major contributor to a successful African American women's campaign to purchase and preserve the home of abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass.

FURTHER READING

Washington, Booker T.
- Education: Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (Hampton, Va.), 1872–75
- Accomplishments: president, Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, Tuskegee, Ala. (1881); founder, National Negro Business League (1900); author, The Future of the American Negro (1899), Up from Slavery (1901), and other books
- Died: Nov. 14, 1915, Tuskegee, Ala.

BORN THE SON of a white man and a slave woman, Booker Taliaferro Washington spent his childhood in slavery and his adolescence working in salt and coal mines in West Virginia. At 16, he walked some 500 miles to the all-black Hampton Institute in Virginia, seeking an education. He paid his tuition by working as a janitor. At Hampton, Washington learned both academic and practical subjects, including brick masonry, and absorbed the school's philosophy of utilitarian education and character building. After graduation, he became a teacher himself, returning to teach at Hampton.

In 1881, philanthropic white southerners who hoped to found an institute resembling Hampton in Alabama offered Washington the presidency of a school he would have to create from the ground up. He started building with student labor and local donations, but swiftly became adept at fund-raising on the national lecture circuit. Washington's program at Tuskegee, which stressed the Protestant work ethic, high moral standards, and the development of industrial skills such as carpentry, farming, and domestic arts, attracted funding from such notable benefactors as industrialist Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. In less than three decades, the school grew to 100 buildings on 2,000 acres of land. It also had an endowment of nearly $2 million dollars and an all-black faculty of 200, including eminent botanist George Washington Carver and sociologist Monroe Nathan Work.

In 1895, Washington's reputation as a speaker and a representative of black America earned him an invitation to address the Atlanta Cotton States Exposition. In his speech, he expressed the belief that African Americans should be educated to work for economic success in farming and the trades and would settle for respectability without agitating for social equality. "Our greatest danger," Washington said in the speech, "is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands.... No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities." Washington's speech pleased southern whites, whose support Washington needed to keep Tuskegee running, but angered militant black leaders like W. E. B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter, who felt he had promised whites that African Americans would advance through "property, industry, skill, intelligence, and character" but would also continue to cooperate in their own disfranchisement and social segregation. They derided the speech by calling it the Atlanta Compromise.

After Atlanta and the publication of his popular autobiography, Up from Slavery, in 1901, Washington became the unofficial black affairs adviser to white politicians and government officials. Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft consulted with Washington in all matters concerning African Americans, including appointments. Roosevelt even invited Washington to dine at the White House in 1901, though he later regretted the action because of the public indignation it aroused among whites.

Black and white supporters of the early 20th-century civil rights organizations, the Niagara Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), increasingly opposed Washington, whose philosophy undercut their own calls for civil rights. Instead of preaching Washington's ideas of "accommodation," these groups urged people to protest segregation and violence against blacks. They called Washington's political influence the "Tuskegee Machine."

Washington fought his critics, sometimes even planting spies in their organizations. But he was not blind to the real problems African Americans faced in his day. He worked behind the scenes, secretly sponsoring civil rights and antiviolence lawsuits and funneling support to black colleges. Privately, he supported many of the NAACP's goals while publicly urging black Americans to work hard and exercise good citizenship, patience, and Christian love to overcome the hatred of white Americans.

Complex, manipulative, and shrewd, Washington chose not to challenge the racial hostility of his time, but did what he felt was necessary to ensure the future for African Americans in the segregated South.

SEE ALSO
African Americans; Carver, George Washington; Civil rights; Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt (W. E. B.); Colleges and universities; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Race relations; Roosevelt, Theodore; Segregation; South; the World's fairs and exhibitions

FURTHER READING