

# **BLACK HISTORY**

## **BOOKER T. WASHINGTON**



Booker T. Washington was an educator who spoke for many African Americans during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Washington taught that hard work and patience were the best ways for them to improve their lives.

Booker Taliaferro Washington was born into slavery in Franklin County, Virginia, on April 5, 1856. Washington and his mother gained their freedom in 1865, after the end of the American Civil War. They moved to Malden, West Virginia.

Washington taught himself the alphabet and studied at a local school. He later attended the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. After graduating in 1875 he became a teacher.

In 1881 Washington was selected to head a new school for African Americans in Alabama. The school was called the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. It had few students and only two buildings. By 1915 Washington had built the institute into a university with about 1,500 students.

During this time, although slavery had ended, African Americans still did not have the same rights that white people had. Washington wanted African Americans to win the respect of whites by learning trades and farming skills. This, he said, would break down the divisions between the two races.

Washington had many African American followers, but W.E.B. Du Bois and other leaders disagreed with him. These leaders believed that African Americans should protest and fight directly for more rights.

Many whites admired and honored Washington. He became one of the most powerful African American leaders of his time. Washington died in Tuskegee, Alabama, on November 14, 1915.