

DR. CARTER G. WOODSON'S FAMILY EXPERIENCES

- **Parents:** James Henry Woodson and Anne Eliza Woodson, former slaves.
- **Born:** December 19, 1875, in Buckingham County, VA
- **Seven brothers and sisters:** William, Robert Henry, Bessie, Susie, Cora, (two others who died from whooping cough before Carter was born)
- **Two of his uncles were teachers:** John Morton Riddle and James Buchanan Riddle – brothers of Carter's mother
 - They took turns teaching at the small school that the Woodson children attended
 - The Woodson children, especially the boys, attended school four months out of the year and attended the family farm the other months

DR. WOODSON'S EARLY LIFE EXPERIENCES

- Despite poverty, Carter's father taught his children to be polite to everybody but to insist always on recognition as human beings—and if necessary, to fight to the limit for it.
- His father commanded the children to never accept insults from whites, compromise their principles, mislead fellow men, or betray their people.
- Although poor, Carter's parents taught the children not only high morality and strong character through religious teachings but also a thirst for education.

DR. WOODSON'S EARLY LIFE EXPERIENCES

- Although illiterate, Woodson's father is credited with teaching Carter his most important lessons.
- His father would not accept handouts.
- Carter's grandfather was one of the few blacks who owned property in the 1870s.
- Carter and his brothers worked in the coal mines and were part of a large black migration who worked in the mines and other industries in West Virginia.
- Woodson claimed that one of his most formative educational experiences while working in Fayette County, WV as a coal miner was listening to one of his coworkers, Oliver Jones, who was a Civil War veteran and who owned and operated a tearoom for black miners.

DR. WOODSON'S EARLY LIFE EXPERIENCES

- When Jones learned that Carter was literate, he engaged him to read the daily newspapers to the group in exchange for free fruit and ice cream.
- Woodson also used to read Virginia newspapers to his father, although he could not afford to buy newspapers very often.
- Many of the miners subscribed to several white daily papers, and occasionally Woodson read to the group from the Springfield Republican, the New York Sun, and the New York Tribune.
- Woodson maintained that by reading newspapers he learned “in an effective way most important phases of history and economics.”
- Woodson taught himself to read using the McGuffey Reader. This fact was very recently discovered by ASALH historians.

DR. WOODSON'S EARLY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- Though there were originally four Readers, most schools of the 19th century used only the first two. The first Reader taught reading by using the phonics method. Once a student could read, the second Reader helped them to understand the meaning of sentences while providing vivid stories which children could remember. The third Reader taught the definitions of words and was written at a level equivalent to the modern 5th or 6th grade. The fourth Reader was written for the highest levels of ability on the grammar school level, which students completed with this book.
- McGuffey's Readers were among the first textbooks in America that were designed to become progressively more challenging with each volume. They used word repetition in the text as a learning tool, and while Colonial-era texts offered dull lists of 20 to 100 new words per page for memorization, McGuffey used new vocabulary words in the context of real literature, gradually introducing new words and carefully repeating the old.
 - McGuffey believed that teachers should study the lessons with their students and suggested they read aloud to their classes. He listed questions after each story for he believed in order for a teacher to give instruction, one must ask questions. The Readers emphasized spelling, vocabulary, and formal public speaking which, in 19th century America, was a more common requirement than today.

DR. WOODSON'S EARLY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- Although famous as the author of the Readers, McGuffey wrote very few other works. McGuffey left Miami University for positions of successively greater responsibility at Cincinnati College, Ohio University, and Woodward College (where he served as president). He ended his career as a professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Virginia. Through the hard times of the Civil War and following, McGuffey was known for his philanthropy and generosity among the poor and African-Americans. William McGuffey died in 1873 a success as an educator, lecturer and author.
- McGuffey is remembered as a theological and conservative teacher. He attempted to give schools a curriculum that would instill Presbyterian Calvinist beliefs and manners in their students. While these goals were considered suitable for the homogeneous America of the early- to mid-19th century, they were less so for the pluralistic society of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The content of the Readers changed drastically between McGuffey's 1836-1837 edition and the 1879 edition. The revised Readers were compiled to meet the needs of national unity and the dream of an American "melting pot" for the world's oppressed masses. The Calvinist values of salvation, righteousness, and piety, so prominent in the early Readers, were entirely missing in the later versions. The content of the books was secularized and replaced by middle-class religion, morality, and values. McGuffey's name was continued on these revised editions, yet he neither contributed to them nor approved their content.

