetics for Black women.

Although John Johnson has run into prejudice in his life, he has always tried to switch things around. He would make the white people see what advantage it would be for them to help him. Most of the time, he would win in the end.

In his whole career, John has always believed that you constantly try until you succeed. You never give up. He did this when he wanted to get nice offices for his company. At first, the real estate people forced him to get housing in Black neighborhoods. But, John came back again and again. Finally, he succeeded in getting what he wanted. This is the strongest message that his autobiography sends to its readers.

UP FROM SLAVERY was one of the favorite books of John Johnson. What are the likenesses of Booker T. Washington's life and John H. Johnson's life?

## **V. COMPARISON OF JOHNSON'S AND WASHINGTON'S LIVES**

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First of all, both men developed their own names. John H. Johnson was originally Johnny Johnson. When he grew up, his teacher told him that he needed an adult name, so he chose John and put in a middle initial “H.” Booker T. Washington had just the name “Booker.” When he went to school, he chose Washington. Later, he took “T” representing Taliaferro, a name his mother had added. As with Johnson, Booker T. Washington spent all his childhood time working. Both men had a thirst for reading and knowledge.

Both Booker and John had strong mothers who dreamed big dreams for their sons. Both mother had a great deal of common sense and worked hard to fulfill dreams for their sons.

Both Booker and John challenged the idea that a Black youth should presume that he will fail. Both were proud of being Black. Both men set goals for themselves and never let anything get in the way of these goals. Both men fully believed that they could succeed: neither tolerated any thought of failure.

Both Booker and John had strong Black role models, yet there were many white people in their lives who had a strong influence on them. Both men felt that both Black and white people helped them in their climb to success. Indeed, they both felt that a person needed the help of both races in order to succeed.

Booker T. Washington believed that education and especially industrial education would help his people to become everything they should be. John H. Johnson believed that it is important to know Black history and understand that Black can be beautiful and that many Black people have achieved a great deal.

In Booker T. Washington's autobiography, he seldom speaks of his family and yet you can feel that they were a strength to him. Most of his story includes his path to knowledge and road to success. This is also true in John H. Johnson's autobiography. You know that his wife and family are powerful segments of his life, but we hear much more of his learning, his mentors and his many successes.

## **VI. COMPARISON OF JOHNSON'S AND BETHUNE'S LIVES**

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Mary McLeod Bethune was another strong role model in the life of John Johnson. Born on July 10, 1875, Mary was the daughter of slaves. After the war, her family bought five acres of land near Mayesville, South Carolina. When Mary first saw books, she fell in love with them. As a child, a white child told Mary to "put that book down. You can't read." Mary took this as a personal challenge.

As with Booker T. and John, Mary had a strong mother, who had belief in herself and her child. As with the others, Mary had to work hard as a child and had no time to play. Mary had strong Black role models. As with the others, she found that many white people were also very supportive. Her white teachers showed her that a person's color has nothing to do with the strength of his brain.

When Mary ran into frustrations, she would always keep going. Just as with Booker and John, she found that many times, these disappointments led to something better in her life. Failure was not in Mary's vocabulary. If she didn't acquire the results she wanted in one way, she did it in another.

As with the others, Mary set a goal and followed through to the end. She also felt that it would elevate the pride and ambitions of Blacks to know of the history and achievements of other Blacks. She spent much time lecturing to others on Black history.

All three people recognized and seized an opportunity when it appeared: Mary with Daytona Normal School; Booker T. Washington with Tuskegee; John with the NEGRO DIGEST. All three turned to whites as well as Blacks to fulfill their dreams. In all cases, rich white people were very supportive to their causes.

Mary, unlike the others, did not always have the support of her spouse. Her husband left her. He didn't understand her dedication to the school.

## VII. COMPARISON OF JOHNSON'S AND SIMMONS'S LIVES

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In contrast to the other successful business people, Jake Simmons, Jr. had a powerful father, who was rather successful himself. Mr. Simmons, Sr. tried to get his sons to join him in farming, but he was unable to convince any one of them. Yet, he was a powerful role model. Jake's father believed that you needed to have a certain amount of discipline, a certain amount of routine and a certain amount of stick-to-itiveness to succeed.

As with John Johnson, Booker T. Washington was a role model for Jake Simmons, Jr. However, he had much more of a chance to view Washington close-up, since he attended Tuskegee. Jake learned to love work for its own sake just as Booker T. Washington taught. He understood that a good appearance is crucial to success. He realized that few men would have succeeded without developing their argumentative abilities—selling, charming, motivating and altering people's behavior and attitudes.

As with John Johnson and the others, Jake had white role models as well as Black. Some of the most powerful were supplied by Booker T. at Tuskegee. Julius Rosenwald, the Sears, Roebuck tycoon, was an example of this.

