

## PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

### Madam C.J. Walker

*entrepreneur, activist, philanthropist*

*"I want you to understand that your first duty is to humanity.*

*I want others to look at us and see that we care not just about ourselves but about others."*

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#### Background Information

Born: December 23, 1867

Death: May 25, 1919

Walker, originally named Sarah Breedlove, was the first member of her family to be born after the Civil War ended. She was orphaned after both her parents when she was 6. Walker was widowed at 20 after her first husband died. She moved to St. Louis and worked to support her daughter as a laundress. While she was there, she met her second husband, Charles J. Walker whose last name inspired her eventual business.<sup>1</sup>

#### Walker's Resistance

When she was young, she realized she had a disorder that caused her to lose the majority of her hair. This inspired her to create a treatment that would revolutionize methods for Black women who cared for their own hair. She developed what is known as the "Walker system", this created lotions, items to heal the scalp, and iron combs made specifically for Black women. Her method of treating hair was very effective and unique because other products were not as effective. She moved to Denver, Colorado and created the "Madam C. J. Walker Manufacturing Company" and gained many loyal customers.<sup>1</sup> She also created many jobs for Black women as sales-representatives for her company. Widely known as philanthropist, Walker donated to many organizations such as the Indianapolis YMCA, the NAACP, National Conference on Lynching and homes for the elderly.

#### Achievements

Walker was the first woman to become a self-made millionaire.<sup>2</sup> The Walker Building is a registered National Historic Landmark in her honor. Walker left behind a legacy of Black, female entrepreneurship that inspires businesswomen today.

<sup>1</sup> History.com Editors. (2020, March 2). *Madam C. J. Walker*. History. <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/madame-c-j-walker>

<sup>2</sup> Klem, M. (n.d.). *Madam C. J. Walker*. Philanthropy Roundtable. <https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/almanac/people/hall-of-fame/detail/madam-c.-j.-walker>

