SPECIAL EDITION: BLACK HISTORY 2016 CELEBRATED

The Reflector

1965–1975: A Decade of Cultural Change

A Time When Culture, Pride and a Name Redefined Us

James Brown and the Song of a Movement

INSIDE

A Black History Supplement to The Community Voice

How Black America Claimed Its Name—and Its Power

A look at the cultural shift that transformed language, pride, and power in Black America

By Bonita Gooch

The years from 1965 to 1975 marked a decade of major change in America, but for Black America, they represented something deeper—a decade of transformation. It was a period when we renamed ourselves, a change that carried far-reaching cultural, political, and social implications.

The shift from *Negro* to *Black* was not cosmetic. It was deliberate, public, and unapologetic. We shed a name tied to slavery and accommodation and claimed one that had long been used against us—turning it into a declaration of pride.

This was not a quiet transition. It was proud and out loud. *Say it loud—I'm Black and I'm proud.* The words, made famous by **James Brown,** captured the spirit of the era perfectly. The change demanded recognition. It told America that we had redefined ourselves—and expected the world to keep up.

For earlier generations, Negro had represented progress and dignity—a step up from Colored and other vulgar labels best left unnamed. But by the mid-1960s, the term sounded dated and constrained, especially to young people. It felt shaped by someone else's comfort, not our own truth.

When **Stokely Carmichael** popularized the phrase Black Power in 1966, the word Black was reclaimed almost instantly. What had once been an insult became an affirmation. Being called Black was no longer offensive—it was empowering.

That shift in name carried an attitude with it. We didn't just rename ourselves; we reintroduced ourselves. The change showed up in how we walked, talked, and related to one another. We developed our own gestures and codes: clenched fists raised high, soul-brother handshakes, and high fives. We called each other brotha and sista—familial terms that reflected a closeness we felt and claimed.

There was a sense of belonging—an inside understanding that didn't need explanation. If you knew, you knew. If you didn't, you weren't part of it.

The Decade of Change (1965–1975) From 1965 to 1975, Black Americans underwent a profound transformation, redefining themselves from *Negro* to *Black* and expressing that pride in visible, lasting ways. *(Clockwise from left)* Elaine Guillory, a VOICE team member, was among those who put away the pressing comb and embraced natural hair. Following passage of the Voting Rights Act, Black political power expanded, leading to the election of Black mayors nationwide, including **Maynard Jackson**. Cultural pride flourished as Black-led programs appeared on television, including **Soul Train**. Host **Don Cornelius** interviews **James Brown**, whose anthem *"Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud"* helped define the era.

Elected as mayor of Atlanta,in 1973 Maynard Jackson was the first Black mayor of any major Southern city,

James Brown and Don Cornelius

Style reinforced the message. Natural hair and Afros became visible symbols of self-acceptance. Women stopped pressing and relaxing their hair to fit someone else's definition of beauty. Men wore Afros proudly, often larger than life. These weren't just fashion statements; they were cultural signals. Our appearance said what words didn't need to: we were done reshaping ourselves for approval.

Music amplified everything. Soul music didn't just sound good—it *felt* like freedom. When **Aretha Franklin** demanded *"Respect,"* she gave voice to a broader insistence that had been building across the community. Respect wasn't requested; it was required.

Black pride came with expectations.

Athletics added to that visibility. With sports increasingly integrated, Black athletes dominated fields, courts, and tracks, showcasing excellence that could not be ignored.

Whether through music or sports, Black culture was leading—cool, confident, and commanding attention. America watched closely. Admiration grew, even when full acceptance lagged behind. Respect increased, even when comfort did not.

Cultural change was matched by political power. In August 1965, **President Lyndon B. Johnson** signed the Voting Rights Act, outlawing literacy tests, empowering the federal government to register voters, and blocking discriminatory changes to voting laws. The result was immediate and lasting: Black voters demonstrated their power at the polls.

That power translated into representation. **Edward Brooke** became the first Black U.S. senator elected since Reconstruction. **Shirley Chisholm** became the first Black woman elected to Congress. Cities across the country began electing Black mayors, reshaping local leadership and priorities.