DR. WOODSON'S EARLY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- Woodson recalled visiting Oliver Jones's home and seeing volumes that described black history and achievements, including J.T. Wilson's *Black Phalanx*, W.J. Simmons' *Men of Mark*, and George Washington Williams' *Negro Troops in the War of Rebellion*.
- Whenever a veteran of the Civil War came out as a candidate for office or achieved distinction, Woodson looked "him up in the books, informed his friends as to what battles he had fought, victories he had won and principles which he thereafter sustained."

DR. WOODSON'S EARLY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- He read speeches, lectures, and essays dealing with civil service reform, reduction of taxes, tariff for protection, tariff for revenue only, and free trade,” and became knowledgeable about populist doctrines advocated by Tom Watson and William Jennings Bryan.
- Frequently, Woodson discussed “the history of the race” with black miners at Jones’s house, and his interest in penetrating the past of his people was deepened and intensified.

DR. WOODSON'S EARLY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- Woodson moved to Huntington, WV in 1895 at age 20 to live with his parents and attend high school.
- He attended Frederick Douglass High School, Huntington's only black high school, and his instructors included his uncles John Morton and James Buchanan Riddle and his cousin Carter Harrison Barnett, who had graduated from Denison University in Ohio and was currently serving as principal at Douglass.
- Woodson finished four years of work in two years and graduated in 1897.

DR. WOODSON'S COLLEGIATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- Desiring more education, Woodson enrolled in Berea College in Kentucky in the fall of 1897.
- When he arrived at Berea, he was placed in the preparatory department at a level equivalent to the third year of high school, even though he had graduated from high school.
- He did, however, receive advanced credits by taking tests.
- Woodson was in residence for only two quarters in the 1897 – 1898 academic year, because he did not have the money for a full year's tuition. He attended Berea part-time from 1901 – 1903, and the University of Chicago during the summer of 1902.

DR. WOODSON'S COLLEGIATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- He followed the prescribed program for a B.L. (Bachelor of Law) degree, taking courses in literature, rhetoric, science, sociology, economics, international law, and history.
- He received his first formal training in history under Howard Murray Jones, who also taught philosophy.
- Woodson studied general history and took advanced courses in British and Roman history.
- Jones used Philip Van Ness Myers' A General History for Colleges and High Schools as the text for the general course, and Myers' Ancient History for Colleges and High Schools and Outlines of Medieval and Modern History as texts for the advanced courses.

DR. WOODSON'S COLLEGIATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- While this first exposure to formal historical training at Berea probably did not influence Woodson's decision to become a historian or to study black history, his experiences there profoundly shaped his attitude toward race relations.
- Woodson was thrust into an education and social milieu that forced him to deal emotionally and intellectually with the values, attitudes, and ideas of poor Appalachian whites, who were potentially, if not in fact, his social and academic equals.
- Woodson had prior contact with this class of whites while growing up in post-Reconstruction Virginia and as a coal miner in West Virginia. But Berea provided him with daily, long-term interaction with whites, not only in the classroom, but also in the dining hall and dormitory.

DR. WOODSON'S COLLEGIATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- Woodson and Berea president William Frost apparently had some interpersonal contact, which was unusual because of Berea's size.
 - Years after he graduated Woodson asked Frost for letters of recommendation for several teaching jobs.
- Although Woodson undoubtedly abhorred Frost's racial views—Frost believed that blacks were inferior—Woodson probably respected his administrative ability and his influence in the educational establishment. Frost's views on the ability of education to transform the lower classes of society—in this case, poor white Appalachians—shaped Woodson's ideas about the same possibilities for blacks.
- Like Frost, Woodson held a deep respect for the value of manual labor as a means of building character and preparing for life.
 - Years later, Woodson adopted outreach programs (adult education courses and a Lecture Bureau) for ASNLH (later ASALH) similar to those Frost had created.

