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**THIS GREAT AND SACRED TRUST:
ROBERT R. MOTON'S LEGACY AT
TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE, 1916-1930**

David J. Paul

Thanks to:

God for giving me the talent, my mother for instilling the perseverance and the work ethic in me, my grandparents for their support, Dr. Bushnell for helping me with the idea, finding sources for me, and making suggestions, Dr. Georganne Rundblad, Dr. Michael Weis and Dr. Gordon Horwitz for their advice and constructive criticism, Dr. April Schultz and the students in my Senior Seminar class for telling me that my paragraphs were too long, the History and Education Departments, Cynthia Wilson of Tuskegee University's Hollis Burke Frissell Library for all her research assistance, Colonel John Welch for sharing his own experiences about Tuskegee's history, and the late Dr. Robert Russa Moton for all the work he did to help the African-American and for providing the historical information found in these seventy pages.

Dedicated to

All the men and women, living and dead, who have attended
Tuskegee University over the years

and

My grandmother Louise Virginia Baker Brodnax, who has helped me
in every way possible, not just during the writing of this paper, but
since the day I was born.

Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, an African-American school of agriculture, teacher training and vocational trades in Tuskegee, Alabama, was at one point the world's most respected school of its kind. This superior reputation was the work of Booker T. Washington, a man who rose up from slavery to help establish the school in 1881 and served as its principal until he died in 1915. Known as "The Founder," Washington used the support of rich and influential whites to develop a major center of practical education; over time, he also created a massive web of patronage and power which he used to control African-American politics. His name eventually became synonymous with African-American leadership and education. When he suddenly died in November of 1915, many people wondered if the work that had been done at Tuskegee would now disappear forever. It was with heavy hearts that the decision to hire Major Robert Russa Moton from Hampton Institute was made, for few thought that anyone could continue Washington's work. They were right. During his twenty-year tenure at Tuskegee, Moton expanded the school into a liberal arts university with impressive facilities, faculty, and curriculum. This drew criticism from some powerful white citizens who thought that Moton was abandoning Washington's traditions and beliefs. Moton's silencing of these critics, who could have used their influence to veto his educational improvements, was the result of an ingenious public relations campaign. Through the glorification of Washington's image that characterized his speeches and writings throughout the 1910s and 1920s, he quietly took the school's appearance and purpose in a new direction while publicly convincing people that he was continuing the Founder's traditions. While president of Tuskegee, Moton also improved the school through student activities, new facilities, and race empowerment, which grew out of his battle over African-American employment at a local hospital. These actions, although not directly related to the public relations maneuvers, are an additional sign of his remarkable work at Tuskegee.

Tuskegee's humble beginnings gave no forewarning of the empire that it would become. The school came into existence as the result of

a political promise made by an ex-Confederate colonel named Wilbur F. Foster, who in 1880 promised the African-American citizens of Tuskegee, Alabama that he would solicit funds for a state school if they would support his state senatorial campaign. The next year, Foster was in the senate and Tuskegee State Normal School began classes with a \$2,000 state endowment, a run-down shack for a campus, and a young graduate of Hampton Institute named Booker T. Washington for its principal. Over the next thirty-five years, Washington and Tuskegee both overcame that auspicious beginning and rose to national prominence.¹ By 1915, the Institute was respected all over the country as a model of vocational education and race relations and Washington, at first, virtually unknown outside of his Virginia home, had become the most powerful African-American politician in American history. He used his influence to transform Tuskegee's campus from a one-room classroom into a four-hundred acre, ten-building facility with telephones and plans for a self-contained water supply and plumbing system.²

Although the state of Alabama provided the initial funding for Tuskegee, the yearly endowment that it provided was insufficient to make any great improvements in its facilities. Washington therefore had to solicit additional funds from private citizens and organizations. From the mid-1880s until his death, he established, cultivated and enlarged a multi-million dollar network of philanthropy and patronage from liberal northern industrialists and southern paternalists. Although some support came from within the African-American community, the bulk of it came from wealthy whites. Tuskegee had begun as a public state institution but Washington quickly managed to have its charter changed so that it would become an independent private school. This gave Washington, the Trustees, and Tuskegee more freedom of operation, but it also meant that the school would have to raise its own money in order to survive. Washington depended on millionaires like George Eastman, Andrew Carnegie and Julius Rosenwald to contribute large sums of money. He also enjoyed donations from ordinary citizens who occasionally contributed several dollars to show their support for the

school. In the early years when Washington was having a hard time even building a roof that would not leak water onto the students, some of his greatest support came from local farmers like Henry Clayton Baker, who annually donated parts of their crops of cotton and corn to Tuskegee. To make large-scale change improvements to the school, however, Washington would need more than corn and dollar bills; that was why he focused his attention on the rich businessmen of the north. Washington gained the support of many of these whites by telling them that he was not seeking equality but only wanted opportunities for African-Americans to gain vocational education and the basic rudiments of Western culture; in this age of white supremacy, this was what many of them wanted to hear.³ Many of the north's industrial barons and successful businessmen were more than happy to contribute to Washington's young school once they heard that his goal was vocational education and not social equality.

Besides soliciting funds, Washington devoted the early years of his principalship to building up the school and trying to provide basic education for his pupils, many of whom were ex-slaves from Macon County or nearby Montgomery County. Despite the fact that African-Americans had more political power in those days than ever before, with senators, governors and mayors of African descent holding power, Washington did not enter the political arena.⁴ This may have been because of his youth or his exhausting responsibilities at Tuskegee left no time for anything else, but whatever the reason, the fact remains that Washington's name is not counted with P.B.S. Pinchback, Frederick Douglass or the other prominent African-American politicians of the post-Reconstruction era.⁵ All of that would change, however, in September of 1895 with a single speech given in Atlanta, the new industrial jewel of the south.

Once considered one of the southeast's most important cities, Atlanta had been burned to the ground by northern troops during the Civil War. Its shining "domes and spires" had all been fully or partially destroyed, and the city railroad system, which before the

war had been one of the South's largest, now consisted of "Sherman's neckties"(railroad tracks twisted around trees); no one but the poor and destitute remained there after the Union Army had left its mark.⁶ It was nothing short of a miracle, therefore, that Atlanta was resurrected so successfully. By 1894, Southerners had taken down the smoldering remains of the war and built dozens of new buildings. With the help of cotton money from northern industrialists (who only thirty years before had run factories that built the equipment used to destroy the city), Atlanta became the industrial and cultural center of the south, rivaling New Orleans and Charleston in size and importance.⁷ To celebrate this rebirth, plans for a city Exposition were begun. The planners, who comprised many of the financial and industrial leaders of the region, decided that one African-American leader should be invited to speak on the role of his race in the new south. At that time, Washington's reputation was based on his educational work at Tuskegee and a speech that he had made before the Annual Conference of Christian Workers in Atlanta in 1893, during which he made a "splendid impression" and received praise from the southern press for his explanation of his "racial philosophy of moderation."⁸ This speech is largely what made him a candidate for the honor of speaking at the Atlanta Exposition.

In the spring of 1894, the prominent southern white businessmen who were organizing the Exposition had to appear before the House Committee on Appropriations to try and get a federal grant for the Exposition.⁹ Washington, along with two southwestern African-American leaders named Bishop Abram L. Grant and Bishop Wesley J. Gaines, was asked to speak for a total of fifteen minutes before the committee.¹⁰ Although Grant and Gaines were both large men who towered well over six feet tall and carried considerable weight on their long frames, it was the small, physically unimpressive Washington who made the greatest impression on the committee. He endorsed the Exposition as "an opportunity for both races to show what they had done in the way of development since freedom" and also expressed his own personal philosophy which eschewed "political agitation" and favored "industry, thrift, intelligence and

property."¹¹ This was well received by the committee and by the group of southern businessmen, who stayed in the capital for several more days and invited Washington to speak freely at all of their remaining meetings, including one with House Speaker Thomas B. Reed.¹² Convinced by Washington and his companions that the Exposition was a worthwhile enterprise, Congress easily passed a motion awarding the Exposition organizers the sum of \$200,000.¹³

The planning for the Exposition continued through the fall of 1894 when a controversy arose that further helped to prepare Washington for his entry into African-American politics. When the Exposition directors proposed that all exhibits by and about African-Americans be housed in a separate "Negro Building", of African-American construction, some leaders of the race said that they would not participate if their contributions to the fair were not desegregated.¹⁴ They were ruled out, however, when Washington announced that he would accept the segregation of the Exposition. He was subsequently made Alabama's Negro Commissioner of the fair, having already declined an offer to be put in charge of Negro commissioners from all the states because this would interfere with his responsibilities at Tuskegee.¹⁵ Washington was also successful in quelling the African-American resentment that arose when the directors reneged on their original agreement and appointed a white man to be architect of the Negro building. This action, as well as what was perceived as "discrimination against negro exhibitors," was interfering with the fair's progress until Washington stepped in.¹⁶