Jake and John had a strong interest in Black history. They both were proud to be Black. They both found African American dignity of utmost importance. When Jake got his first job as Pullman porter, he was called "boy" by a passenger. When he took exception to this term, the man told him that if he didn't want to be called "boy" in life that he'd better not do "boy's" work. He quit his job immediately and vowed never to do a "boy's" work again.

Family was very important in both Johnson's life and Simmons's life. Both men were driven fighters who worked unceasingly to defy limitations and triumph over obstacles. Both refused to be victims of bigotry, to suffer from preconceptions others imposed over them. Simmons would tell his children, "You are equal to anyone, but if you think you're not, you're not."

Both men developed their appearance, their speaking abilities to best present themselves to others. Both were respected for their fierce sense of racial pride. To both men, jobs were the key to the economic empowerment which far too many African Americans lacked. As they climbed the ladder of success, they never stopped looking back. Simmons said that it is a waste of life for a man to fail to achieve when he has the opportunity. He felt it was just as important to achieve so that you could help others as to achieve to help yourself. Both men fought for the rights of their people.

In studying the lives of Mary McLeod Bethune, Booker T. Washington, John H. Johnson, and Jake Simmons, Jr., we find that all four persons were in a struggle for knowledge. Each had to struggle to discover who and what he or she was. This was quite a chore, since the social order around them seemed deliberately designed to rub them out or stuff their heads with symbols of what it wanted or feared them to be. Black writers seem to live in two worlds: American and Black, public mask and private face. They have two equally important perspectives which must somehow be brought together into a single field of vision: the subjective awareness and the political message, the unfolding sense of self and the absolute need to gain control over their history. Autobiography affords the greatest opportunities to combine the two perspectives because it develops like a village on the crossroads between the author's subjective life and his social historical life.

The purpose of autobiography is by definition to express and create subjective awareness. Yet, it can never be considered apart from its context. It shapes and interprets material but does not invent situation or character. The author and speaking subject are one and the same. The main character, who is the source of perception

inside the book, also has an objective existence outside of it. Whatever he says and does has an authenticity rarely possible to duplicate in a fictional construct. The “message” of necessity is simply an extension of his subjective awareness. Message becomes part of the impact of experience of the author.

In these four autobiographies, we find a combination of these two things. We learn to understand each separate individual. At the same time, we are introduced to their social-historical lives. We are introduced to the life of a freed slave in Booker T. Washington’s autobiography. We became acquainted with the life of a Black in the early 1900’s with Mary McLeod Bethune’s life. Then, we learned what life in the Southwest was for a Black person during the time of 1901 to 1981. Finally, we learned what life was in Chicago approximately 1918 to the present.

Each autobiography told us how the individuals handled the problems of each time. We certainly see that in all four cases, the individuals seemed to succeed with the same strengths: never giving up, ignoring failure, dealing with people of all races, having belief that they can succeed in anything that they do.

## VIII. SAMPLE LESSON PLANS

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### **Sample Lesson #1-Life of Booker T. Washington**

#### ***OBJECTIVE: THE STUDENT WILL BE ABLE TO:***

1. Identify the accomplishments of Booker T. Washington
2. Identify the role models in Washington’s life
3. Identify the characteristics that made Washington successful
4. Identify how Washington dealt with prejudice
5. Identify how Washington dealt with lack of ethnic credit associations

#### ***MATERIALS NEEDED: UP FROM SLAVERY***

##### **BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you know about Booker T. Washington?
2. What characteristics do you think make a person successful in business?
3. What do you think was the political environment in Booker T. Washington’s times?
4. What was life like for a Black person during Washington’s times?

#### ***PROCEDURE:***



1. Read UP FROM SLAVERY
2. Discuss book

**RELATED ACTIVITY: Students will go to the library and do a report on Booker T. Washington's life or on Tuskegee Institute**

### **Sample Lesson #2-Life of Mary McLeod Bethune**

**OBJECTIVE: THE STUDENT WILL BE ABLE TO:**

1. Identify the accomplishments of Mary McLeod Bethune
2. Identify the role models in Bethune's life
3. Identify the characteristics that made Bethune successful
4. Identify how Bethune dealt with prejudice
5. Identify how Bethune dealt with lack of ethnic credit associations

**MATERIALS NEEDED: MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE**

**BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you know about Mary McLeod Bethune?
2. What characteristics do you think make a person successful in business?
3. What do you think was the political environment in Mary McLeod Bethune's times?
4. What was life like for a Black person during Bethune's times?