Economic opportunity followed, slowly but steadily. In 1966, Johnson signed Executive Order 11246, requiring federal contractors to take affirmative action in hiring and promotion. That momentum expanded in 1972 with the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, which strengthened enforcement against hiring discrimination. Doors that had long been sealed began to creak open.

For decades, teaching had been the primary professional path available to many Black college graduates, with medicine and law accessible to a limited few. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, recruiters began appearing on campuses. Careers in management, accounting, engineering, marketing, journalism, and corporate leadership became possible. The future widened.

Together, these changes marked a turning point. This wasn't just a name change—it was an identity shift. Black America stopped asking to be included and started insisting on being recognized on its own terms. The pride was visible. The confidence was shared. And once it was claimed, it could not be taken back.

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"Say it loud—I'm Black and I'm proud."

JAMES BROWN

The REFLECTOR

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The Great Debate: Booker T. or Du Bois?

With such divergent views on how to advance the post-slavery Negro, there was no middle ground. You had to take sides.

Think **Clarence Thomas** versus **Thurgood Marshall,** or the **Black Panther Party** versus the **Southern Christian Leadership Conference.** If what comes to mind is opposing philosophies and sharply different strategies, then you're beginning to understand the divide between **Booker T. Washington** and **W. E. B. Du Bois.**

At the turn of the century—the late 1800s and early 1900s—these two men stood as the most influential Black leaders in America. Both sought advancement for a people only decades removed from slavery, but they disagreed fundamentally on how that progress should be achieved. Through speeches and published works, each laid out his vision, and as their voices grew louder, so did the divide among Black and White Americans over what was then called "the Negro problem."

In 1865, millions of formerly enslaved people were freed with little consideration of what freedom would require. Should they be educated? Employed? Treated as equals?

As White Americans debated those questions, so did Black Americans themselves. Washington and Du Bois confronted the same realities but reached opposite conclusions.

Their disagreement ultimately split African American leadership into two camps: Washington's conservative supporters and Du Bois' more radical critics. Du Bois' call for agitation and civil rights foreshadowed the modern Civil Rights Movement, while Washington's emphasis on self-help and gradualism continues to echo in contemporary debates over race, opportunity, and equality.

Booker T. Washington: Accommodation and Self-Help

Booker T Washington

Booker Taliaferro Washington was born into slavery in 1856. After emancipation, he worked in a salt mine and later as a domestic servant for a White family. Determined to improve his circumstances, Washington pursued an education at the Hampton Institute, one of the nation's earliest schools established to educate Black Americans. After completing his studies, he began teaching and quickly gained recognition as a capable organizer and leader.

In 1881, Washington was selected to lead the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama. At the time, Tuskegee was little more than a concept. Under Washington's leadership, it grew into a nationally recognized institution focused on vocational education, moral discipline, and economic self-sufficiency. His rise mirrored his philosophy: progress achieved through discipline, productivity, and patience rather than confrontation.

Educational Philosophy

Washington believed education should be practical and rooted in immediate economic need. He argued that Black Americans—newly freed and largely impoverished—required skills that would allow them to survive and prosper in a hostile economic environment. Trades, agriculture, construction, and domestic sciences, he believed, offered a more realistic path forward than classical or theoretical education.

This view did not stem from a belief in Black inferiority. Rather, Washington maintained that education should match social realities. He believed dignity existed in labor and that mastery of a trade provided a foundation for independence and self-respect.

"One man may go into a community prepared to supply the people there an analysis of Greek sentences. The community may or may not be prepared for Greek analysis, but it may feel the need of bricks and houses and wagons," —*Up From Slavery*

At Tuskegee, learning was inseparable from application. Students built many of the school's buildings themselves, an approach Washington viewed as education in action rather than exploitation. Producing tangible results, he believed, demonstrated competence and worth.

Washington also emphasized character. Education must train the mind, the hands, and the heart. Moral discipline, personal responsibility, and economic independence were central to his vision of progress.