As the fair approached, the directors began to debate whether or not an African-American should be allowed to represent his race at the speaking podium on the opening day. Some felt that this would "mark the good feelings between the two races" and pay tribute to the African-American presence at the fair, while others were opposed to "any such recognition of the Negro." In the end, the liberals prevailed and the committee decided to ask Washington if he would speak at the opening day ceremony.¹⁷ On the morning of August 23, Washington received a telegram from Irving Garland

Penn, head of the Negro Department of the fair, informing him that he would have the honor of addressing a large white audience for the first time in the "history of the South."¹⁸ The Montgomery Advertiser reported that Washington, having previously been known only for being Tuskegee's principal, was now being made the "chosen representative of his people."¹⁹ Other newspapers recognized the decision to allow Washington to speak as a "bid for Northern commendation," the hand of mighty God, or the tool to lead the "negro race . . . out of the bondage of ignorance and sloth."²⁰ Washington himself saw the decision as the cause of his newly acquired case of anxiety. While all of this activity was taking place in the newspapers of north and south, he was struggling to find a right thing to say in the very speech that was causing all of the excitement. It was the beginning of a new school year at Tuskegee, and his responsibilities there were taxing enough without having to worry over the "great responsibility which had been entrusted to me". He had been picked to speak before a large crowd of mixed with Southerners, Northern businessmen, and African-Americans; he had to find something to say that would please all of them without offending the South so greatly that it would never allow another African-American to speak before whites again.²¹ This point was best expressed by a white farmer of Macon County when he humorously remarked that:

"Washington, you have spoken before the Northern white people, the Negroes in the South, and to us country white people in the South; but in Atlanta, to-morrow, you will have before you the Northern whites, the Southern whites, and the Negroes all together. I fear you have gotten yourself into a pretty tight place."²²

By September 17, Washington finally had a working speech. He rehearsed it before his wife and fellow faculty members, heard their criticisms and encouragement, and left for Atlanta with the speech looming less than twenty-four hours in the future.²³ That night in Atlanta, he prayed instead of sleeping.²⁴

On the afternoon of September 18th, Washington marched in a parade with other Exposition participants, although he and the rest of the African-American contingency had to stay in the rear of the procession.²⁵ By the time they reached the Exposition fairgrounds for the opening exercises, Washington had been thoroughly abused by the midday Georgia sun; this, along with his "nervous anxiety," nearly caused him to collapse as he entered the auditorium and looked out at the crowd of whites, many of whom he knew had only come to see him "make a fool of myself." Several people were heard to say, "What's that nigger doing on the stage?" as Washington approached the platform and sat down.²⁶ They soon drew quiet, however, as the day's activities began. Rufus B. Bullock, ex-governor of Georgia and master of ceremonies, gave the opening address, followed with speeches by Bishop Nelson, Albert Howell, Jr., Charles A. Collier and Mrs. Joseph Thompson.²⁷ The crowd sat through these speeches in silence but quickly became animated when Victor Herbert's popular band played "Star Spangled Banner", "Yankee Doodle", and "Dixie", the last of which drew the most cheers and inspired some to give the rebel yell that had once inspired pro-slavery armies of grey. When the noise subsided, Governor Bullock took the podium again and announced that the next speaker was a "great Southern educator".²⁸ The audience, not knowing who Bullock was referring to but still excited from the music, cheered loudly until they saw Washington rise and start towards the podium, at which point the applause was ceased with "an icy coldness."²⁹ Bullock hastily added that Washington was also a "representative of Negro enterprise and Negro civilization", and the cheering resumed, especially from the Jim Crow section; the African-Americans in the audience had realized that their representative was about to speak.³⁰ Washington himself diplomatically chose not to comment on this typical expression of prejudice in his later autobiographical books, saying only that there was "considerable cheering" when he rose from his seat.³¹ Once the cheering had subsided, Washington began by turning his face to shield it from the southern sun and then began to speak "straight as a Sioux chief, with big white teeth, piercing eyes and a commanding manner."³²

The words that Washington would speak were the words that stated his position on African-American education, race relations, and the place of his race in American civilization. They catalyzed his rise to the top of African-American politics and made him such a legend among both races that Robert Moton was later inclined to pay tribute to his memory. Without this speech, Washington might have remained a minor African-American educator and Tuskegee would have remained a minor African-American vocational school like Talladega or Alabama State. It was not unusual that such a rapid rise in status should come as a result of only one speech; this was a time in American society when public speaking was the means by which many men made their name in politics. Only a few years later, presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan would experience a similarly meteoric rise in popularity just from the public reaction to his "Cross of Gold" speech; ironically, Bryan later used his high status to criticize Washington for dining with Theodore Roosevelt in the White House.³³ On that late summer day in Georgia, however, Washington was virtually without criticism.

He began slowly, praising the organizers of the Exposition for their fair and generous treatment of African-Americans and reminding his listeners that his race made up one-third of the South's population. He then criticized the strategies for improvement that African-Americans had used in the past; in his opinion, the political involvement and holding of high offices, although more attractive than "starting a dairy farm or truck garden", were not the proper way to move up from slavery. It was this criticism that led directly into the famous "ship at sea" parable. The crew of a ship, Washington said, had been lost at sea and needed fresh drinking water. The thirsty sailors begged a nearby vessel to send over their water but were told instead to "cast down your bucket where you are." They resisted at first but eventually did cast down their bucket and were amazed to find it full of "fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River."³⁴ Washington has long been given credit for creating this metaphor, but the truth is that he culled it

from a speech given by a Washington, D.C. teacher named Hugh M. Browne in 1893.³⁵ Browne's message had been the same one that Washington was trying to send to his audience; African-Americans should not seek traditionally white jobs in the North or South or try to find opportunity in foreign lands; they should take roots in the south and "cast . . . down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded", especially with the "Southern white man." Washington urged the members of his race to "cast it down" in the southern fields of agriculture, mechanics, commerce, domestic service, and professional fields in the South because the South was the best place for African-Americans to gain a "man's chance in the commercial world." He pointed out that African-Americans had historically worked at manual labor and that they must continue at this work to be successful; the same skills and activities that had supported African-Americans in slavery would serve them well in emancipation.³⁷

Washington's next topic of discussion concerned the men and women who had once owned those now-emancipated slaves--Southern whites. Washington urged them to cast their bucket down among the African-Americans of the south whose "fidelity and love" had been tested when they "tilled your fields, cleared your forests, builded your railroads and cities, . . . and helped make possible this magnificent representation of the progress of the South" as well as engaging in "nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to our graves." This was a reference to the "faithful Sambo" and "mammy" images that were an integral part of the "Gone With the Wind" view of the antebellum South that many whites, both north and south, believed to be true. Washington asked southern whites to repay this faithful service by agreeing to stand by African-Americans and allow them "the chance of self-improvement through educational and economic opportunities." The next part of his speech has long been the most famous and most widely quoted; many times it has been used as a ten-second explanation of Washington's policy. Washington caused a "delirium of applause" to break out when he

said "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."³⁸ He symbolized this sentiment by first raising his hand high in the air with the fingers spread apart, then clenching the digits to form a united fist (seventy years later, the Black Panthers would use this same gesture to symbolize black power, perhaps without ever knowing that the conservative Washington had first made it famous).³⁹ As the crowd's support grew louder and louder, Washington warned them that if this partnership of the fingers did not succeed, his race might very well constitute "one-third and more of the ignorance and crime of the South", but he would rather see that they were one-third of the progress and financial success. He asked his audience to be patient with his people, pointing out that African-Americans were only thirty years removed from slavery and drawing laughter with a reference to the freemen's ownership of "a few quilts and pumpkins and chickens (gathered from miscellaneous sources)." This remark later drew criticism from other African-Americans who did not appreciate Washington's tendency to make demeaning remarks about his own race in speeches and writings.⁴⁰ On this day, however, they were overruled by the whites who thrilled at this joke and at his rejection of social equality that came next. Washington argued that:

"The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing."

