

Chapter 10

At Tuskegee

MANY friends, and newspapers, too, urged me to make a statement with regard to my future work at Tuskegee Institute. The people generally, especially the Southern people, were anxious to know whether there would be any change in the policies of the Institute. Accordingly, I thought that the inauguration at Tuskegee Institute would be an appropriate occasion to set forth my attitude and views concerning those phases of the work in which the public was most interested. Of course, I realized that the hundreds of interested people who assembled here for the Commencement and inauguration came largely because of their interest in Tuskegee Institute, and because they wanted to see and hear the man who was to succeed Doctor Washington. Mr. Low, the chairman, and Mr. Campbell, the vice-president, were both away because of illness, and Mr. William G. Willcox, a member of the Board, presided in their stead. Among the speakers for the occasion were His Excellency, Governor Charles Henderson of Alabama, Doctor Frissell of Hampton Institute, and President H.T. Kealing of Western University, Quindaro, Kansas, representing the South, the North, and the Negro, and reflecting in their words the kindly interest of the three elements upon whose coöperation the Tuskegee Institute has been built up. My own address, which follows, sets forth what had been frequently and urgently requested of me from many parts of the country:

At a time when racial misunderstandings and sectional strife, resulting from the Civil War and subsequent reconstruction, had reached an acute stage, when well-meaning men were trying to find an adequate method of racial readjustment, a Southern white man, and one who had strong Southern feelings, who saw the great need of the Negro here in Alabama and the South, and who was filled with an earnest desire to help him, wrote to a Northern white man with equally as strong Northern feelings, inquiring if a coloured man could be sent to Tuskegee to begin a work similar in plan and purpose to that which had been started at Hampton—a type of educa-

tion which was at that time not only woefully misunderstood, but bitterly opposed by many of the leading men of the Negro race.

On that day in July, 1881 when the modest, quiet, unassuming young man, Booker T. Washington, reported with a letter from General Armstrong, his former teacher, and was cordially received and welcomed to this community by Mr. George W. Campbell, then it was that a form of coöperation began, the scope and effectiveness of which were destined to command the respect and admiration, not only of this country, but also of the entire civilized world. Here met the three elements—the North, the South, and the Negro—the three elements that must be taken into account in any genuinely satisfactory adjustment of race relations. It was natural for white men to be considered as important factors in any and all adjustments and problems, whether civic, business, educational, or otherwise. Up to this time the Negro had usually been the problem and not regarded as an element worthy of serious consideration, so far as any first-hand contribution was concerned that he could make toward the solution of any large social question.

These two men, representing the two extremes of sectional sentiment—Mr. Campbell, a former slave owner, the South; and General Armstrong, a former officer in the Federal Army, the North—both broad in sympathy and wise in judgment, and entirely void of any selfish motives, both actuated by a sincere desire to reunite the nation in spirit and purpose, as well as in law and lineage, both patriotic American citizens—these two gentlemen united their forces for the primary object of lifting the burden of ignorance, and all the consequences resulting therefrom, in the South. Mr. Campbell wanted a Negro to undertake the work, and General Armstrong knew of at least one Negro, Booker Washington, who could do the work. These three men, in a united purpose for the common good of humanity, began a coöperation which has been strikingly characteristic of Tuskegee Institute, and a coöperation vitally necessary in the promotion of any successful work for the permanent betterment of the Negro race in our country.

The Tuskegee School, from the very beginning, has had a moral and material support and backing from Mr. Campbell and other white people in this community, without which this institution would have been impossible. No one knew and appreciated this fact more than did Doctor Washington, and no one could have been more grateful than he was for it. There were also coloured men who stood by the founder of Tuskegee Institute

in those early days. In his autobiography, "Up From Slavery," Doctor Washington fittingly says:

"In the midst of all the difficulties which I encountered in getting the little school started, and since then through a period of nineteen years, there are two men among all the many friends of the school in Tuskegee upon whom I have depended constantly for advice and guidance; and the success of the undertaking is largely due to these men, from whom I have never sought anything in vain. I mention them simply as types. One is a white man and an ex-slaveholder, Mr. George W. Campbell; the other is a black man and an ex-slave, Mr. Lewis Adams. I do not know two men whose advice and judgment I would feel more like following in anything that concerns the life and development of the school than that of these two men."