Respect Must Be Earned

Washington was an optimist who believed progress was inevitable, though slow. He viewed American society as evolving and believed Black Americans could advance by proving their value within it. Pressing too hard for immediate political or social equality, he warned, risked provoking resentment among Whites and endangering fragile gains.

Instead, Washington urged patience. He believed Black Americans should focus first on establishing themselves

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Booker T Washington at Tuskegee Institute

W. E. B. Du Bois: Agitate

W. E. B. Du Bois

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868–1963) was born in Massachusetts to a free Black family living in an integrated neighborhood. He excelled academically, graduating as valedictorian of his high school class. In 1885, he attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he experienced overt bigotry for the first time and witnessed Jim Crow repression up close.

After Fisk, Du Bois continued his education at Harvard University, becoming the first African American to earn a Ph.D. there in 1895. He emerged as a towering Black intellectual, scholar, and political thinker.

In T*he Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois took a forceful stand against accommodation, rejecting vocational-only education and insisting that full citizenship and equality were essential.

Education

Du Bois insisted that culture could never be built from the bottom up.

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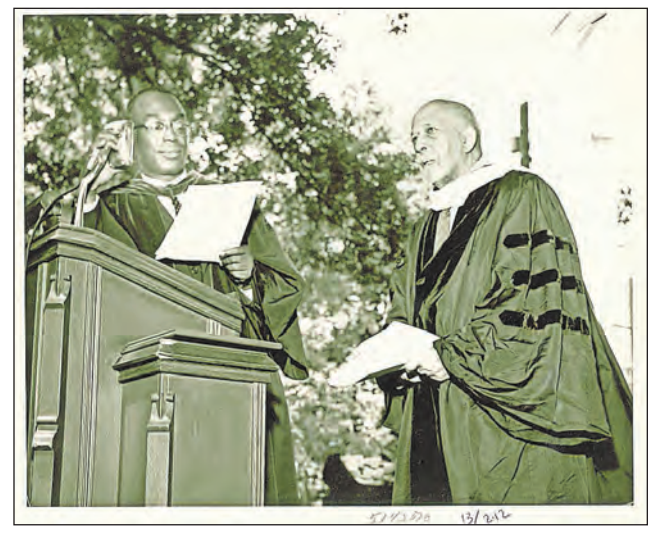
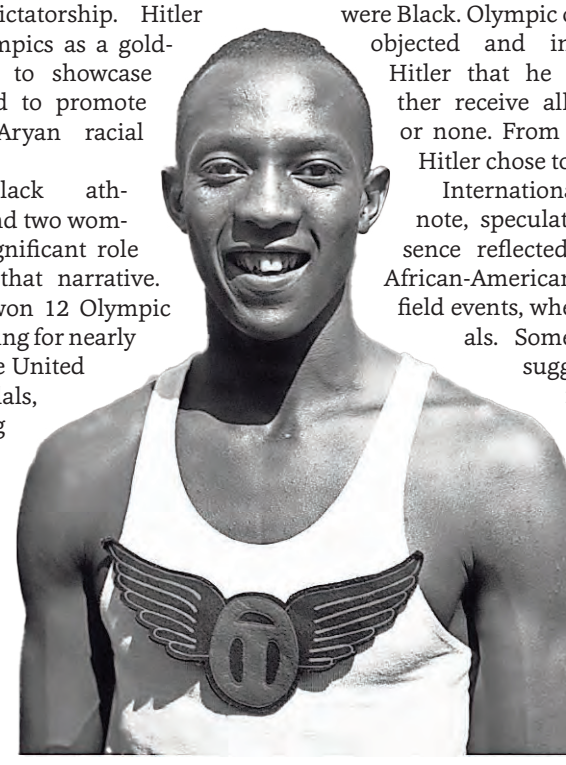


W.E.B Du Bois June 1924 commencement speech at Fisk University

Black Athletes and the Nazis

The 1936 Olympics were possibly the most politically charged Olympic Games in history, and the success of Black athletes added to that politicization.

Berlin, Germany, was awarded the 1936 Summer Olympics in 1931, two years before Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler became the country's chancellor and quickly transformed the nation's fragile democracy into a one-party dictatorship. Hitler viewed the Olympics as a golden opportunity to showcase his country and to promote the idea of Aryan racial superiority.