Having forfeited all rights to the programs and ideas of Reconstruction and civil rights activism, Washington concluded amidst thunderous applause by calling for a "blotting out of sectional differences and racial animosities and differences" and pledging the "patient, sympathetic help of my race" in solving the race problem and advancing the "material prosperity" of the South.⁴¹ He then headed for his seat but was intercepted by Governor Bullock, who

had rushed across the stage in an effort to shake Washington's hand. The symbolism of this gesture added to the crowd's already animated state. Men hooted, stomped their feet, and broke down in tears while women pulled flowers from their dresses and threw them at Washington's feet. The rest of the day's activities began after everyone had calmed down and did not conclude until sunset. President Grover Cleveland then pressed a telegraph key from his home in Massachusetts and officially began the Exposition; neither the later speeches nor Cleveland's participation drew a great deal of attention in the newspapers and conversations of whites over the next few days. Washington had carried the day and made himself a legend. Clark Howell, editor of the Atlanta Constitution, would later call the speech the "beginning of a moral revolution in America."⁴²

In the days following his speech, Washington received dozens of letters in the days congratulating him on his "consummate plea". People all over the country from every walk of life rushed to praise the Founder for his "historic Speech . . . of the century", "grand truths", "eloquently apt and philosophically sound words", and "[the] most opportune speech ever made."⁴³ The speech became very popular because of the message it carried. Washington, in essence, endorsed segregation and second-class citizenship for African-Americans. Not only did he allow that the fingers of the hand be left separate, he conceded that some of those fingers should be inferior to others. African-Americans, he argued, were not ready for social equality; they had to earn it first by copying the thrift, hard work and clean living habits of their white neighbors.

Because Washington was now viewed as the spokesman for the entire race, he made it seem that intelligent African-Americans would not want to leave the South or rise above the mechanical, agricultural and service industries. He left it up to whites to decide when the African-American had proven himself ready for social equality; as in the days of slavery, they would be dependent upon the feelings and attitudes of whites. The quest for political offices and other high positions of power that occurred during

Reconstruction, according to Washington, was a mistake; African-Americans should have left those things to the men who had historically held them. He seems to have gone so far as to say that this political activism was the cause of the African-American's degraded position in 1895, as if the resurgence of white supremacy, Jim Crow laws and mass murder had nothing to do with it. The speech in fact made no reference to lynching, abuse of African-American women, forced sharecropping, or any of the other mistreatment that African-Americans had suffered from whites. In fact, the only mention of slavery was that it had happened and that African-Americans had proven loyal to their masters while it existed. The bullwhip, shotgun, and lynch rope are not part of the world that Washington constructed during his speech; the stolen chicken and the good intentions of whites are, however. In short, Washington's speech was a brilliant example of telling people what they want to hear.

If Washington had worried in the days before the Exposition about how to reach his southern white audience, those worries were surely eased by the widespread approval that met him after the speech was been made. He reinforced the stereotypes of the antebellum South and its African-American inhabitants that were held by most Southerners and, in the late nineteenth century, were being solidified by Social Darwinism and the dubious research of various sociologists and scientists. The former slave-owners and Confederate soldiers, as well as their children and grandchildren, felt that the African-American did not have the capability to run a political system or survive without white help, but were perfectly capable of performing service-oriented jobs such as domestic service, farming (on a white man's property), or shining a businessman's shoes on his way to work. Washington did nothing to challenge those conceptions and did everything to reinforce them. The result of all this was that Jim Crow and the oppressing of the southern African-American went on with a new vengeance.

Convinced by Washington that African-Americans did not want equality, southern whites passed Jim Crow laws that blanketed over every aspect of the African-Americans' life. Anyone who broke or challenged the segregated color line, either by action, word or perception, was beaten, forced to leave, or killed.⁴⁴ Over three thousand African-Americans were killed between 1890 and 1910 for this challenge to Jim Crow and white supremacy, often by whites who freely admitted to holding a great respect for Washington and his school.⁴⁵ The men and women of Tuskegee were seen as "good Negroes" who "stayed in their place"; others who did not stay in their place did not live to an old age. Eight million Americans and their descendants would suffer for decades as the result of a five minute speech. James Creelman, an eyewitness correspondent for the New York World, summed up these sentiments without realizing the full impact of what had occurred. He reported that as the whites in the audience at the Exposition cheered wildly and surged to shake Washington's hand:

"A ragged, ebony giant, squatted on the floor in one of the aisles, watched the orator with burning eyes and tremulous face until the supreme burst of applause came and then the tears ran down his face. Most of the Negroes in the audience were crying, perhaps without knowing why."⁴⁶

Creelman, although eloquent, misunderstood the man's emotions and underestimated the perceptiveness of the African-American spectators. They were not crying because they had loved the speech; they were crying because they were witnessing the death of African-American civil rights. It would take another sixty years before the damage was even begun to be repaired.

In terms of education, Washington's address did not present any advanced or liberal thoughts. He called for African-Americans to embrace vocational and trade education so that they could better learn to farm, cook, clean, and perform marginal tasks of industry. Washington scoffed at higher learning and the fine arts as a realm of

importance, saying that they would do a cotton picker or a street sweeper no good and that those African-Americans who pursued them would know nothing but failure. It was this gospel of vocational and industrial education that would prevent southern African-Americans from attaining the education enjoyed by the northern "Talented Tenth" of African-American doctors, lawyers and journalists that was led by the young and increasingly influential W.E.B. DuBois.⁴⁷ Washington's address would exemplify the rest of Washington's political and educational career and become so entrenched in the minds of many Americans that Robert R. Moton would one day have to perform a masterpiece of public relations in order to transform Tuskegee Institute into a legitimate college.

The power that Washington began to accumulate in 1895 was still with him in 1915 despite the many changes in American society that had occurred. The mass migration of African-Americans to the North had begun and the South was responding with renewed attempts to keep them from leaving.⁴⁸ Despite the emergence of the NAACP and its spokesman W.E.B. DuBois (who would soon assert himself as the ideological opponent of Washington), civil rights advances had declined under the conservative presidency of Woodrow Wilson. This man, who had broken the Republican stranglehold on the White House and, like Washington, had experience as a college president, publicly professed a belief in white supremacy and referred to "Birth of a Nation" (a movie that portrayed the Klu Klux Klan as honorable knights and African-Americans as foolhardy, savage children) as "history written with lightning."⁴⁹ He and the rest of the country were looking at the carnage taking place on the battlefields of Europe and wondering if Americans would have to go "over there" and die in the trenches alongside French, British and German boys.⁵⁰ Advances in automobiles, film, industry and communications were helping to usher out the 19th century and radically change the appearance of American society. One thing that stayed the same, however, was Washington's status. He still enjoyed the same national popularity

and measure of control at Tuskegee that had been his for much of the twentieth century. Although he was not as powerful in the District of Columbia after Wilson removed many African-American officeholders and ignored Washington's advice on racial issues, he still held more political power in the capital and around the country than did any other African-American.⁵¹ The general public, the politicians and the philanthropists still looked to him for leadership and answers to their questions. They were not aware that Washington was dying.

There had been several signs of physical weakness in earlier years; a collapse in 1885 (when he was not yet thirty), a near-collapse in 1899, a breakout of indigestion in 1909, and a visit to a Michigan sanitarium in 1911. Even with these lapses, Washington continually refused to take a lengthy vacation or receive full medical attention, saying that he was too busy; he stopped working only briefly at the deaths of his first two wives and his long-time friend General Samuel Chapman Armstrong. To him, "work was life", and there could be no rest. He only grudgingly agreed to take a two-week vacation in 1913 to go on a fishing trip in Mobile, a trip that he found enjoyable and repeated in 1914 and 1915 under the medical supervision of Dr. George Cleveland Hall.⁵² By this time, however, it was too late to repair the physical damage that thirty-five years of non-stop work had done to his body. The beginning of the end came in New Haven, Connecticut, where he spoke to large crowds about the need for greater improvement in African-American education.⁵³ Washington then traveled to New York to meet with a group of Trustees, who saw that his health was failing and convinced him to cancel a speaking engagement at Roanoke, Virginia.⁵⁴ Upon checking into St. Luke's Hospital in New York, Washington was examined by Dr. Walter A. Bastedo, who announced that "racial characteristics" had caused a condition of being "completely worn out"; this vague diagnosis led some to believe that Washington was suffering from syphilis, which was thought to run rampant among African-American males.⁵⁵ Other physicians and personal friends did their best to assure the press that Washington was not suffering from any type of

venereal disease, but in the meantime, Washington was fading fast. When he first checked into the hospital, he had been able to run Tuskegee's affairs from his bedside via telegraphs and letters; by November 12, however, he was so weak that he could barely whisper his request to be taken back home to Tuskegee.⁵⁶ He reached home the next day and rested in a school hospital bed, surrounded by friends, family, and the entire Tuskegee staff. At 4:45 on the Sunday morning of November 14th, Booker Taliaferro Washington died at the age of fifty-two.⁵⁷ The man who had risen from slavery in Virginia, built a school and an empire from a broken-down shack in the heart of segregationist Alabama, held the ear of four presidents, and become one of the most powerful African-Americans that the world has ever seen, was dead.

