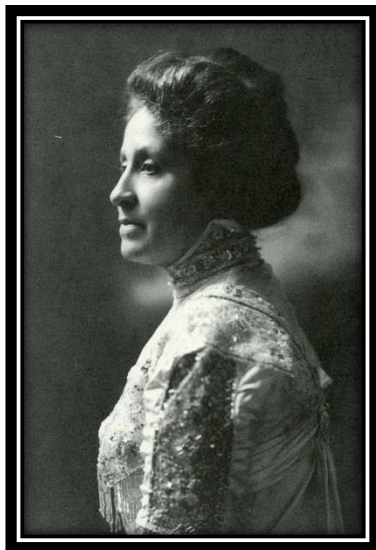


PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

MARY CHURCH TERRELL

civil rights activist, journalist, suffragist

“And so, lifting as we climb, onward and upward we go, struggling and striving, and hoping that the buds and blossoms of our desires will burst into glorious fruition ere long.”



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Background Information

Born: September 23, 1863; Died: July 24, 1954

Terrell was born in Memphis, Tennessee to formerly enslaved parents. Her father, a successful businessman, became one of the first African American millionaires in the South. This wealth allowed Terrell to attend the Antioch College Laboratory School in Ohio, as well as Oberlin College. She earned both Bachelor's and Master's degrees before beginning her career teaching at Wilburforce College. Here she worked for two years before relocating to Washington, D.C., where she taught at the M Street Colored High School. Terrell met her husband at the school, and they later had two children.¹

Terrell's Resistance

Terrell's passion for civil rights activism began in 1892, after a close friend was lynched because his business was economic competition for a local white business. As a result, she became involved with fellow activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett in anti-lynching efforts. She held a deep-rooted belief that racial discrimination could be ended through racial uplift. Her personal motto "Lifting as We Climb" became the motto of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), a group she co-founded in 1896. Terrell also acted as president of this organization from 1896 to 1901.

Believing that women's voting rights were essential to elevating the status of black women, Terrell became involved in the Suffrage Movement. She campaigned for Black women's suffrage through picketing the White House under the Wilson Administration.

Terrell was a founding member of the NAACP and the College Alumnae Club (which later became known as the National Association of University Women).¹

Achievements

In 2002, Terrell was included on Molefi Kete Asante's list of 100 Greatest African Americans.² In 2009, Terrell was among 12 civil rights activists acknowledged in a U.S. Postal Service postage stamp series.³ In 2018, Oberlin College named its main library the Mary Church Terrell Main Library.⁴