Eighteen Black athletes—16 men and two women—played a significant role in challenging that narrative. Together, they won 12 Olympic medals, accounting for nearly 20 percent of the United States' 56 medals, despite making up less than 5 percent of the 312-member U.S. team.

Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, reportedly called the victories by Black athletes "a disgrace." Hitler largely ignored them.

On the first day of track and field competition, Hitler left the Olympic Stadium as rain threatened and darkness fell, missing the opportunity to greet the American medal winners in the high jump, two of whom were Black. Olympic officials objected and informed Hitler that he must either receive all medalists or none. From that point on, Hitler chose to receive none.

International journalists took note, speculating that Hitler's absence reflected the dominance of African-American athletes in track and field events, where they won 14 medals. Some journalists openly suggested these victories undermined the Nazi myth of Aryan superiority.

To international audiences and Olympic crowds, Black American athletes were a major success, particularly Jesse Owens, the star of the Games. Owens, a track standout from Ohio State University, won four gold medals, set a world record in the long jump, and helped set another in the 400-meter relay. German fans chanted his name and sought his autograph.

Hitler never formally met Owens. German media often referred to him as "the Negro Owens," while other Black athletes were described as "America's Black auxiliaries," language that suggested they were not full members of the team.

Owens later said he did not feel personally snubbed by Hitler, recalling that the Führer once stood and waved to him during competition, a gesture Owens returned.

Another controversy emerged when the only two Jewish athletes on the U.S. track team, Marty Glickman and Sam Stoller, were removed from the 400-meter relay at the last minute. They were replaced by Owens and Ralph Metcalfe. Glickman later speculated that Olympic official Avery Brundage may have pressured coaches to avoid offending Hitler.

Throughout the 14 days of competition, Hitler maintained a deliberately restrained public presence, both to appease Olympic officials and to present a controlled image to international observers.

Boycott Avoided

After Hitler came to power, debate arose in the United States and other democracies over whether to boycott the Games. Critics cited Nazi treatment of Jews, while others opposed politicizing the Olympics.

Most African-American newspapers opposed a boycott. Black journalists highlighted the hypocrisy of condemning discrimination in Germany while ignoring racial injustice at home. Publications such as The Philadelphia Tribune and The Chicago Defender argued that Black athletic success would challenge Nazi racial ideology and inspire pride among African Americans in the United States.

Jesse Owens, often called "the fastest human being," won four gold medals and emerged as the star of the 1936 Olympic Games. In the long jump, he leaped 26 feet, 1½ inches, setting an Olympic record.
After the Games, Owens sought to capitalize on his fame and withdrew from the AAU's European post-Olympic tour, for which he was suspended from amateur competition.

Members of the U.S. men's 4 x 100m relay team. The record-setting team won the Olympic and World gold (L-R) Jesse Owens, Ralph Metcalfe, Foy Draper and Frank Wykoff.

Berlin, 1936: American athletes swept the Olympic 100-meter sprint titles. Helen Stephens won gold in the women's race, while Jesse Owens captured gold for the men.

Olympic Defiance

It was a moment that shocked the world.

It was a muggy October evening in Mexico City in 1968 when Americans Tommie Smith and John Carlos rose to the victory platform to receive their medals for the Olympic 200 meters. Moments earlier, Smith had powered away from the competition, tying the world record at 19.8 seconds. Carlos, a co-favorite, finished third.

The Americans stepped onto the medal podium wearing black socks and one black glove each. Carlos wore a beaded African necklace. Smith wore a black scarf.

All of the medalists wore a large white button emblazoned with "Olympic Project for Human Rights," an organization formed a year earlier by activist Harry Edwards to address the civil-rights concerns of African-American Olympians.

After the medals were presented, "The Star-Spangled Banner" began. At the sound of the first trumpet, Smith and Carlos thrust their gloved fists skyward and bowed their heads.