Through the years, Washington had kept the knowledge of his poor health a private matter. Only his close friends and confidants Tuskegee knew that he was not well, and people who stood outside the tight circle of Washington's trust only heard passing rumors of illness. Although he had aged in appearance, there was little to suggest that he was suffering from anything other than the natural aging process.⁵⁸ It was a great shock to the nation, therefore, to learn of his sickness and death in November. In the days following his death, the letters of sadness and pain were mailed to Tuskegee with the same speed and quantity that had been characteristic of the public reaction to his Exposition speech almost exactly twenty years earlier. In the District of Columbia, the board of education ordered that every school flag over which they held jurisdiction should be flown at half mast during Washington's funeral on November 17th.⁵⁹ Men like Marcus Garvey, who had always been eager to criticize Washington and his policies, now showed an equal willingness to call him the "greatest hero sprung from the stock of scattered Ethiopia."⁶⁰ Many African-Americans were reminded of the mood that existed at the deaths of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. American poet Capp Jefferson sent a poem to Mrs. Washington expressing the sorrow that many African-American

farmers felt at the Founder's passing. The elegy contained these words:

"Comes now the question, no dispute
Where can we find a substitute
To carry out unfinished plans
And fill the stead of this 'Great Man'?"⁶¹

Even as they mourned, many people pondered over this same question. Only two days after Washington's death, Charles William Anderson, who was the head of the Negro Bureau of the New York State Republican Party, wrote a letter to a close friend of Washington speculating as to who would be named the new principal.⁶² After the funeral, the trustees and Tuskegee faculty, led by acting principal Warren Logan, undertook the dual task of returning a semblance of normalcy to the campus and finding a permanent replacement for the deceased Founder. On November 30th, Seth Low of the Board of Trustees sent a telegram to Washington's secretary Emmett J. Scott asking him to call a meeting of the Trustees "for the purpose of selecting a successor to Doctor Washington."⁶³ In this meeting, various names were bandied about, but it soon became clear that there were only two men who were seriously being considered. The first was Scott, who had for twenty years been Washington's secretary, lieutenant, absentee principal, and second-in-command. The second was Robert R. Moton.

At the time of Washington's death, Moton was employed at Hampton Institute in Virginia as Commander of Cadets and assistant to Dr. Hollis B. Frissell, who was the school's principal. A large man who stood 6'2" and weighed over two hundred pounds, Moton naturally commanded respect by his appearance but had also gained a national reputation as "a splendid man and a fine gentleman" and an educator of the first order.⁶⁴ Born in Amelia County, Virginia in 1867, he, like Washington before him, had been educated at Hampton before beginning a career there. Like Washington, he had risen to the heights of that school's power structure through natural

ability and dedication to the "Washingtonian" philosophy that "young Negro men . . . must love work as well as knowledge. They must hate no one, black or white. They might take delight in serving others."⁶⁵ While some may not have liked his relative conservatism, few questioned his intelligence and devotion to his work. He was thought of as a considerate, gentle man who at the same time commanded a great deal of respect- few people of either race were brave enough to "tangle horns" with him.⁶⁶ An additional point in his favor was a factor that had been entirely out of his control. At the time, it was believed that the best and the brightest members of the African-American race inherited their superior qualities from white ancestors. Washington himself was the light-skinned son of a white man, and other top leaders, including W.E.B. DuBois, Roscoe Conkling Bruce and the late Frederick Douglass, were also of mixed blood. Many whites (and African-Americans) thought that "white blood" was the deciding factor in the intelligence and leadership abilities of these men. Moton, however, was very dark in color and had distinctively African features. He proved that a man of purely African blood was just as good as a man of mixed ancestry and that infusion of white blood had nothing to do with talent. In fact, Moton actually did have "white blood in his veins", but he kept this fact hidden from all but his closest friends. Since this was not known to the general public, however, many thought that if Moton's appointment to the principalship would be a sign to the world that pure-blooded Africans were just as gifted as those with mixed ancestry.⁶⁷

Other people who supported Moton felt that he of all African-American educators best exemplified Washington's and philosophy. This belief came about in part because of the long friendship between the two men. The two men had much in common; both had been raised in Virginia in the middle of the 19th century (although Moton was Washington's junior by ten years), both had graduated from Hampton and later been employed there, and both were accustomed to working closely with whites. Washington had regularly corresponded with Moton on issues of race and education

and frequently gave him advice on how to handle various issues, although Moton also felt free to give Washington criticism whenever he felt that the Tuskegee principal had mishandled a situation.⁶⁸ As time went by, Washington corresponded less and less with Dr. Frissell and more often wrote to Moton when he had to discuss something that involved Hampton. While Moton's comparatively undemanding schedule and Frissell's failing health may have had something to do with this, it was probably more related to the close bond between Moton and Washington. This closeness is exemplified by Washington's glowing complements of Moton as a "clean, high-souled gentleman" of "such kindly good humor, thorough self-control, and sympathetic disposition".⁶⁹

In 1906, when Washington was publishing a collection of essays from the faculty and alumni of Tuskegee and needed a contribution from Hampton, he turned not to Frissell but to Moton. The Major promptly produced an essay which compared Hampton's "Aryan ingenuity . . . conspicuous among the white race for a thousand years", to Tuskegee's previously nonexistent African-American intelligence and work ethic in industrial and agricultural work.⁷⁰ When W.E.B. DuBois and the NAACP became a major political force in 1910 and immediately came into conflict with the more moderate Booker T. Washington, it was Moton who worked to bring a peace between the two sides. As a younger man who had no history of conflict with the founders of the NAACP and was a close confidant to Washington, Moton was able to partially diffuse the hostility between Washington and DuBois.⁷¹ This was no small feat considering the fact that many of those who spearheaded the NAACP, including DuBois, Oswald Garrison Villiard and Mary Church Terrell, had been fighting with Washington since the 19th century and often resorted to tactics spying and political sabotage (these were tactics that Washington had used to perfection for years).⁷² Moton's actions brought him much publicity and also ingratiated him with both moderates and militants. He still identified most closely with Washington, however, and the two friends, along with their families, often spent time together whenever it was possible.⁷³ Moton also

accompanied Washington on his speaking tours throughout the country, including his tour of the Carolinas in 1910 and his engagements in Florida in 1912, and the presence that he brought to these occasions often drew almost as much attention as did Washington.⁷⁴

It is possible that Moton was being considered for the future presidency of Tuskegee as early as 1909. In January of that year, Washington had to seek major treatment for his chronic indigestion.⁷⁵ When he recovered, his correspondences and visits with Major Moton, already at a high level, increased even more. Moton, who had never accompanied Washington on any speaking tours before his illness nor been Washington's primary liaison at Hampton, now began to fill both of these roles. In 1911, when Washington wrote to his friend James Calvin Hemphill on activities at Hampton, he spoke not of Frissell, his long-time white father figure, but of "Major Moton and Dr. Frissell".⁷⁶ It seems that Moton had surpassed Frissell in importance to the principal of Tuskegee; this may be because Moton had the potential to eventually become Tuskegee's principal while Frissell, who was older, white, and already had a school to run, was not. While the private conversations between Moton and Washington during the last six years of the Founder's life are not a matter of public record, it is possible that Washington knew that he would not live a great many more years and that he was instructing his younger friend on how to carry on his work after he died. Washington never publicly spoke about who he wanted to succeed him, but it is likely that he wanted a member of his own school of thought to take both his office and his role as national race spokesman, and Moton was the most outstanding member of Washington's camp. An event from the last hours of Washington's life illustrates this point. As Washington lay dying, he asked that Moton be brought to his bedside and then said to his longtime friend, "Major, I want you to stand by Tuskegee Institute."⁷⁷ This historical anecdote may or may not be true; what is true is that Moton did stand by Tuskegee for years to come.

Despite the self-apparent logic of appointing Moton to Tuskegee's presidency, the decision to actually hire him was not an easy one. The newspapers of early December report that in the month between Washington's death and the election of Moton to his position, the Tuskegee Board of Trustees met with "leading negroes and with whites associated with educational problems" to get varying positions on the issue at hand.⁷⁸ Ex-president Theodore Roosevelt and the rest of the Trustees felt that their "selection of a principal for Tuskegee Institute was as important a matter as the election of the president of the United States."⁷⁹ Because they numbered twenty men and included job candidates Warren Logan and Emmett J. Scott among their members, it was necessary that they lessen the number of people involved by forming a "Committee of Five" to make the final decision.⁸⁰ This committee quickly divided into two sides. One side, which was composed largely of the Tuskegee faculty, supported either Warren Logan or Emmett J. Scott for the presidency.⁸¹ Logan was a longshot from the very beginning; although he had served as vice principal and treasurer since 1883, he had not established a great reputation outside of the Tuskegee community.⁸² He was essentially forgotten as the debate intensified and the list of candidates narrowed to just Moton and Scott. Scott, however, would not be dismissed as easily as Logan had been.