Needless to say, Mr. Wright W. Campbell has stood by Doctor Washington and the school with the same devotion and sacrifice as did his noble father. I might mention also such men as Mr. Hare and scores of the other white and coloured people in this county and state who were also very kind, sympathetic, and generous in those early days of the school, and I am glad to state that they are equally as sympathetic today.

The experimental seed of this new coöperation which was planted in 1881 by Mr. Campbell, and which during thirty-four years was so wisely, patiently, and devotedly nurtured by Doctor Washington, has grown into a substantial reality in successful racial coöperation and helpfulness here at Tuskegee. It has far exceeded the most sanguine expectations of our most hopeful friends of fifty years ago.

This unselfish working together of the white and coloured races was truly of very great importance, but it was of equal importance to prove what was at that time very seriously doubted—whether there could be developed within the Negro race any forceful, unemotional, business-like, harmonious working together. This was a mooted question, and one about which there was much real, though often kindly and sympathetic, skepticism even among our own people. Doctor Washington, believing as he always did, in the possibilities of this race, set out to prove that Negroes could work together and under Negro leadership, too, in educational as well as in business organizations. The success which those who compose the membership of the National Negro Business League, as well as many others outside the League, have had, was to him a reward of genuine satisfaction for his unfaltering faith in his people.

While he always sought the advice, criticism, and help of the white race, he drew the "colour line" when it came to the actual work of the institution. How well he succeeded is too evident for comment. These grounds and buildings, the consecrated lives and work of the men and women whom he gathered about him, are eloquent and convincing evidence of the wisdom of his course. I think now of such workers as Mr. Lewis Adams, Mr. R.H. Hamilton, and Mrs. Adela H. Logan, who, like our great leader, "have conquered in the fight." We have with us still such faithful workers as Mr. Warren Logan, Mr. John H. Washington, and Mr. C.W. Greene, who were willing with Doctor Washington to bear the "burden and heat" of those early days—these, with many others of the pioneer, as well as the present-day workers, because of their services and sacrifice, have made possible the Tuskegee Institute of today, not merely the grounds and buildings, not even this splendid body of students, but transcendingly more significant and beautiful, they gave us the "Tuskegee Spirit"—the spirit of coöperation and consecration.

That spirit was not and it could not be confined to this campus. It is equally manifest in the lives and work of the thousands of graduates and former students of the Institute such as Mr. William J. Edwards, Mr. W. H. Holtzclaw, Mr. Edgar A. Long, and Miss Cornelia Bowen, who are but types of hundreds of others. They, like our great teacher, are working earnestly to bring about a clearer and better understanding between the races, "hastening that far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves."

Doctor Washington's ideas of education appeared so simple, so unconventional, and even so unacademic, so vastly different from what had previously been expected of an educational institution, that he was often misunderstood. His methods and motives were candidly questioned in some quarters by some honest people, especially by members of his own race. This feeling took such form as would have discouraged and hampered an ordinary man, but with Doctor Washington, who was truly a prophet and a seer, such opposition served only as a spur to greater and more persistent efforts.

When it was said that he did not approve of higher education for the Negro, he was at that time giving employment here to more Negroes with college training than any other single institution in the land. The fact that he was a trustee of both Howard and Fisk Universities shows that he was in accord with such work. Education was to him the means only, and not

the end. The end was life—the life of the ignorant, poverty-stricken Negro who was earnestly longing for a chance. Doctor Washington cared little about the kind of education the Negro received, but he was exceedingly anxious that it should be thorough and well-suited to his reasonably immediate needs. The truth is, the need of industry and skill, of honesty and efficiency, the lack of land and decent homes, the imperative necessity for better methods of farming, together with a woeful lack of morality, which was prevalent among many of the untrained millions of Negroes—all this made such a strong appeal that any system of education which did not offer immediate relief for these masses made comparatively little impression on him.