DR. WOODSON'S COLLEGIATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- Why Woodson chose Berea is unknown, but it was established in 1855 by abolitionist John G. Fee. Every aspect of life at Berea was integrated—classrooms, dining halls, and dormitories, as well as extracurricular activities and entertainment.
- However, by the time Woodson enrolled there, the commitment to interracial education had weakened.
- He earned enough credits to graduate in the Spring of 1903.
- In 1904, just a year after Woodson graduated, the Kentucky state legislature passed the Day Law, which was specifically directed at Berea in proscribing integration in higher education, and black students were no longer admitted. Instead, the college educated poor, white Appalachians.

DR. WOODSON'S COLLEGIATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- In 1907, enrolled as a full-time student at the University of Chicago
 - He intended to take graduate courses for a master's degree in history, but he was informed that he must take some undergraduate courses to earn another bachelor's degree. His degree from Berea College was considered inadequate preparation for entrance to the graduate program.
 - Although discouraged, Woodson complied, and took graduate and undergraduate courses simultaneously at the University of Chicago.
 - Woodson first decided to write his thesis on a study of the black church
 - Either his advisors disapproved or he could not find enough on the subject.

DR. WOODSON'S COLLEGIATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- Since he had familiarized himself with French primary source materials while studying at the University of Paris, he decided to write his thesis on the French diplomatic policy toward Germany in the eighteenth century, covering the corrupt administration of Louis XV, French efforts to partition Austria during the War of the Austrian Succession 1740 – 1748, and the origins of the French Revolution.
- In addition to secondary sources, Woodson used French diplomatic correspondence and the personal papers of Louis XV.
- The thesis was accepted in August 1908
- Received his master's degree from the University of Chicago in history and Romance languages and literature.
 - He earlier completed requirement for the bachelor's degree and received it in March 1908

DR. WOODSON'S PH.D. JOURNEY

- Determining that Woodson was capable of advanced study, his professors at Chicago undoubtedly encouraged him to seek the Ph.D. degree and may have advised him to apply to Harvard University since he was interested in American history
 - Moreover, because Chicago was just beginning to award doctorates at the time Woodson was studying for his master's degree, Harvard was a better choice.
 - Woodson may have also been attracted to Harvard because Du Bois, the only other professional trained black historian, graduated from that university and because he believed the history department faculty were liberal and socially enlightened. (He found out differently)
 - He arrived in Cambridge, MA October 1908. In December, the history department approved Woodson's plan of study but not his request to take the general and special examinations during the spring of 1909. Despite his intention to leave Harvard to return to the Philippines (where he taught earlier), Woodson applied for a fellowship that would provide him with the financial resources to remain in residence for a second year, but was turned down.

DR. WOODSON'S PH.D. JOURNEY

- While Woodson may not have been as well prepared academically as his first-year counterparts, probably few others had traveled as much or experienced life in as many different cultures as Woodson had.
- He took American history from Edward Channing. Although Woodson had believed that Channing was liberal on racial issues, he later recalled that in seminar Channing not only belittled the Negro's role in American history but also argued that the Negro had no history.
 - Woodson frequently challenged Channing's views and interpretation of American history and Channing, in turn, challenged Woodson's views and asserted that Woodson should undertake research to prove that the Negro had a history.

DR. WOODSON'S PH.D. JOURNEY

- Because of Channing's negative attitude toward blacks, Woodson asked Albert Bushnell Hart to serve as his dissertation adviser, even though he took no courses with Hart and Channing remained on his committee. Woodson soon found out, however, that Hart was just as conservative as Channing.
- Hart believed blacks to be an inferior race, although he maintained that they should be given an opportunity to improve themselves through education.
- Woodson was not the first black student Hart had supervised at Harvard; he also had served as Du Bois' dissertation advisor.
- While Woodson did not share many of Hart's views or his interpretation of American history, Hart probably did influence Woodson's philosophy of history. Both men thought that an accurate understanding of the past would enlighten the present generation and that the more assembling of facts would lead to the truth.