Those who supported the secretary for Tuskegee's highest position saw him as the as the logical heir to Washington because they knew what he had done over the past twenty years. Scott had been the secondary architect of the Tuskegee Machine, initiating or carrying out all of Washington's various plans and de-emphasizing his own importance. Few people were aware of the extent of "all of the activities in which he (Washington) was interested."⁸³ During his tenure as secretary, the "small, rather delicate-looking yellow man" blacklisted faculty members who sympathized with Boston newspaper editor and anti-Washington activist William Monroe Trotter, prevented the African-American press from learning about W.E.B. DuBois' Niagara Movement, fought against an attempt to have

Tuskegee's tax-exempt status removed by the state legislature (this status allowed Washington to buy large plots of land in Macon County at reduced prices), and attacked men like DuBois and Trotter either anonymously or under the false name of Amos Joy.⁸⁴ Due to Washington and Scott's success in ridding Tuskegee of any faculty who did not support him and his methods, the administration of 1915 was eager to support the man with the pince-nez.⁸⁵ Charles William Anderson's speculative letter to Scott informed the secretary that he and those who he referred to as "most of the thinking people" were in favor of the secretary being appointed to the principalship.⁸⁶ Scott himself said that he had "not the slightest desire or ambition to succeed Dr. Washington as the Principal of Tuskegee Institute."⁸⁷

Scott's support, although strong at Tuskegee, was far from universal. There were many people who knew of Scott's underhanded tactics and wanted Tuskegee to have a principal who would employ a more honest, open-minded approach. These people supported Moton who was the most widely respected "candidate from this national field" and seen as the heir to Washington's position of political power.⁸⁸ Other men such as education guru Roscoe Conkling Bruce and newspaper editor T. Thomas Fortune were looked upon favorably by liberal whites and Tuskegee supporters but were considered to be also so vital to the various enterprises that Washington had placed them in that they could not be moved elsewhere; they also lacked the experience and national recognition that the principalship required. Moton, on the other hand, had years of experience in educational administration and enjoyed considerable backing from Theodore Roosevelt, the United States Board of Education, the General Education Board and the Executive Committee of the National Negro Business League, among others.⁸⁹ To these prominent citizens and organizations, no one but Moton had the ability to carry on Washington's work and become "what the President of Tuskegee should be-the leader of his race in this country."⁹⁰

While Moton's record as an educator and friend to Washington were reasons why he became such an attractive candidate for Tuskegee's principalship, other forces entirely out of his control were at work as well. Despite the close relationship between Hampton and Tuskegee, the two schools were considerably different in some ways. Hampton had been founded for the purpose of educating Native Americans as well as African-Americans and had always been run largely by whites. It had employed two presidents (the first of whom, General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, had originally recommended Washington to the Alabama legislature as principal of Tuskegee), both of which were white, and the chief power positions had always been held by whites. Washington and Moton, in fact, were probably the only African-Americans who had ever become second-in-command at the school; Washington had served in this capacity under Armstrong, while Moton worked under Dr. Frissell. By the mid-1910s, Frissell was on the losing end of a long struggle with illness and discussion about who his successor would be had already begun. Many felt that Moton was the best man for the job. He had worked tirelessly at Hampton for years and proven an excellent administrator and representative of the Hampton philosophy. Few disputed that Moton had the requirements and experience necessary for running a school like Hampton or Tuskegee. This was 1915, however, and race superseded personal character in circumstances such as these.⁹¹

Because Hampton had been run by white men for almost fifty years, some thought that appointing Moton to the presidency would be "too radical a departure from the traditions". Much of Hampton's faculty was white, and there was widespread opposition to allowing any African-American, even one as talented as Moton, to be in a position of authority over whites. This opposition made it difficult to determine what direction Moton's career would take. It seemed that there was no way of reconciling these issues. If Moton became president of Hampton, it would be very well received by African-Americans and some whites, but many of the rich trustees and influential Americans would not take kindly to this affront to white

supremacy, for even whites who considered themselves enlightened still harbored the idea that African-Americans were not as inherently good as Anglo-Saxons and therefore should stay segregated and powerless. On the other hand, if Frissell died and Moton was passed over for the principalship, the cry of racism would be heard from African-Americans throughout the country. Many might feel betrayed by the whites of Hampton and Tuskegee and turn to the more radical message of DuBois and the NAACP or even the African nationalist teachings of a young Marcus Garvey, who was becoming more influential in the African-American communities with each passing year. The trustees of Hampton and Tuskegee could find no solution to this dilemma until Washington died. His death, although sorrowful, "solved this problem in a way which no human wisdom could dictate."⁹²

Tuskegee's history of African-American control meant that the appointment of Moton as principal there would not create any of the controversy that might have arose if he took the same position at Hampton. In fact, all three of the men whose names were bandied about as potential replacements for Washington--Moton, Emmett Scott, and dark horse candidate Warren Logan--were African-Americans.⁹³ Moton's selection as Tuskegee's principal would also pay tribute to Washington because the two men had shared such similar backgrounds and educational beliefs. By hiring Moton, the trustees would send the message that only a person like Washington could run Tuskegee effectively. Hiring Moton would also clear the way for a white man to ascend to Hampton's presidency. If Moton was kept in his secondary role at Hampton while a white man was promoted over him, tension would rise, but if Moton was moved to Tuskegee and rewarded for his years of service, the path would be clear for a white man to be put in charge of Hampton. This would continue the tradition that, as a trustee put it, "Hampton Institute was a school founded by white people for the benefit of Negroes while Tuskegee Institute was a school founded by Negroes and managed by Negroes for the benefit of Negroes."⁹⁴ The decision would be easy to coordinate because of the long history of interaction

and movement of faculty between the two schools; many of Tuskegee's trustees were also on the Board of Trustees at Hampton and were therefore responsible for appointing presidents at both schools. Moton himself became a member of Hampton's Board of Trustees several years after his appointment to Tuskegee's presidency.⁹⁵ The close connections between Hampton and Tuskegee made the move seem not so much a hostile pirating of Hampton's faculty as a friendly "loan" from one site of African-American vocational education to another.

The decision was announced on December 20, 1915. Moton, after learning of his selection, immediately left a previous engagement in Detroit for Tuskegee to meet with the faculty, Scott included.⁹⁶ As a close friend of Washington and associate of many other Tuskegee faculty, Moton had been to the campus many times before and was closely acquainted with many faculty members, including Registrar John H. Palmer, his old classmate from Hampton. The new principal assured his old friend and new co-workers that he had no intention of changing Washington's policies and that he hoped to have the cooperation and support of the entire Tuskegee community during this difficult transition period.⁹⁷ In light of the opposition to his appointment that had been widespread at Tuskegee, Moton may have been anxious to remind the faculty that they owed him their full support, although there is no written evidence to suggest that the faculty intended to resist him. The new principal's first official step was to designate Warren Logan as acting Principal (he had been acting in that capacity since Washington's death); Logan would preside at faculty meetings and council sessions for the rest of the year so that Moton would be free to busy himself "becoming familiar with the details of administration and . . . personal acquaintance with all the workers."⁹⁸ On May 25, 1916, however, both Moton and Logan stopped their work momentarily so that Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute could inaugurate its second principal.⁹⁹

Once in office, Moton faced the daunting task of taking over the work that a legend had started. Although he had acquainted himself

with faculty, personnel and facilities by the summer of 1916, he would soon be faced with two major incidents that would require all of his attention and abilities. First, the plan to hold a Million Dollar Fund campaign was approved and initiated by school administrators. This plan had actually been conceived during Washington's presidency, but it did not gain momentum until after he died, when it was redefined as "a memorial to the Founder." The fund was meant to be used for long-needed repairs on school facilities, enlargement of the school's endowment, and permanent stability of its financial affairs. Some philanthropists had originally been unwilling to donate large sums of money to this cause; while no one wanted Tuskegee to fall into physical disarray, some feared the independence that a gift of this size would provide. After Washington's death, however, Moton and the Trustees used his image as part of the publicity for the fund and many people were more willing to donate; continued lack of support would have been interpreted as disrespect towards the Founder's memory. The campaign for funds sent Moton traveling all over the country; he especially spent a lot of time at Hampton, which had agreed to share the responsibility of raising the money, and at the home of photography mogul George Eastman, who had pledged \$250,000 to Washington and now made good on this promise when Moton came calling.¹⁰⁰

While Moton was away from Tuskegee, Dr. Logan and Emmett Scott kept the school's daily affairs in order, having done so for years during Washington's long trips around the country. Moton was forced to come home, however, when a major disaster struck. The Boys' Trade School, which housed the Institute's industrial and mechanical equipment and was the main center for vocational education, burned to the ground in an accidental fire. Two-thirds of Tuskegee's students were now without the facilities that they needed to learn their trades. The school's money vaults were not full enough to pay for the replacement of the Trade school without outside help; the fundraising campaign thus took on an extra urgency. Moton, who was not on campus when the fire occurred, decided that the best

course of action was for him to continue his philanthropic travels and try to secure enough donations to pay for a new vocational facility.¹⁰¹ He called an emergency meeting of the Trustees in New York and made plans to replace the Trade School facility with a five-building complex of modern design and more equipment than had been in the old building.¹⁰² Following in the tradition of having the students personally build campus structures in order to give them vocational experience and teach them the value of hard work, Moton decided that the complex would be built by students employed in the masonry, ironworks, and construction trades, while the design and supervision of its erection would be done by students of Tuskegee's Architectural Division. With these plans and the million dollars required to carry them out, Moton victoriously returned home within a few weeks.¹⁰³

With the recent death of the Founder, many people wanted to show their continued support for his work and ensure that Tuskegee would not, as some had suggested, die with Washington. The financial donations that Moton had solicited were, he felt, a sign that people wanted him to be successful in his work and carry on Washington's wishes. To continue this early success, however, Moton had to appear to be continuing Washington's work and not striking out in his own direction. If he had promised a radically new philosophy at Tuskegee after taking office, many people might have been frightened. Tuskegee was the example of African-American conservatism, and any philosophical move to the left would have made people wonder if DuBois, Trotter, or one of the other liberals had gotten to Moton, and donations would have decreased. Moton, therefore, had to continue business as usual in the mission and administration of "Washington's school." It remained to be seen how long that would last.