Doctor Washington worked out a plan of education which showed that the training of the hand should strengthen and supplement the mental and moral activities, especially of those who were fitting themselves for leadership. This system of all-round education for larger service, which was so effectively carried on under his direction, has been so productive of good results that it has attracted the attention and respect of educators the world over. He worked out here a system of correlation of work and study, of industrial and academic instruction, as complete and as satisfactory as could probably be found anywhere. Important and satisfactory as this system was, however, the spirit back of it was of infinitely greater importance. It was the spirit of coöperation between the coloured workers in the school and the white citizens outside of the school, and a consecration for the relief of mankind everywhere, whether in Macon County, the State of Alabama, or in the Nation.

No greater or more serious responsibility was ever placed upon the Negro than is left us here at Tuskegee. The importance of the work and the gravity of the duty that has been assigned the principal, the officers, and the teachers in forwarding this work cannot be overestimated. But along with the responsibility and difficulties we have a rare opportunity, one almost to be envied—an opportunity to help in the solution of a great problem, the human problem of race, not merely changing the mode of life and the ideals of a race but of almost equal importance, changing the ideas of other races regarding that race. Let us keep in mind the fact that while the outlook was never more hopeful, the Negro problem is not yet solved. True, there are many people who thoroughly believe in Negro education, but we must remember that there are also many honest, sincere white people who are still doubtful as to the wisdom of educating the coloured

man. We can and we must convince that class of people that Negro education from every point of view is worth while. While there is great encouragement in the fact that 70 per cent of the Negro population can read and write, it is not safe to assume that 70 per cent of the Negro race are really and truly educated. Our progress in this country has been wonderful, and we have every reason for rejoicing; but ignorance, shiftlessness, disease, inefficiency, and crime are still prevalent among our people. Colour and conduct still count in this question, but let us remember, friends, that conduct counts a great deal more than colour.

General Armstrong, Doctor Washington, and Doctor Frissell, with the support and influence of such Southern men as Mr. Campbell, have shown us the way out, have shown us how these perplexing questions may be met and solved. If we follow the course mapped out here, we shall have the hearty coöperation and support of as distinguished, as wise, as unselfish, and as devoted a body of men as is to be found anywhere in this land. I refer to the Board of Trustees of this institution. Not only so, but we will have also the cordial help and sympathy of the white and coloured people of this state, from His Excellency, Governor Henderson, and Superintendent Feagin, both of whom honour this occasion by their presence, down to the humblest citizen. This whole country, too, will stand by us, if we are wise, sincere, and unselfish. I repeat, our responsibility is tremendous, and our opportunity is great. We should measure up to our responsibilities and our opportunities, and we can do it. Not by arrogant self-seeking; not by bluff, sham, or bombast; not by flippant fault-finding; not by shrinking at difficulty, or shirking duty; not by the cherishing of prejudice against white men or black men can the Tuskegee Institute live and prosper and serve.

In order that this institution shall continue to carry forward the ideals of its great founder, in order that it shall not cease to render large service to humankind, in order that we shall keep the respect and confidence of the people of this land, we must, first, every one of us—principal, officers, teachers, graduates, and students—use every opportunity and strive in every reasonable way to develop and strengthen between white and black people, North and South, that unselfish coöperation which has characterized the Tuskegee Institute from its beginning. Second, we must patiently and persistently and in the spirit of unselfish devotion, follow the methods of education which in this school have been so distinctive, so unique, and so helpful. Third, we must consecrate and reconsecrate our lives to this work as instruments in God's hands for the training of black men and

women for service, in whatever capacity, or in whatever locality they may find a human need. Fourth, there must be no cantankerousness here—we must all work absolutely together.

In his last talk from this platform, Doctor Washington spoke on the value and importance of team-work. He urged that officers, teachers, and students, in every department and in every phase of the work, should cultivate, more than ever before, team-work, emphasizing the necessity of this vital essential of the school's success. If team-work, my friends, was necessary in this school under the leadership of Doctor Washington, how much more imperative the necessity is now, inasmuch as we have not the help and inspiration of his strong words and visible presence.

