

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

MARY BURNETT TALBERT

social reformer, suffragist, orator, peace activist

“...no permanent peace will triumph until all are ready to do justice and give justice to all.”



COURTESY OF THE CHAMPION
MAGAZINE, 1916

Background Information

Born: September 17, 1866; Died: October 15, 1923

Talbert was born in Oberlin, Ohio to Cornelius and Caroline Nicholls Burnett. She graduated from Oberlin High School at age sixteen and then went on to pursue a higher education. In 1886, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Oberlin College, where she was the only African American woman in her graduating class. Upon graduation, she began working as a professor at a university. Through hard work, Talbert became assistant principal of Union High School, which was the highest position held by an African American woman in the state of Arkansas at the time. She then went on to pursue a higher degree in education, though it was unusual for a woman, especially an African American woman, to do so at the time.¹

Talbert's Resistance

She used her education and connections to fight to improve the status of African Americans at a national and international level. She participated in both anti-lynching and anti-racism efforts, as well as fighting for women's suffrage. She used her oration skills to educate national and international audiences on the injustices and oppression faced by African Americans, as well as promote acts of legislation to address these issues.

Talbert was foundational in organizing civil rights activism in the United States. She was a founder of the Niagara Movement, which paved the way for its successor, the NAACP. Acting in a manner ahead of her time, she was laying foundational work that would later aid the Civil Rights Movement.

In 1910, she was one of the co-founders of the first chapter of the NAACP in Buffalo. She then went on to co-found chapters in Texas and Louisiana. She served as a board member, and then as vice president, of the NAACP. In 1921, due to her long-time advocacy, she was appointed National Director of the NAACP Anti-Lynching Campaign.²

Achievements

Talbert was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 2005.³ Her work within the Black Woman Club movement helped to organize new branches of clubs across the country. She was also the first woman to be awarded the Spingarn Medal, which is the highest honor awarded by the NAACP.

Essential Questions

1. How did Talbert fight against racism throughout her life?
2. How were her actions acts of resistance?
 - a. What was it that she was working against/to resist?
3. Why is it important to create organizations?
 - a. Are organizations a necessary component to ending social issues?
4. ***“...no permanent peace will triumph until all are ready to do justice and give justice to all.”***
 - a. Given what you know about Talbert, how does this quote symbolize her resistance?
 - b. Do you think this quote applies today? Why or Why not?

¹Davis, L. (2009, February 07). Mary B. Talbert (1866-1923). Retrieved October 7, 2020, from <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/talbert-mary-b-1866-1923/>

²Mary Burnett Talbert -. *Archives of Women's Political Communication*. Retrieved 2020-04-12.

³National Women's Hall of Fame, Mary Burnett Talbert