In the first years of Moton's presidency, he made few changes from what Washington had done; society as a whole, however, did not remain nearly as stable. Washington's message to southern African-Americans to "cast down your bucket" was being ignored as

thousands of them were running away from southern Jim Crow laws and mob violence and running to northern industrial jobs. As the population in northern cities swelled to uncomfortably large numbers, immigrants who competed with African-Americans for jobs and housing came into violent conflict with their new neighbors from the south and bloody race riots broke out all over the country.¹⁰⁴ The African-American race, long considered a southern agrarian group of people, was rapidly becoming northern and industrialized. Moton was forced to find a way to protect and improve the well-being of his people during this massive upheaval that surpassed, with the possible exception of emancipation, any previous change in the situation of African-Americans. This, however, was not the only change that was taking place.

In 1917, the United States prepared to enter the war that had been raging across Europe for three years. President Woodrow Wilson, who had used the slogan "He Kept Us Out of the War" to gain reelection, now had to mobilize for a full-scale invasion of Europe in order to "make the world itself at last free."¹⁰⁵ By the next year, American troops of both races were fighting in the European bloodbaths and numerous reports about their behavior were coming back to the United States. Some of these reports suggested that the African-American soldiers were not performing well. They were, in fact, accused of cowardice, inefficiency, and improper treatment of the local people (this last accusation referred to reports of sexual violence against French women).¹⁰⁶ At the same time, intelligence tests administered by the armed forces concluded that African-American soldiers were not intelligent enough to make good soldiers.¹⁰⁷ War Department administrators had begun placing African-American troops in the field with French units so that American officers would not have to deal with them. The charges and discrimination against the African-American troops grew so great that President Wilson asked Major Moton to go over to Europe and get a first-hand account of what the soldiers were doing. Wilson had not suddenly developed a concern for the well-being of African-Americans, but he did have the experienced politician's sense of

prudence. If he had been forced to pull African-American troops off of the battlefield, he would have had to replace them with white men back home in America. He did not want to draft any more sons, fathers and husbands into the bloody war and therefore was eager to have Moton defend the African-American troops so that men of both races could stay where they were.¹⁰⁸

Moton had previously received an offer from Newton D. Baker, Wilson's Secretary of War, to serve as a special advisor on "problems of Negro enlisted men" but had instead recommended Scott for the position. He could not, however, turn down this request from President Wilson, not with the seriousness of the charges against African-American soldiers. He was given full power to go anywhere the army went and had access to any information that he needed in his quest for the truth about the African-American troops. Leaving Scott and Logan in charge of the school, Moton went to Europe in the late summer of 1918 and began investigating the charges that African-American soldiers were raping the local women in large numbers. He first was told that the crime was "very prevalent" among the troops, but when the official records were examined, he found that only seven soldiers in the entire 92nd Division had been charged with rape and only two of these accused soldiers had actually been convicted (one of those convictions was later overturned). Investigations of other divisions brought similar results. The truth, Moton discovered, was that white officers were wildly exaggerating stories about the lawlessness of their African-American troops and sending lies back to the people in America, who in light of the stereotypes about African-Americans that existed at the time, did not challenge such accusations. Moton's work was key in helping to dispel this falsehood and clearing the name of the 92nd and other divisions. He also found that these same troops who had been accused of cowardice had been given high commendations by French officers and compatriots; in fact, some who were named in American dispatches as cowards had received awards of bravery. Whether Wilson or his aides were fully convinced by these reports, it is not known; it is a fact, however, that African-American troops

continued to serve in the most dangerous situations for the duration of the war and were among the most decorated of all Allied troops when it came to the gratitude of the French people for their defense of Gallic land.¹⁰⁹

Moton gained a personal victory for his actions overseas; politicians like Harding and Coolidge later remembered the patriotism that the principal had shown when he put his own life in danger and ventured to foreign battlefields. In later years, he would interact with both of these men during their presidential tenures and performing various services for presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt. These presidents, along with other powerful men in the nation's capital, were always kept aware of what Moton was doing at Tuskegee and respected his personality and position.¹¹⁰ They would help him later when he wanted to influence policy regarding his race and his school, and although he was not as involved in politics as Washington had been, he still occasionally needed his friends in the capital to help him with a problem.

Moton's initiation of contact with presidents and other political leaders usually came only when he had a problem and needed special help. Unlike Washington, Moton did not attempt to influence policy or promote his friends for government appointments. He was not as interested in politics as Washington had been and never really showed any talent for it. Washington's biographers, in fact, blame Moton for allowing the Tuskegee Machine of political influence to fall apart after the Founder's death; this, if true, probably reflects Moton's lack of interest in the machine rather than a level of incompetence.¹¹¹ His contemporaries remember him as "a man of great courage", a "splendid man" and an "engaging and attractive personality", but not as a man of high political acumen.¹¹² In fact, on the eve of his appointment it was pointed out that he, unlike Washington, was not well known for giving speeches, which was an activity necessary for politics but not for running a college.¹¹³ In earlier years, his public addresses had been limited to those made at Hampton and Tuskegee and during traveling tours that he made with

Washington, during which he was never the center of attention or keynote speaker. After he became president of Tuskegee, however, he was expected to speak at various occasions ranging from farming conventions to Sunday chapel service at the school. In these speeches, Moton's primary goal was to reconcile the races and increase benefits for all while still dealing with the mistreatment of African-Americans.¹¹⁴

Moton had been educated and employed by an institution founded on the premise that African-Americans and whites should work together for the common good; although he was now the head of an all-black school, he did not by any means live in an all-black world. William Varner, Jr., the son of one of Tuskegee's oldest and most powerful families, later recalled that Moton, like Washington before him, often spent his late afternoons drinking tea with Tuskegee's leading white citizens on their front porches, although other less distinguished African-American visitors were not allowed such a liberal bending of the rules of segregation and had to knock at the rear door before entering.¹¹⁵ These whites who welcomed the principal into their homes were often the target of great praise in Moton's speeches, which were designed to cultivate "good will between the two races." Throughout his tenure as principal, he went on a number of speaking tours in the southeastern states and was always received with praise and admiration by the white press and community.¹¹⁶ When speaking before a largely African-American audience, he, like Washington, called for thriftiness, hard work and clean habits; if the audience was white, he emphasized mutual cooperation and understanding without explicitly challenging the color line.¹¹⁷

The greatest example of Moton's skill at public appearances is the speech that he gave at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C in 1922. Thirty years before, many whites had seethed at the the decision to allow Washington to speak at the Atlanta Exposition; this time, however, Lincoln Memorial Committee chairperson, former president and Supreme Court Chief Justice

William Howard Taft could select Robert Moton to deliver the keynote address without controversy. Moton's speech, which praised the fallen Civil War president as the emancipator of his people and a great American, called for unity between the two races and, according to the press, was well received by all. It had been thought that on a day which celebrated the life of a man who freed an entire race of people, the greatest living member of that race should deliver the main address; Moton, by all accounts, did not disappoint this faith put in him and was just as impressive as Washington would have been had he still been living.¹¹⁸