If we are to be true to this great and sacred trust; if we are to carry out the aims and purposes of Booker T. Washington, the founder of this institution, we must each cherish and maintain the spirit which has always permeated the life and work of this place—the spirit of self-forgetfulness—the spirit of service and sacrifice—the *“Tuskegee Spirit”*—*the spirit of co-operation and of consecration*. It is only in this spirit that the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute can continue to render service to our people, to our state, to our country.

I cannot more fittingly or forcibly close these remarks than with the use of the following words from Doctor Washington's last Sunday evening talk: “We want to have team-work,” he said, “not only in the direction to which I have referred, but most of all, highest of all, we want to have team-work in our spiritual life, in our religious life, in the prayer meetings, in the preaching service, in every devotional exercise. We can get it by each one forgetting his own personal ambitions, forgetting selfishness, forgetting all that stands in the way of perfect team-work.”

I was very pleasantly impressed on this occasion by the deep and sympathetic interest of the alumni of the Institute, which was indicated by the presence of groups representing various classes which came from many sections of the country. I recall among others a special party from Chicago headed by Mr. Claude A. Barnett of the class of 1906 which brought, besides many alumni from that city, a large number of distinguished coloured people from the Northwest. It was also gratifying to have present on this occasion a large party from Virginia, composed largely of men and women with whom I had been associated for many years in various movements affecting the life and interests of the coloured people of that state. I was very much surprised when, in the midst of the exercises, President John

M. Gandy of Petersburg, in behalf of the group, presented me with a loving cup in token of their good wishes and esteem.

It was reassuring to receive in connection with this event various letters and telegrams from men and women in the South, both white and coloured, who gave me assurance of good will toward the work of Tuskegee and cordial coöperation and support of my own efforts in connection therewith. His Excellency, Governor Charles Henderson, was especially cordial in his welcome to the State of Alabama and pledged his support and the continued interest of the white and coloured people of the state in the work being carried on at Tuskegee Institute.

We have followed closely the policies of Doctor Washington. There have of necessity been some changes and some reorganization. This was to be expected, but there have been fewer changes than might have been expected under the circumstances. Doctor Washington was a man unique in method as well as personality. I had supposed that any one succeeding him would find it necessary to devise plans and methods better adapted to his own capacities and temperament. The fact is, I soon found that he had constructed a working organization that was remarkably simple and equally effective in its operations, an organization that sometimes seemed to function as well in the absence of the principal as when he was present. It was this, in fact, that enabled Doctor Washington and enables the present principal to spend a considerable part of his time away from the Institute in securing the funds necessary to carry on the work.

Among the first to greet me at the Institute was Mr. J.H. Washington, the brother of Doctor Washington and for many years General Superintendent of Industries, who has had a great deal to do with the physical development of the Institute in all of its phases. He joined his brother a few years after the work began and has ever since given himself unreservedly to the interests of the Institute. The confidence and devotion of the two brothers was touchingly beautiful. He has recently been obliged to give up active responsibility, but is nevertheless just as much interested in every aspect of the Institute's work. It is a pleasure and benediction for teachers and students to see him about the grounds, and his advice and counsel are still found very valuable on many matters touching the interests of the Institute.

During the interval between Doctor Washington's death and the inauguration of the new principal the responsibilities of this post devolved upon the vice-principal and treasurer, Mr. Warren Logan. Mr. Logan came to the Institute at Mr. Washington's invitation two years after Mr. Washington

himself came. He, like Mr. J. H. Washington, was a graduate of Hampton Institute. Mr. Logan had been teaching school in Maryland. He had not been at the Institute long before the acute financial needs which Mr. Washington continually faced in the early years of the school led him to ask Mr. Logan if he had any money. Mr. Logan answered that he had seventy-five dollars, and seventy-five dollars was a great deal in those days in the hands of a coloured school teacher. It represented, I think, Mr. Logan's savings for two years. Doctor Washington forthwith borrowed it and put it into the work of the Institute. Mr. Logan through all these years has stood by the school with the same spirit of self-sacrifice and, as treasurer, has husbanded its finances in every possible way. Doctor Washington once mentioned to Doctor Frissell and myself that Tuskegee would not have been possible had he not had the help of Mr. Logan. He has held about every position in the school: treasurer, business manager, director of the Academic Department, and almost from the beginning has acted as principal in Doctor Washington's absence. During the interim when he served as acting principal the school went on with its accustomed smoothness. The casual observer would scarcely have known that Doctor Washington himself was not living and present.

