

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

SELENA SLOAN BUTLER

community leader, child-welfare activist

“...consciousness of the importance of child welfare is being deeply felt in all departments of our social and educational systems.”

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PUBLIC DOMAIN IMAGE

Background Information

Born: January 4, 1872; Died: October 7, 1964

Butler was born in Thomasville, Georgia. Her mother was of African and Indian descent and her father was a white man who supported his family financially from a distance. Her mother died when she was young. She received elementary schooling from local missionaries. She was later sponsored by a minister and attended what is now known as Spelman College. She graduated at age sixteen and began her career teaching English and elocution (the art of public speaking). Butler married and gave birth to a son, Henry. When she struggled to find a good preschool for him to attend, she decided to start a school from her home.¹

Butler's Resistance

When her son entered the school system, Butler sought ways to achieve universal parental involvement. At the time, the Parent-Teacher Associations that existed were white only. Through enlisting support from other parents, she was able to found the first black Parent-Teacher Association in the United States at Yonge Street School. Upon seeing the success this program had, she endeavored to expand statewide. With her collaboration, a group called the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers was formed. What initially started as a single venture, became a national organization for Black parents.¹

Achievements

The Black Parent-Teacher Associations were modeled closely after the same framework as the white Parent-Teachers Associations. Recognizing how important parental involvement was to the child's educational achievement, she aimed to improve school conditions through this organization for all children, regardless of race. Butler was inducted into the Georgia Women of Achievement Hall of Honorees in 1995. In 2000, the Georgia Senate passed a resolution to hang her portrait in the State Capitol.²

¹Georgia Women of Achievement. (n.d.). Selena Sloan Butler. Retrieved October 10, 2020, from <https://www.atl2020.net/selena-butler.html>

²“SELENA SLOAN BUTLER – activist, founder”. *Georgia Women of Achievement*. March 1995. Archived from the original on August 27, 2020. Retrieved August 27, 2020.

Essential Questions

1. How did Butler fight against segregation in the lives of black children and parents?
 - a. What was the biggest obstacle in attaining her goal?

2. Why is parental involvement in schools an important aspect of student success?

3. What is an injustice that you face in education?
 - a. What is an impactful change you could make to fight injustice in your daily life as a student?

4. ***“... consciousness of the importance of child welfare is being deeply felt in all departments of our social and educational systems”***
 - a. Given what you know about Butler, how does this quote symbolize her resistance?
 - b. How does this relate to what we see in social and educational systems today?

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