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Read MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE
2. Discuss book

**RELATED ACTIVITY: Students will go to the library and do a report on Mary McLeod Bethune**

### **Sample Lesson #3-Life of John H. Johnson**

**OBJECTIVES: THE STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

1. Identify the accomplishments of John H. Johnson
2. Identify the role models in Johnson's life
3. Identify the characteristics that made Johnson successful
4. Identify how Johnson dealt with prejudice
5. Identify how Johnson dealt with lack of ethnic credit associations

**MATERIALS NEEDED: SUCCEEDING AGAINST ODDS, John H. Johnson**

**BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you know about John H. Johnson?
2. What characteristics do you think make a person successful in business?
3. What do you think was the political environment in Johnson's times?
4. What was life like for a Black person during Johnson's times?

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Read SUCCEEDING AGAINST ODDS
2. Discuss book

**RELATED ACTIVITY: Students will read an article from EBONY MAGAZINE regarding a famous Black person. Write an essay on the qualities that led this person in his search of success**

**Sample Lesson #4-Life of Jake Simmons, Jr.**

**OBJECTIVES: THE STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

1. Identify the accomplishments of Jake Simmons, Jr.
2. Identify the role models in Simmons's life
3. Identify the characteristics that made Simmons successful
4. Identify how Simmons dealt with prejudice
5. Identify how Simmons dealt with lack of ethnic credit associations

**MATERIALS NEEDED: STAKING A CLAIM, JAKE SIMMONS, JR.**

**BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you know about Jake Simmons, Jr. and the oil business?
2. What characteristics do you think make a person successful in business?
3. What do you think was the political environment in the Midwest in Simmons's times?
4. What was life like for a Black person during Simmons's times in the Midwest?

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Read STAKING A CLAIM, JAKE SIMMONS, JR.
2. Discuss Book

**RELATED ACTIVITY: Students will go to the library and do a research project on the oil industry in the 1920-1970 time period**

## **Sample Lesson #5-Characteristics of Success**

### **OBJECTIVES: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

1. Identify characteristics of success
2. Identify characteristics that will hamper success
3. Be able to demonstrate characteristics of success

### **MATERIALS NEEDED: EXTRAORDINARY BLACK AMERICANS FROM COLONIAL TO CONTEMPORARY TIMES**

#### **BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you think are the characteristics of success?
2. What characteristics could hamper success?
3. What characteristics can be developed?

#### **PROCEDURE:**

1. Read EXTRAORDINARY BLACK AMERICANS FROM COLONIAL TO CONTEMPORARY TIMES
2. Discuss different famous Black persons

### **RELATED ACTIVITY: Each student will demonstrate one characteristic of success**

## **Sample Lesson 6-Insurmountable Problems**

### **OBJECTIVES: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

1. Identify problems that could be encountered by a Black business person
2. Identify ways to deal with these problems
3. Learn how to make decisions on business problems

### **MATERIALS NEEDED: Case Studies and Speakers**

#### **BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS:**

1. What kinds of problems could be encountered by a Black business person?
2. How do you think you could deal with these problems?
3. What would be the best ways to learn how to deal with these problems?

#### **PROCEDURES:**

1. Read case studies

2. Listen to speakers
3. Discuss both

**RELATED ACTIVITY: Students will do case studies and submit them**

### **Sample Lesson #7-Black History**

**OBJECTIVES: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

1. Identify some important people in Black History
2. Identify what has been done by some of these people
3. Identify the importance of what these people have done

**MATERIALS: EYES ON THE PRIZE film series**

**BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS:**

1. Who do you know from Black History?
2. What did they do?
3. Of what significance were their contributions?

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Watch EYES ON THE PRIZE
2. Discuss

**RELATED ACTIVITY: Students will write an essay on one person mentioned in this series**

### **Sample Lesson #8-Role Models**

**OBJECTIVES: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

1. Select qualities that he/she will look for in role models
2. Identify qualities not wanted in role models
3. Select role models for himself/herself

**MATERIALS NEEDED: EBONY, JET, EM Magazines; Speakers, Books on Black Americans**

**BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS:**

1. What qualities do you admire in a person?
2. What qualities do you dislike in a person?
3. Are these qualities of a successful person?
4. Can you develop these qualities?

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Read magazines, books
2. Listen to speakers
3. Discuss

**RELATED ACTIVITY:** *Students will select one role model from the magazines, books or speakers and write an essay on his/her characteristics and how you could develop these characteristics*

## **IX. TEACHERS BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## X. STUDENT BIBLIOGRAPHY

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*Mary McLeod Bethune* , New York: Chelsea House Publishers, Malu, Halasa.

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*Up From Slavery* , Booker T. Washington.

## XI. SPEAKERS

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Speakers will be selected from the Black Community.

## XII. CLASSROOM MATERIALS NEEDED: All available in library.

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### Appendix A

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An Early Portrait of Booker T. Washington

*(figure available in print form)*

“The Pavilion,” Tuskegee Institute—Used as an auditorium before completion of chapel

*(figure available in print form)*

Buildings on Grounds When Purchased for the Tuskegee Institute—Used as first school buildings. The one on the right is still in use.