Long before the death of Doctor Washington I had known of the great service of Mrs. Washington to the Institute as Dean of Women, which began many years before she became Mrs. Washington. She has been a tremendous force in the development of the school, sharing without reserve the many and increasing burdens which the rapid growth of the school made necessary. While her special work has been the direction of girls' industries at Dorothy Hall, she has been no less active and helpful in all of the other workings of the organization. She has stood by the work since her husband's death as she had done before, with a loyalty and devotion to the best interests of Tuskegee that have known no abatement.

In assuming the duties of principal, I very naturally came into close and intimate contact with Mr. Emmett J. Scott, who for many years served as private secretary to Doctor Washington and later as secretary of the institution. I found him to be a rarely competent and painstaking executive. No one at the Institute knew more about the varied and peculiar activities which Tuskegee fostered outside of the school proper, or sensed more clearly what Tuskegee's attitude should be touching public questions generally.

It was with the help of Mr. Scott that Doctor Washington was able to

build up the very effective executive machinery of the Institute and to develop his wide field of public activity.

In the various other departments of the Institute, I found that Doctor Washington had gathered about him men each of whom had a clear and firm grasp on his own particular branch of the work. In the department of Mechanical Industries Mr. Robert R. Taylor was carrying forward his work with admirable efficiency. Prof. George W. Carver in agricultural research and experimental work was accomplishing results that were attracting attention throughout the South and in other parts of the world. The Institute hospital, in charge of Dr. John A. Kenney, I found to be one of the most useful and efficient departments of the work. The department of Accounting in charge of Mr. Charles H. Gibson, and the Boys' Department with Major Julius B. Ramsey as commandant, were, along with others, under the direction of very capable men, all of whom were most loyal to Doctor Washington and coöperated very heartily with the incoming principal.

I know of no educational institution whose Board of Trustees takes a more active and personal interest in its work than is true of the Trustees of Tuskegee Institute. An institution is truly fortunate when men of the type of Mr. William G. Willcox—formerly chairman of the Board of Education of New York City and representing large business interests there—are willing to give so much of their time and thought to the internal affairs of a school like Tuskegee. It was soon after my own coming to Tuskegee that Mr. Willcox consented to accept the chairmanship of the Board of Trustees, following the death of Mr. Seth Low.

Among those associated with Mr. Willcox on the Board of Trustees are such men as Mr. Frank Trumbull, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Chesapeake and Ohio as well as several other railroads; Mr. Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck & Company, Chicago; Dr. William Jay Schieffelin of New York; Mr. Charles E. Mason of Boston; and Mr. William M. Scott of Philadelphia. These gentlemen have been untiring in their efforts to sustain the work of the Institute and have responded to every call upon their time and energy which the principal has made upon them. Not only these men but the wives of many of them have been equally interested and responsive to the needs of Tuskegee. We owe the John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital to Mrs. Charles E. Mason; and much of the equipment for the girls' industries, as well as for their dormitories, to the thoughtful interest of Mrs. William G. Willcox and Mrs. Julius Rosenwald. In many ways these ladies have manifested a keen and discriminating interest in

all the activities for girls at the Institute that has been most helpful to their proper development. This is true also of Mrs. Seth Low, who, during the time when her husband was chairman of the Board of Trustees, accompanied him on his visits to the Institute and concerned herself personally about the health and comfort of the girls.

Of course, it was not easy to give up a life and environment in which one had spent more than twenty-five years under very pleasant circumstances. It meant the severance of very close and intimate ties and the giving up of a work not only within but also without Hampton Institute that had taken a very strong hold upon my sympathies and to which I was giving my best thought and endeavour.