At first, attention remained on the flag. Then the stadium's focus shifted—the photographers, officials, athletes, and cameras turned toward the podium. Soon, the attention of the world followed. Their gesture conveyed opposition to racial inequality and discrimination faced by people of color in the United States.

As Carlos later recalled, "The American people in the stands were shocked into silence. One could hear a frog piss on cotton—it was so quiet in the stadium."

It was a moment that would go down in history as one of the most controversial acts of defiance against American ideals. These two Black men, one from the inner city and the other from a sharecropper's farm, stood on the victory stand at the world's most visible sporting event and made a symbolic statement during the national anthem.

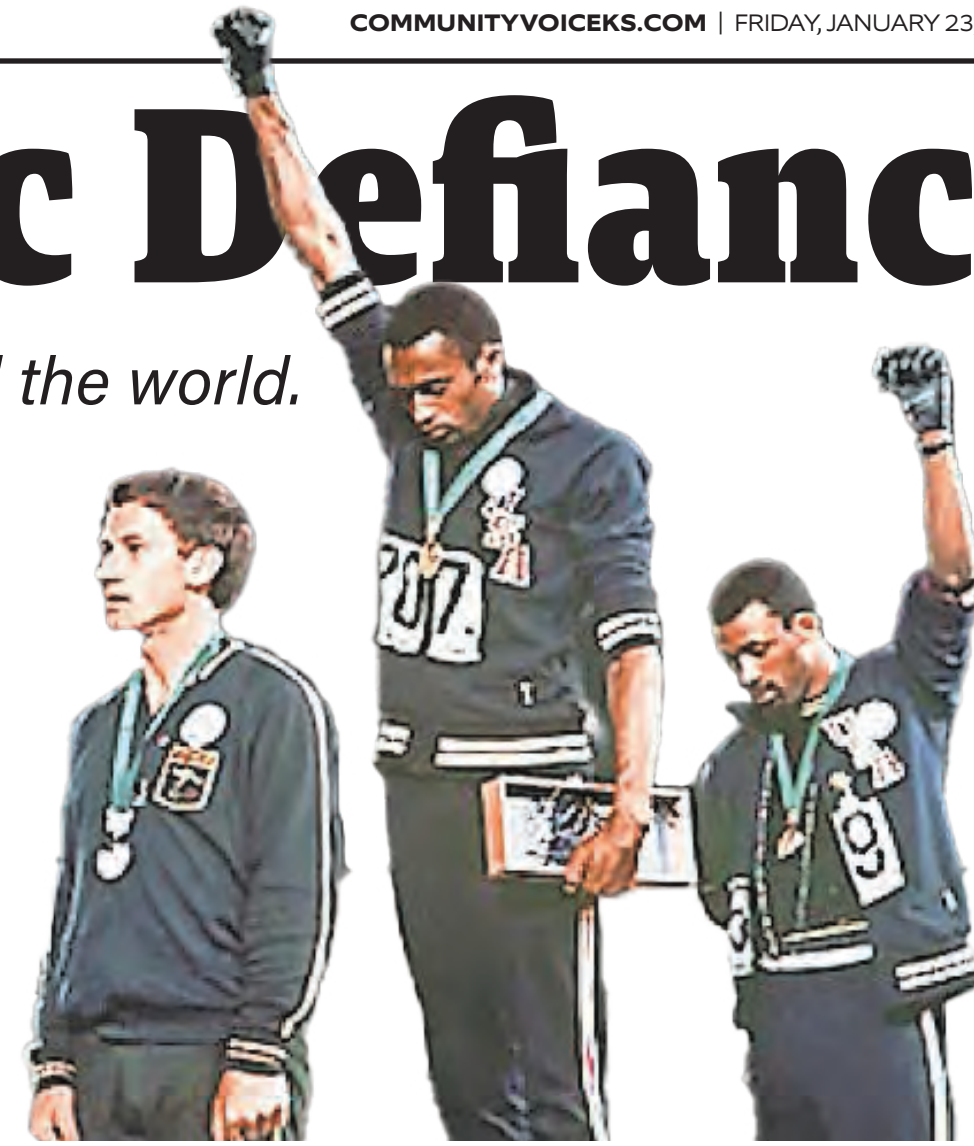
For African-American athletes, sports had long represented both opportunity and contradiction. Black athletes could gain recognition for excellence while continuing to face discrimination elsewhere in society. Many professional leagues integrated before schools, housing, or workplaces, creating a perception of progress that did not always reflect broader reality.

