



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN  
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



## September 2022 Her Story ENewsletter Mary McLeod Bethune Now in Statuary Hall

National Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C., contains 100 statues – two from each state. The addition of Florida's sculpture of Mary McLeod Bethune to Statuary Hall during 2022 now brings the total number of women represented to ten. The others are Helen Keller (Alabama), Dr. Florence Sabin (Colorado), Frances Willard (Illinois), Maria Sanford (Minnesota), Jeannette Rankin (Montana), Sarah Winnemucca (Nevada), Sakakawea (North Dakota), Mother Joseph (Washington), and Esther Hobart Morris (Wyoming). Bethune is the first Black woman to be represented in Statuary Hall and we devote this entire newsletter to her. The female sculptor of her statue was the first artist of Puerto Rican descent commissioned to provide a sculpture for National Statuary Hall.



Considered the most influential Black woman in the U.S. for more than thirty years, **Mary McLeod Bethune** was determined to provide educational opportunities for all Black people, especially women. Born of freed slaves, Bethune attended Scotia Seminary (today Barber-Scotia College) and began teaching. She moved to Daytona Beach, Florida and established her school in 1904 with \$1.50. Her initial student population was six students – five girls and her son. By 1923, the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute had grown to 300 female students and 25 faculty. In 1929, it became Bethune-Cookman College when it merged with the Cookman Institute of Jacksonville and became coeducational in the process. She was its President until 1942. Today the institution is known as Bethune-Cookman University.

Her legacy extends far beyond her academic accomplishments. Bethune championed and worked for both civil and women's rights. She had an active role in government service as well. Bethune was an advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Bethune played a key role in organizing Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet." When President Roosevelt named her director of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration, she became the highest ranking African American woman in government.



Bethune co-founded the United Negro College Fund in 1944. She was a member of the U.S. delegation at the founding of the United Nations in 1945 and the only Black woman at the founding conference. She was the founding president of the National Council of Negro Women and vice president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She was NAACP vice president from 1940 until her death. Bethune served as president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. She led voter registration drives. Bethune received nine honorary doctorates and has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. She has been featured on a U.S. postage stamp and the final home where she lived is a National Historic Site.

Her public speeches often contained noteworthy thoughts. One of her sayings, which is etched on the pedestal of her National Statuary Hall statue is "Invest in the human soul. Who knows, it might be a diamond in the rough."

Mary McLeod Bethune is among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us all. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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