

Up from Slavery



Booker Taliaferro Washington (1856-1915) was an American political leader, educator, orator and author. He was the dominant figure in the African American community in the United States from 1890 to 1915. Representing the last generation of black leaders born in slavery, and speaking for those blacks who had remained in the New South in an exploitative, racist *modus vivendi* with the white Southerners, Washington was able throughout the final 25 years of his life to maintain his standing as the major black leader because of the sponsorship by powerful whites, substantial support within the black community, his ability to raise educational funds from both groups and his accommodation to the social realities of the age of segregation. Washington was born into slavery to a white father and a slave mother in a rural area in southwestern Virginia. After emancipation, he worked in West Virginia in a variety of manual labor jobs before making his way to Hampton Roads seeking an education. He worked his way through Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (now Hampton University) and attended college at Wayland Seminary. After returning to Hampton as a teacher, in 1881 he was named as the first leader of the new Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Washington received national prominence for his Atlanta Address of 1895, attracting the attention of politicians and the public as a popular spokesperson for African American citizens. Washington built a nationwide network of supporters in many black communities, with black ministers, educators and businessmen composing his core supporters. Washington played a dominant role in black politics, winning wide support in the black community and among more liberal whites (especially rich Northern whites). He gained access to top national leaders in politics, philanthropy and education. Washington's efforts

included cooperating with white people and enlisting the support of wealthy philanthropists, which helped raise funds to establish and operate thousands of small community schools and institutions of higher education for the betterment of blacks throughout the South, work which continued for many years after his death. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

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