Smith and Carlos no longer believed that athletic competition alone advanced the civil-rights struggle. They questioned the idea that success in sports was evidence of meaningful racial progress. In their view, participation without protest risked reinforcing the perception that racial inequities had already been resolved.

The protest on the victory stand became the most visible moment of a broader movement associated with the Olympic Project for Human Rights, led in part by Smith and Edwards, a San Jose State University professor. One of the movement's original goals was to encourage a boycott of the Olympic Games by African-American athletes. Organizers believed that the absence of Black athletes—and the medals they were expected to win—would draw national and international attention to civil-rights concerns in the United States.

The proposed boycott did not gain widespread participation, with many athletes expressing sympathy with its goals but choosing to compete after years of training and preparation. The protest ultimately took place not through withdrawal from the Games, but through a symbolic action carried out during the medal ceremony.

Their action remains one of the most widely recognized examples of athlete protest in Olympic history and continues to be referenced in discussions about the role of sports figures in social and political movements.



The Olympic Project for Human Rights badge, worn by activist athletes in the 1968 Olympic Games, originally called for a boycott of the 1968 Olympic Games. Tommie Smith (left) and John Carlos raise gloved fists during the U.S. national anthem at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, a silent protest calling attention to racial injustice and human rights.

After the Protest: Smith and Carlos

Following their protest at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, **Tommie Smith** and **John Carlos** faced immediate consequences. Although they **were not stripped of their medals,** they were suspended from the U.S. team, expelled from the Olympic Village, and required to leave Mexico City shortly after the ceremony.

Back in the United States, both men encountered public backlash, harsh media criticism, and threats to their personal safety. Their athletic careers were disrupted, and professional opportunities became limited.

In the years that followed, Smith and Carlos remained involved in sports, education, and community work. Smith pursued teaching and coaching, while Carlos worked as a coach, counselor, and author. Over time, public perception of their protest shifted. What was once widely condemned is now recognized as a pivotal moment in the history of athlete activism and civil-rights advocacy.

The Yates Branch:
How One Place Shaped Generations

LaDora Murphy

Tall Girls Club

The Yates Branch, located at 644 Quindaro, played a central role in much of LaDora Murphy Lattimore's early success in life.

As a teen in the early 1960s, Lattimore and her friends packed the branch, which served as a welcoming hangout for students.

"Parents would always let you go there when they wouldn't let you go other places," she recalled.

It was a role the Yates Branch had served for more than half a century. Although the organization no longer carries its YWCA designation, the Friends of Yates organization continues to serve the Kansas City, Kansas, community, carrying forward a legacy rooted in empowerment, safety, and belonging.

The Yates Branch YWCA dates back to 1915, a time long before women were empowered feminists and long before integration. Women were expected to marry, work in the home, and raise children. Those who did not marry often worked, and for women of color, opportunities were limited largely to domestic service. For college-educated Black women, teaching was one of the few professional careers available.

Across the country, YWCA branches provided safe housing for young women—some year-round, others as affordable places to stay while traveling. However, these options were largely unavailable to Black women. Recognizing this need, members of the Kansas City community began advocating for a YWCA branch to serve Black women.

Proposals for a "colored branch" surfaced as early as 1907. A mass meeting was held on March 16, 1911, at First Baptist Church at Fifth and Nebraska to organize such a branch. The Yates Branch YWCA was officially organized on March 4, 1913.

The idea was not new to the national YWCA. The first "colored" YWCA opened in 1889 in Dayton, Ohio, following a model similar to Black YMCAs that dated back to 1853. The Kansas City YWCA was the only colored YWCA ever established in Kansas.

The branch's original theme was "Service, involvement, love."