*(figure available in print form)*

### Appendix B

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Under Bethune’s firm direction, the Daytona Institute survived its financial difficulties and became a thriving center for the local black community. By 1906, so many students were enrolled at the school that Bethune found it necessary to move classes from the original cottage to a larger hall.

*(figure available in print form)*

Samuel and Patsy McLeod saved enough money to buy a small farm after their emancipation. Strongly religious people, they taught their children that God rewards those who have a strong spiritual faith and who work hard in the service of others.

*(figure available in print form)*

The nation's leading black educator, Booker T. Washington (seated, left) is shown here with faculty members at Tuskegee Institute, the black vocational college he founded in Tuskegee, Alabama, in 1881. Bethune once dreamed that Washington gave her a diamond to help her found a school.

*(figure available in print form)*

By selling home-baked sweet potato pies and staging public choir concerts by her students, Bethune managed—just barely—to gain the upper hand in her relentless struggle to raise funds for her school. A woman of boundless energy and determination, she told associates who complained that a task was impossible, “Go ahead and do it.”

*(figure available in print form)*

## Appendix C

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Business magnate James M. Gamble contributed most of the money required for the construction of one of the Daytona Institute's first buildings. Much of the funding for the school came from wealthy northerners such as Gamble who vacationed in Florida during the winter.

*(figure available in print form)*

The internationally acclaimed poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar served as an inspiring example of black achievement to the students at Bethune's school.

*(figure available in print form)*

In 1936, Bethune was appointed director of the National Youth Administration's Division of Negro Affairs and thus became the first black woman to be placed in charge of a federal agency. She is shown here with members of other New Deal agencies.

*(figure available in print form)*

## Appendix D

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My mother, Gertrude Johnson Williams, as a young woman.

*(figure available in print form)*

A friend and mentor, Harry H. Pace, president of Supreme Liberty Life Insurance Company.

*(figure available in print form)*

The future publisher as a young commencement speaker, Du Sable High School, 1936.

*(figure available in print form)*

With another friend and mentor, Earl B. Dickerson. ( *Norman L. Hunter* )

*(figure available in print form)*

Returning to Arkansas City birthplace for first time in 53 years, 1986. ( *James L. Mitchell* )

*(figure available in print form)*

## Appendix E

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Receiving NAACP Springarn Award, 1966.

*(figure available in print form)*

Named “Magazine Publisher of the Year” by the Magazine Publishers Association, 1972. ( *Camera 1* )

*(figure available in print form)*

Inducted into the Black Press Hall of Fame, 1987. ( *Bob Johnson* )

*(figure available in print form)*

Honored for distinguished contributions to journalism with *USA Today* Editor John C. Quinn and Executive Producer Don Hewitt of “60 Minutes,” 1986. ( *Maurice Sorrell* )

*(figure available in print form)*

At National Advisory Board meeting of First Commercial Bank, Little Rock, Arkansas—1987.

*(figure available in print form)*

## Appendix F

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J. J. Simmons III, about 1930, ( *Collection of J.J. Simmons III* )

*(figure available in print form)*

Tuskegee Institute’s 1918 championship basketball team, with Jake Jr. in the center, holding the ball. Even as a teenager he knew how to stand out from the crowd. ( *Collection of Blanche Jamierson* )

*(figure available in print form)*

As a high school student in 1952, Donald Simmons was the first black elected “youth governor” of the Oklahoma YMCA’s Youth in Government program. ( *Simmons Family Collection* )

*(figure available in print form)*

## Appendix G

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(Left) Jake Jr.’s mother, Rose Simmons, with her youngest child. Arvada, approximately 1910. Raised on the ranch of her grandfather. Cow Torr, the Creek tribe’s only black chief. Rose was a tough, sharp-eyed frontier woman. “Training” children for thrift and discipline was her greatest joy. ( *Simmons Family Collection* )

*(figure available in print form)*

(Right) Jake Sr. and Rose Simmons with granddaughter Ophelia, whom they raised after her mother was sent to prison for killing her husband’s mistress, photo taken approximately 1920. ( *Simmons Family Collection* )

*(figure available in print form)*

Muskogee, “Queen City of the Southwest,” at the turn of the century. ( *Tulsa University, Special Collections Library* )

*(figure available in print form)*

The Simmons family, about 1940: (left to right) J. J. III, Donald, Eva, Kenneth, and Jake Jr. The east Texas oil boom provided the family with a comfortable living, but taking the school board to the Supreme Court in an equal education lawsuit made Simmons the most controversial African-American in the state. ( *Simmons Family Collection* )

*(figure available in print form)*



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