Despite his relatively moderate message found in many of these early speeches, Moton could on occasion deliver a more liberal and empowering speech than had his predecessor. He demonstrated this at a public meeting held in New York City which had been organized to discuss the welfare of native South Africans. General Jan Smuts, the leader of the white population in South Africa and the chief architect of her apartheid policy of complete segregation, was the keynote speaker. He gave the American audience a brief amount of background information of the native people and praised them for their patience in the resolution of race conflict, saying that it was like "the patience of the ass." Members of the audience were so shocked by this unflattering comparison that they gasped in astonishment, but Smuts did not notice and kept on speaking. He would have ended the evening on that note were it not for Dr. Moton, who had silently waited behind Smuts during the speech but now took the podium and began to speak. He diplomatically praised Smuts for his sympathetic treatment of black South Africans but admitted that something was troubling him. Moton explained to Smuts that his comparison between Africans and the ass "shot a pang through the hearts of my people and many others who are kindly disposed towards us. I wish you would explain to these people what you meant when you compared the Negro with the ass." Smuts, visibly shaken, quickly apologized to Moton and explained that he had not meant to be insulting. Local papers that were published the next day carried the headline "MOTON REBUKES GENERAL SMUTS."¹¹⁹

When he was not making speeches and raising money, Moton busied himself with the daily operations of the Institute. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, it looked considerably different from the leaky, one-room shack that Washington had started classes in forty years earlier. Thanks to the deep pockets of Tuskegee's white friends, Tuskegee had become the greatest institution of African-American education in the world. Part of the reason why Tuskegee was so highly thought of because it, like the town that surrounded it, was very physically attractive. Tuskegee had been settled in the 1830s on the top of a great, pine-covered ridge of black earth; the woods that the town had been hacked out of were so thick that even during Moton's principalship they could support bears and wolves, who occasionally wandered out from the trees to inspect local farms. These farms were often built on the tops of hills where a person could stand on the top of a hill and see the area around them for miles; this has not changed in the sixty years since Moton was there. In addition to the natural beauty, Tuskegee itself was considered an "unusually pretty town." The residential areas were marked by their long streets, rows of trees, and large, dignified houses built in the Greek Revival style. The town square was shaded with alazea trees and surrounded on all four sides by small, businesslike shops which reflected the air of importance that the people inside seemed to carry. The center of the square, like nearly every other town in the South was marked with a statue of an armed Confederate soldier menacingly looking northward and bearing the names of Tuskegee men who had died wearing the grey uniform. Many local whites, after examining their natural and man-made resources, came to the conclusion that Tuskegee was not only physically attractive but also "greatly surpassed places of comparable size in its social and cultural life."¹²⁰

The Institute, although all-black, was considered a part of this superior atmosphere. Much of this was due to the presence of Robert R. Taylor. Taylor had been the first African-American graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1892 when he

completed that school's architecture program and was named valedictorian.¹²¹ Under his guidance, Tuskegee's students erected thirty-nine impressive new buildings between 1892 and 1925, including the Veterinary Hospital, Wilcox Trades Building, Alumni Bowl, and the George Washington Carver Museum. An aerial view of the campus in the late twenties showed a sprawling plain of grass and trees interjected with dozens of massive red-brick buildings. The school was large enough to impress any visitor but not so large that students, who did not have the luxury of automobiles, could not get from one end to the other in a reasonable amount of time. By the late 1920s, Tuskegee had also constructed its own post office, water tower, power supply, phone lines and electrical systems.¹²² All of this construction was done by the students, who were among the only in the country who could honestly say that they had personally made their school what it was.

The students, in addition to erecting new buildings and facilities, were kept extremely busy throughout the day. Moton also saw to it, as Washington had, that they would not travel outside the school in search of entertainment; this was accomplished by making their schedules so hectic that they had little time for frivolous pursuits. Students spent six days of the week attending classes, doing physical labor in the fields, factories or homes of the Institute, eating, attending church services (Tuskegee was a non-denominational school, but all students were nevertheless required to attend services), practicing for athletic teams, and studying.¹²³ They accomplished all of this during a day which began at 6:30 in the morning and did not end until 9:30 at night.¹²⁴ Moton also saw to it that they would not need to leave the campus for any reason. Tuskegee Institute became such a self-contained microcosm that every necessary supply or resource, from food to clothes to books, was made from scratch right there at the school. Students who did feel the need to shop in town soon found that the white-owned stores would not serve them by order of Jim Crow and the black-owned stores would not serve them by order of Booker T. Washington (even after he died).¹²⁵ Going outside of Tuskegee was

not an option either; Montgomery, the closest town of any size, was over forty miles away. It was therefore both necessary and beneficial that Moton would ensure that Tuskegee's campus had everything that students and faculty needed.

Moton also saw to it that the students would not spend what little free time they had in pursuit of the things not found at Tuskegee. To keep them away from the town theater, he built a cinema on campus.¹²⁶ For those who did not enjoy the movies, there were numerous other entertainment opportunities throughout the school year. During his tenure, Moton brought attractions like Roland Hayes, Marian Anderson, the Russian Symphony Orchestra, Martha Graham's Dance Ensemble, John Philip Sousa and his Band, William Handy, and Duke Ellington to the school. Any student could enjoy these performances by purchasing a reasonably priced season ticket.¹²⁷ Moton also encouraged students to don the school colors of crimson and old gold by participating in varsity sports, which were among the best in the country. In the 1920s, Tuskegee's "Golden Tigers" on the swimming, tennis, basketball and baseball teams were among the best in the South Intercollegiate Conference (S.I.A.C.). Even those athletes, however, could not equal the mark of the incomparable football team, which under the leadership of Head Coach Cleve L. Abbott won four black college national championships during a record string of forty-nine consecutive victories. This winning streak was unmatched by any other college, either black or white, and it exemplified the "winning tradition" that permeated every aspect of Tuskegee's activities.¹²⁸

Although fraternities and sororities, which were a hindrance to the "community of oneness" that Moton sought to create, were not allowed on Tuskegee's campus, other forms of social activity were encouraged. Student organizations, which were generally dedicated to the pursuance of social gatherings and parties, included the Alpha Pi Gamma club, the NYX, the Ki Yi Club, the Polka Dots, and the T Letterman's Club.¹²⁹ Female students had the opportunity to become Miss Tuskegee, which was akin to being the homecoming queen and

was a great honor for those who won it; honorees included Robert Moton's oldest daughter Charlotte, Tuskegee native Louise Virginia Baker, and the mother of popular recording artist Lionel Richie.¹³⁰ For men, there was an ROTC program, which was run first by Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., the first African-American general in the United States Army, and later by his son Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., commanding officer of the decorated Tuskegee Airmen during World War II and eventually the first African-American four-star general in the armed forces.¹²⁶ Despite the prestige of its administrators, however, the program suffered a setback in 1924; because the Army did not have enough African-American officers for all the African-American ROTC units across the country, Moton was told that he would either have to accept a white officer as the unit commander or else disband the unit altogether. He attempted to bargain with the Army, but no bargains would be made despite Moton's history of unselfish service for the armed forces, and Tuskegee's Junior Infantry ROTC Unit was reduced to an unofficial unit. It did not regain its full status again until World War II.¹³²

Despite this failure, Moton continued to try to provide Tuskegee students with a self-contained, all-black world in which they would not have to suffer the harshness of white racism. This did not mean, however, that he was lenient towards the students when it came to discipline. They were required to wear a uniform, placed under a demerit system that resembled the one used at West Point, subject to having their "barracks" inspected regularly, had to be escorted by a faculty member at all times if they were female, and were required to get passes signed by the president anytime they wanted to leave campus, even if they were leaving to go back home at the end of the school year.¹³³ Despite these rules, Moton was probably less demanding than Washington, who had been so strict that he admonished students and faculty alike for chewing gum and had been derisively called "The Master of the Tuskegee Plantation"; his massive home in Tuskegee's Greenwood community was known as "The Big House."¹³⁴

Under Moton's strict rules, any student who engaged in inappropriate behavior was usually found out, and if such behavior continued, they were usually expelled. In his classic semi-autobiographical novel Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison describes how this very thing happened to him. Enrolled at Tuskegee in the 1930s, Ellison was a promising student who was one day assigned to chauffeur a northern Trustee from the north. Ellison made the mistake of taking the Trustee to the farm of a local man who had recently become a great embarrassment to the Institute by impregnating his wife and daughter. When the school found out that Ellison had allowed a northern white man to see the lives of uneducated African-Americans, he was taken before an administrator, who accused him dragging the "entire race into a slime" and called him "nigger." To the young student, the fact that a member of his own race could use that word against him in the same fashion as a white man might was the greatest shock of all; it was "as though he'd struck me. I stared across the desk thinking, he called me *that* . . ."135 The man who would one day win the National Book Award was expelled two days later for this incident, and letters were sent to every industrial friend of the school with instructions not to hire him under any circumstances. He was thus sent out into the world with no education and little hope for a good job, all because he had displeased the Tuskegee faculty.¹³⁶ This was what life was like for students on the "Tuskegee Plantation" during those years.