Churches and individuals from across the Black community were instrumental in making the branch a reality, creating a deep sense of ownership from the beginning. Although the branch operated under the Central YWCA in downtown Kansas City, Kansas, and did not control its own finances, the Yates Branch maintained an administrative board to oversee daily operations.

The branch was originally housed in a rented building at Fifth and Nebraska, with Lydia Smith sent from the national office as its first Negro secretary and executive director. In 1915, it moved to Ninth and Nebraska, where a matron supervised roomers. By 1920, the branch relocated to 337 Washington Boulevard and housed 25 young women.

In 1919, the branch was renamed Yates in honor of Josephine Yates, believed to be the first African American woman to hold a full professorship at a university and a prominent women's club leader in Kansas City, Missouri.

"V" Velma Hardee Middlebrooks

Leadership played a critical role in the branch's growth. In 1929, "V" Velma Hardee Middlebrooks became director, serving until 1960. In a 1949 article in The Kansas City Call, Middlebrooks said she was brought to Yates "to help this baby walk." At the time, the branch had just 45 members and limited programming. Under her leadership, membership grew to more than 1,000.

Fundraising efforts included teas and lawn parties, particularly after a 1940 fire destroyed the Washington Boulevard building. The Y temporarily relocated before moving in 1942 to two buildings at 636 and 640 Quindaro—one for residences and one for offices. Middlebrooks took pride in the fact that the second building was paid off in just 18 months through community and church contributions. However, the Central Y retained the deeds, a point of tension that would later resurface.

Middlebrooks also expanded programming. The Yates Branch gained national attention for its Cosmopolitan Club, which successfully merged business, professional, and industrial women—groups that were typically kept separate elsewhere.

"In keeping with the 'Y' movement for world peace, we felt we must first create peace among ourselves," Middlebrooks explained. "Where there are barriers, there is no true peace."

Other programs included Y-Teens, the Deroloc Club, Y Collegiate, and even a Tall Girls Club. With the help of volunteers, Yates offered educational and recreational opportunities for children, youth, adults, and seniors. Over time, programming evolved from etiquette and crafts to preparing women for broader roles, including employment.

The Yates Branch offered a free employment service and assisted women in finding housing, particularly young women new to the city. Although focused on women, Yates also welcomed men, addressing a lack of programming available to

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Black men at the time. Its facilities became a central gathering place for community organizations, hosting teas, meetings, and social events.

One of the branch's most enduring programs was its summer day camp. Dating back to 1911, the Stay-at-Home Camp provided a six-week daytime option that allowed children to return home each night. Affordable and safe, the program remained popular well into the 21st century, with fees often subsidized when families could not pay.

Nationally, the YWCA was an early advocate for racial justice. By the 1930s and 1940s, it publicly opposed lynching, promoted interracial cooperation, and adopted an interracial charter declaring its commitment to addressing injustice wherever it existed.

Locally, however, progress was slower. Efforts to integrate Kansas City Y branches never fully took hold. Few African Americans participated in Central Y programs, and few White residents visited the Yates Branch.

By the late 1960s, frustration grew over the Central Y's control of funding. In 1967, Yates supporters called for open discussions on racial integration and demanded greater recognition of Yates as a vital part of the association. Despite growing membership and revenue, funds were funneled to the Central Y, while Yates facilities and programs suffered from underinvestment.

These concerns coincided with broader challenges facing the Central Y, including urban renewal, changing demographics, competition from other programs, and declining participation. Without meaningful reform, the organization continued to weaken.

In 1979, United Way ended its funding, citing insufficient services to justify continued support. Although warnings had been issued for two years, the decision proved devastating for both the Central Y and the Yates Branch.