DR. WOODSON'S PH.D. JOURNEY

- Hart wrote historical articles for numerous magazines and newspapers, believing, as did Woodson, that it was important to present history to the general public.
- In addition, Woodson shared Hart's view on the value of oral testimony as a supplement to documentary sources for historical research.
- In preparation for writing *Slavery and Abolition*, published in 1906, Hart traveled throughout the South and interviewed former slaves and their masters.
- Because Hart encouraged his students to write on subjects with which they were familiar, he may have influenced Woodson's decision to write his dissertation on the secession movement in western Virginia.

DR. WOODSON'S PH.D. JOURNEY

- First-year students in American history seminar were encouraged to choose a dissertation topic and begin their research as soon as possible.
- Although Woodson initially hoped to complete all of his requirements during the first year at Harvard, it is unlikely that he made considerable progress on the dissertation.
- After he learned that he would not be permitted to take his exams in the spring, and that he would not receive a fellowship, Woodson decided to return to the Philippines and abandon hope of completing the Ph.D. He reasoned that once he was settled in the Philippines he would be unable to conduct the necessary research to complete his dissertation and probably could not arrange to return to the United States to take his examinations.

DR. WOODSON'S PH.D. JOURNEY

- At end of the spring term, Woodson began preparations to return to the Philippines. At the same time, however, he applied for a teaching position in the Washington, D.C. public schools and took the required examinations.
- In July 1909, he left Cambridge, MA to visit his family in Huntington, WV where he received word of a job offer in Washington, DC at a salary comparable to what he would receive in the Philippines.
- On July 15, just five days before he was to leave Seattle, WA and sail to the Philippines, Woodson wrote to the assistant chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs declining the teaching assignment in the Philippines.

DR. WOODSON'S PH.D. JOURNEY

- Once he settled into a daily routine of teaching high school in Washington, DC, he continued to study for his Ph.D. examinations and worked on his dissertation at the Library of Congress.
- He was fortunate in that Louis Mehlinger, who worked as a stenographer in the Treasury Department, was interested in history and helped him.
- September 1909 Woodson wrote to Haskins at Harvard University to inform him that he would be completing the requirements for the degree and began to make arrangements to take the general examination in European history.
- Took exam in January 1910 and easily passed.
 - Channing chaired a committee that consisted of Emerton, MacVane, Merriman, and Munro who examined Woodson in “Early and Modern British History,” “German History,” “Theory of the State,” and “The History of the Church from the Fall of the Roman Empire to the Middle of the Fifteenth Century.”
- By spring of 1910, Woodson had completed a draft of the dissertation and submitted it to Haskins, Hart and Channing.

DR. WOODSON'S PH.D. JOURNEY

- Haskins was left with the unpleasant tasks of informing Woodson that Hart and Channing found his dissertation unacceptable. Not only was the literary composition “distinctly rough” but “important aspects of the subject had not been covered.”
- Woodson “had not worked out the latter part of the subject . . . the decade or so preceding the Civil War.” He had failed to cover “the growth of relations between Virginia and the Ohio Valley.”
- According to Haskins, Hart and Channing believed that “the thesis also suffered to a certain extent from a lack of breadth in failing to take account of the general movements of American history in the period Woodson was considering.” Haskins advised Woodson to seek more specific advice from Hart before he began his revisions.
- Though undoubtedly discouraged by this setback, Woodson was determined to produce an acceptable dissertation and obtain his degree, even if it meant that he had to deal with Hart’s and Channing’s criticism.

DR. WOODSON'S PH.D. JOURNEY

- By January, 1911, Woodson had produced a draft that he believed would be satisfactory. He wrote to Haskins and Hart stating that he had spent a year “rearranging and amplifying the thesis” asking them to read the revised manuscript.
- Woodson faced an additional stumbling block on the way to earning his doctorate: he failed his special examination in American history. He had arranged to take the special examination as well as his language examinations in May, 1911. Hart chaired the examining committee, which also consisted of Channing, Turner, and Munro. It is unknown why Woodson failed—sixteen students took the exam and he was the only student that did not pass. Undoubtedly, Woodson’s views on American history differed from those of his white professors.