Mrs. Moton felt the change quite as keenly as I did and in some ways was more reluctant about severing our connection with the work of Hampton Institute than I was. It was a source of satisfaction to both of us at Hampton to be near our parents, who are well advanced in years. Between my own mother and myself there has always been a real companionship such as has not developed between her and the other children, which was due in all probability to the fact that for some years, both prior to and after my father's death and until she married again, many of the responsibilities of the household, notwithstanding my youth, I was obliged to share. There are seven of us—four boys and three girls. Three besides myself attended school at Hampton and all are married and succeeding in a way that is very pleasing to my mother. One of them, Joshua E. Blanton, is in educational work at Penn School in South Carolina, where he holds a responsible position in a unique institution. My mother even now exerts a very strong influence over all of her children, and any one of them would hesitate to follow a course of which she had expressed disapproval.

Following the inauguration Mrs. Moton and I took up life at Tuskegee in very much the same way that we had lived at Hampton. We established our home amid very pleasant surroundings where Mrs. Moton and our four children—two girls and two boys—have grown to be just as happy and contented as they were at Hampton. While the two institutions are very much alike, there are some aspects in which they are quite unlike. At Tuskegee we have the unique situation of a large institution—really a community—of about three thousand coloured people conducting and directing all of the activities incident to their daily life. While there have always been the pleasantest relations with the white people of the town of Tuskegee and the county as well, the school community is as separate and

distinct in its daily activities as if they were many miles apart. Visitors to the Institute, white as well as coloured, generally find it a matter of interest and pride to observe here a well-ordered institution entirely and successfully directed by Negroes.

It was just after the close of this first year's work that Tuskegee sustained one of its greatest losses in the death of Doctor Frissell, the one man, excepting Doctor Washington himself, who in the last thirty years has been most active and helpful in Negro education. There was scarcely a man in the country more genuinely loved and respected by people of both sections and races than Doctor Frissell. For thirty-seven years he was a worker at Hampton, first as chaplain and vice principal, and after General Armstrong's death, in 1893, as principal. Under his quiet, unassuming leadership, Hampton Institute grew, not only physically, but in influence and power among blacks and whites throughout the land. He stood shoulder to shoulder with Doctor Washington in all movements touching the best interests of the South. There was never between the two any semblance of misunderstanding or rivalry. Doctor Washington was always glad, by word or deed, to serve Hampton; and Doctor Frissell gladly used every opportunity to do the same for Tuskegee. But it is better to let these two friends, one white, one black, each express in his own words his affectionate regard for the other:

His was a wonderful life of faith. I believe that no man without a belief in an overruling Providence could ever have stood what Booker T. Washington stood; could ever have endured what he endured. He believed that down underneath what sometimes seemed like prejudice there was a heart of love, and he found that heart.

— H.B. FRISSELL.

Doctor Frissell is one of the rarest human souls that any one can know. He gives himself—body, mind, and soul—to the service of others. I have never met a man of such rare unselfishness and such rare modesty.

— B.T. WASHINGTON.

Almost the last words of Doctor Washington to me in a New York hospital, three days before his death, were about Doctor Frissell's health, when he expressed the hope that Doctor Frissell might be spared for many years to our race and country. It is hard for one not intimately associated with the two men to appreciate the real love and genuine affection existing

between them. They both worked and sacrificed with one unselfish purpose, and for one absorbing and inspiring cause, the bringing to pass of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Mr. Frank Trumbull, in an address at Tuskegee Institute, referred to Mr. Ogden, Mr. Low, Doctor Washington, and Doctor Frissell as "a very remarkable quartette." It was truly a remarkable group; courageous, unselfish soldiers they were; simply, patiently, wisely, unselfishly fighting for broader sympathy and more thorough understanding between men of all races.

After careful and painstaking search Dr. James E. Gregg, of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, was called to be the principal of Hampton Institute; and the Trustees have been most fortunate in finding a man who with great vigour and wisdom has assumed the responsibility of carrying forward that work. Doctor Gregg has manifested at Hampton the spirit so characteristic of his predecessors, which is so much needed in the social and economic readjustments of the nation just now.

Tuskegee and Hampton have always worked in closest sympathy. They cannot do otherwise in the future. The placing of such a man as Doctor Gregg at the head of Hampton and the election of the principal of Tuskegee Institute as a trustee of Hampton will insure equally as great and helpful coöperation between the two schools as in the past, and will also, I hope, help in bringing about greater sympathy and coöperation in all efforts for Negro education.