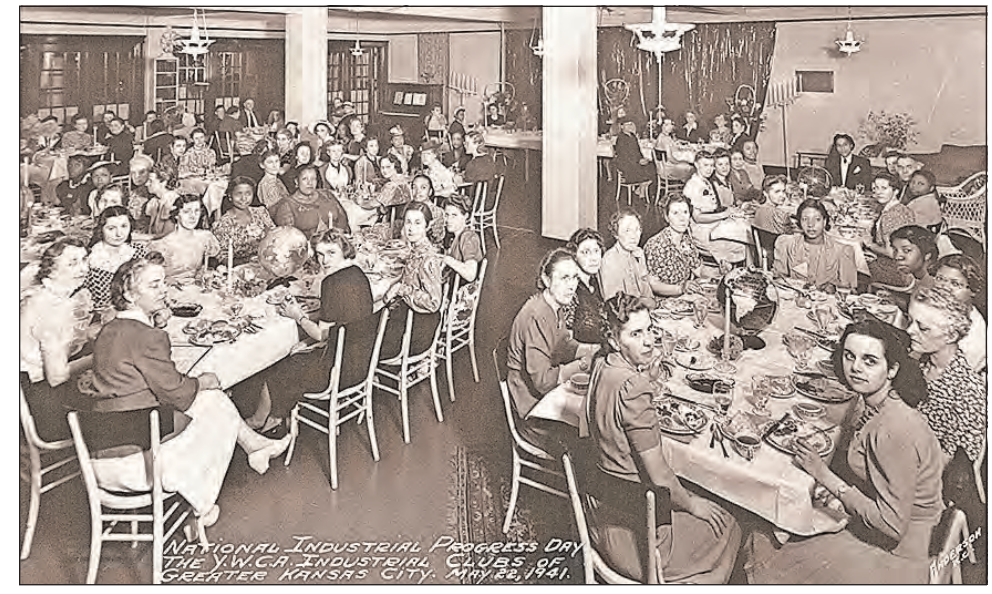
Anticipating the loss, Yates supporters organized the Friends of Yates and hired a young executive director, LaDora Murphy Lattimore—ensuring that while the YWCA chapter closed, the spirit and mission of Yates would endure.

Friends of Yates Today

Today, the legacy of service connected with the historic Yates Branch continues through **Friends of Yates,** a long-standing community agency providing critical domestic violence support in Kansas City, Kansas. Friends of Yates operates a **24-hour hotline and emergency shelter, offers advocacy, case management, legal and financial assistance, counseling, and support groups** for survivors and their families, and provides broad **outreach, education, prevention, and community training programs** designed to help individuals and families affected by abuse.

Y Teens Club

National Industrial Progress Day 1941



Ladies Dinner

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economically and socially. Once they demonstrated reliability, productivity, and usefulness, equality would follow.

The Atlanta Compromise

Washington's philosophy reached its most influential moment in his 1895 address at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta. Invited because of his moderate reputation, he became the first Black man to address the largely White audience.

In his speech, Washington called for cooperation between the races, emphasizing economic partnership over social integration. He reassured Whites that Black Americans sought opportunity rather than upheaval, while encouraging Black Americans to focus on progress from the ground up.

"No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem."

His most controversial statement followed:

"In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."

The address was widely praised by White political and business leaders and became known as the A**tlanta Compromise.** It suggested that Black Americans would temporarily accept segregation and political disfranchisement in exchange for economic opportunity and access to education.

Critics later argued that the speech helped legitimize the doctrine of **"separate but equal,"** which was formalized by the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Supporters countered that Washington's approach was pragmatic, stabilizing, and protective during a period marked by racial violence and repression. Regardless of interpretation, the speech cemented Washington's national prominence and defined his role in shaping the racial debate of the era.

DU BOIS, from Page **11** ↓

Leadership and education, he argued, must lift the masses.

"It is, ever was and ever will be from the top downward that culture filters."

He championed the idea of the **Talented Tenth,** an educated Black leadership class responsible for guiding and uplifting the broader community.

Constant Agitation

A brilliant writer and speaker, Du Bois called for "ceaseless agitation and insistent demand for equality," including moral persuasion, protest, and political pressure. He helped found the NAACP and The Crisis, serving as the magazine's editor-in-chief for more than 25 years.

Over time, Du Bois grew increasingly disillusioned. He broke with the NAACP in 1934 and later aligned himself with Pan-African and socialist movements. In 1960, he moved to Ghana, where he died on August 28, 1963—the eve of the March on Washington. The man who had spoken longest and loudest for Black equality was silent as many of his aims were finally realized.