DR. WOODSON'S PH.D. JOURNEY

- Hart, as chairman of the committee, may have influenced the final decision to fail Woodson; when Woodson took the examination again in April, 1912, Hart had been removed from the committee and replaced as chairman by Channing, and Woodson passed.
- His dissertation was approved and accepted by the graduate school shortly thereafter.
- Although Woodson did not acknowledge Hart as the chairman of his dissertation committee, Hart's signature appears first on the title page of Woodson's dissertation, followed by Turner's and Channing's.

INFLUENCES ON WOODSON'S PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

- Woodson's commitment to teaching was deepened both by his interaction with his teachers at Berea and through his friendships with other black students, most of whom also planned to teach.
- In return for all the practical lessons he had learned from ordinary blacks, Woodson decided to become a teacher in the black community.
- His interest in history was stimulated further when he moved home to live with his parents in Huntington, WV where he still read to his father from a variety of newspapers and on Sunday mornings brought him breakfast at the railway shops where his father worked.
- Woodson eagerly performed this task, for it allowed him to listen to conversations between his father and other black and white workers, many of whom also were Civil War veterans.

INFLUENCES ON WOODSON'S PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

- He recalled years later that he learned “so much about the Civil War from the actual participants.”
- Woodson also became acquainted with Civil War veteran and minister George T. Prosser, who founded the first African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in Huntington. Prosser had served in the Massachusetts Fifty-Fourth Regiment under Robert Gould Shaw and frequently illustrated his Sunday sermons with stories about his Civil War experiences.
- Woodson noted years later that they had influenced his views about history.
- From the time he left his parents' home to attend Berea until the time he founded ASNLH (later ASALH) eighteen years later, he underwent experiences that expanded and influenced his worldview and shaped his ideas about the ways in which education could transform society and uplift the lower classes.

DR. WOODSON'S CAREER EXPERIENCES

- 1898 – 1900 Woodson taught in Winona, West Virginia in a school established by black miners for their children.
- 1900 - Woodson became principal at the school where he graduated, Douglass High School
- In 1903 the state legislature began to require teachers to be certified, but Woodson had already earned a state teaching certificate in 1901.
 - Average grade 91; Lowest grade 82.9 in US history, general history and government; but his best grades were in Latin, arithmetic, and algebra.
 - When he assumed his post, his salary more than doubled from \$30 to \$65 a month.
- In 1898 the Treaty of Paris ended the Spanish-American War and brought the Philippines under American jurisdiction.

DR. WOODSON'S CAREER EXPERIENCES

- In 1898, prior to the establishment of Taft's administration, during military occupation in 1898, a superintendent of schools was appointed and began to recruit American teachers, purportedly to train the Filipinos to govern themselves
 - Because of his belief in the transforming power of education and because of the opportunity to travel to another country to observe and experience the culture firsthand, Woodson decided to teach in the Philippines
 - Salary \$100 per month
 - 28 years old when he arrived in the Philippines
- 1903, assigned to a school in San Isidro in the province of Nueva Ecija
- 1904, promoted and transferred to the province of Pangasinan where he served as supervisor of schools and was in charge of teacher training.

DR. WOODSON'S CAREER EXPERIENCES

- Concluded tour of duty in the Philippines in December 1905 and signed up for two more years
- 1906 visited family in U.S. and when he became too ill to return, reluctantly resigned his position in the Philippines in 1907
- For forty years, Woodson participated in the education of black, brown, yellow, and white races in both hemispheres and in tropical and temperate regions, with students from kindergarten to the university. He traveled around the world to observe not only modern school systems in various countries but to study also the special systems set up by private agencies and governments to educate the natives in their colonies and dependencies. (*The Mis-Education of the Negro*, 1933, pg xi)

DR. WOODSON'S TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

- After recovering from his illness at home, Woodson embarked on a six-month world tour, visiting Africa, Asia, and Europe.
- He traveled to Malaysia, India, Egypt, Palestine, Greece, Italy, and France where he studied educational methods, visited libraries, and met many scholars whom he would later call upon to assist him in his research on black history.
- In Paris, Woodson conducted research in the Bibliotheque Nationale and spent one semester at the University of Paris studying European history and attending lectures given by professors Francois-Alphonse Aullard, Charles Diehl, and Henry Lemonnier.
- After this brief period of formal study with these eminent historians, Woodson apparently decided to pursue graduate work in history
- He returned to U.S. by fall 1907