Throughout the 1920s, Moton's drive for perfection in athletics, social organizations and student discipline was also characteristic of his efforts to avoid conflict between white Tuskegeans and Institute personnel. This was a continuation of Washington's policies; the Founder's conciliation of local whites and self-isolation had caused many Alabamians to believe that Tuskegee was the perfect model of interracial cooperation and harmony. This feeling came about for several reasons. Because the students and faculty of Tuskegee seldom left the campus, they had few opportunities to interact with whites. With their own stores, water and power facilities, movie theaters, parks, and churches, Tuskegee students and professors

could spend years at the school without ever leaving the campus.¹³⁷ Whites were able to get along with Institute personnel because they rarely saw them. Since the Institute community had always been exclusively African-Americans, any white who tried to become part of that community would have unacceptably breached the rigidly enforced color line. This line was occasionally crossed if there was money to be made, but until 1921, there was no profit to be made in being involved with the Institute. All of this changed with a single newspaper article.

In the spring of 1921, Mayor William Varner showed Moton a news clipping that announced plans for the building of a Veterans Administration hospital to serve the needs of African-American war veterans. Moton and Varner agreed that having such a hospital in Tuskegee would be profitable; Varner saw the potential economic gain for the white population of the county, while Moton envisioned a training ground and place of employment for African-American doctors and nurses and an additional source of funds for the Institute.¹³⁸ His support, however, came with the condition that African-Americans would be appointed as doctors, nurses and administrators; these terms were acceptable to both Varner and the VA. With this temporary alliance, Moton and Varner then gained support for their idea among the Trustees, who donated schools lands to the VA, and local white landowners, who answered the Trustees' donation with one of their own. This generosity and enthusiasm was rewarded by the VA's decision to build the hospital in Tuskegee later on that year. The twenty-seven building, \$2 million dollar facility was completed in February of 1923 and dedicated on Abraham Lincoln's birthday by Vice-President Calvin Coolidge.¹³⁹ He invoked the memory of Washington as he reminded the crowd that "time and patience and perseverance" were necessary to make gains in civil rights.¹⁴⁰ It was clear to Moton that Coolidge was impressed by his efforts at Tuskegee and would be willing to help Tuskegee in the future.¹⁴¹ Without Coolidge, the second most powerful man in the country, as his ally in Washington, it was unlikely that Moton would

have been able to slow the rising tide of racial tension that grew in the months to come.

Many local whites had initially been supportive of the Veterans' Hospital because of the potential financial gains it offered. They had assumed that it, like every other large enterprise in Alabama (with the exception of Tuskegee Institute), would be run by whites; Moton and Varner apparently had not told them of the agreement that had been made. In the months following the dedication, however, it became clear that the government intended to at least partially stand by its pledge that the hospital would be run by African-Americans. When the Veterans' Administration made plans to appoint a white man to be chief administrator of the hospital, Moton objected at first but then conceded the point with the understanding that this administrator would be of northern origin and that the rest of the staff would be African-American. Instead, the VA appointed Dr. Robert Stanley, an Alabama native and a staunch segregationist who promptly informed Moton that the only African-Americans on the payroll would be unskilled laborers.¹⁴² Moton then wrote to President Harding, a president who was thought to be more sympathetic to African-Americans than Wilson had been.¹⁴³ The principal pointed out that if the African-American press got word of the betrayal, a public relations disaster was sure to come.¹⁴⁴ Harding, a practiced politician, was probably aware that such a disaster would result in the loss of African-American and liberal white support for the Republican Party in the upcoming presidential elections. He responded by freezing all appointments to the hospital until he and Moton could find qualified African-Americans to fill the necessary positions. General Frank T. Hines, Director of the Veteran's Bureau, along with others, felt that this was an impossible task due to his belief that there were no African-American doctors and nurses qualified to run a \$2.5 million dollar facility.¹⁴⁵ Harding nevertheless directed him to undergo a "thorough and determined effort" to hire a competent African-American staff.¹⁴⁶ Hines then contacted Major Moton to ask for assistance and was apparently surprised to find that dozens of African-Americans had graduated

not only from historically black institutions such as Howard Medical School, the Freedmen's Hospital and the Nurses Training School but also from many of the major white medical schools.¹⁴⁷ With this newfound information, Hines was able to select Dr. Joseph H. Ward, a major in the Medical Corps during the war, as his chief administrator. His assistants were picked from a competitive field that included graduates and employees of Boston Psychopathic Hospital, Harvard, and Columbia. Hines, Moton and Harding thought, with good reason, that their efforts had been successful. White Alabamians, however, were not interested in where these African-Americans had gotten their degrees; they only cared about the preservation of white supremacy.¹⁴⁸

The campaign against African-American control of the hospital quickly intensified. As the editor of the Montgomery Advertiser put it, "Every institution in the South should be managed by white men, for as long as the blood of Southerners courses our veins, white men will control the South."¹⁴⁹ The leading white politicians of the state, including the governor and Senator Richard Holmes Powell (who lived in Tuskegee), led the opposition to "niggers in Alabama we can't control."¹⁵⁰ These men publicly used the ideals of white supremacy and racial unrest to influence the voters, but money was also a major factor in the controversy. Whites had always been content to let Tuskegee Institute exist as an all-black institution because it generated no substantial revenue for its employees. The only money at Tuskegee either went back into the improvement of the school and its surrounding farms or else was used to pay faculty salaries, which were lower than those at white colleges and universities.¹⁵¹ The hospital, however, was a different story. It would command a payroll of \$75,000 a month. It boasted state-of-the-art, twentieth-century quarters and working conditions, which were a rare treat for employees in Northern hospitals but almost unheard of in the South. It was, in short, the greatest hospital ever built in the state of Alabama. Whites, who of course had always held a racial monopoly on business and financial gain in Alabama, wanted these benefits for themselves just as Moton wanted them for African-Americans.

Albon L. Holsey, a secretary at Tuskegee, understood this when he wrote that "race prejudice falls with a bang before the almighty dollar" just a few years after a state law had prohibited white nurses from caring for African-Americans.¹⁵² For African-Americans to be in charge of the hospital would mean that for the first time they would have to opportunity to make more money than whites. Other black-owned and controlled enterprises such as churches, pool halls, and corner stores were like Tuskegee Institute; they made minimal profits for only a few people.¹⁵³ The hospital, if staffed by African-Americans, would change that economic tradition, and such an idea was unacceptable to Alabama's white political leaders.

Through the 19th century and early 20th century, Tuskegee had remained apart from the racial violence characteristic of other southern towns. The controversy over appointments to the hospital changed all of that; local whites were now convinced that Tuskegee's African-Americans were challenging segregation after years of racial harmony. Angered by this perceived challenge and spurred on by their leaders, whites in Tuskegee were ready to commit acts of violence to maintain their stranglehold on power, starting at the very top of the Tuskegee Machine. Dr. Moton was visited in his office by a self-appointed town committee who informed him that a thousand men were prepared to "wipe out the whole dammed institution" if he did not back down from his position.¹⁵⁴ According to the story, Moton responded by saying that ". . . my life is in your hands . . . you can take my life, gentlemen, but you can't take my character . . . I have only one life to give; but I would gladly give a dozen for this cause." The men left Moton's office that day without doing physical damage to his person or his school, but by April his house had been placed under armed guard and he soon began an out-of-state vacation with his family.¹⁵⁵

With the principal out of harm's way, the angry whites turned to other targets. John H. Calhoun was a recent graduate of Hampton Institute and an applicant for the position of disbursing official at the VA hospital. Stanley had given this position to a white woman, but

after Coolidge declared his appointments null and void, the woman and all other applicants had to be tested with a Civil Service exam. When the scores from this exam were tallied, it was discovered that the white woman had flunked and Calhoun had gotten the highest score of all the applicants. He was in Virginia at the time but left for Tuskegee immediately when he got news of his score and subsequent hiring. Unfortunately, he arrived on July 3, the same day that the Klu Klux Klan had scheduled a march and parade through the streets of the Institute to remind everyone of the "powerful and eternal supremacy of the white race". When the Klan learned that Calhoun was in town and at the hospital, they sent word to him through the commanding officer in charge of guarding the hospital that they would "kill him on sight" if he did not leave Tuskegee immediately. These threats of violence had little effect on Calhoun, however; although the commanding officer had him removed from hospital grounds for his own safety, he refused to leave town and stayed with friends in the Tuskegee community for several more days. He was then persuaded to go to Washington until the tension and high feelings subsided.¹⁵⁶

While Calhoun and Moton were gone, Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, professor of military science and commander of Tuskegee Institute's ROTC program, organized his students for an armed defense of the school.¹⁵⁷ It is not known if Moton who dictated this action from out of state, but it is known that such plans were far removed from Washington's policy of complacency and Moton's statement to the townspeople a few weeks before. Perhaps Colonel Davis, who later became the first African-American to rise to the rank of general, had different ideas about the path that African-Americans should take. At any rate, the cadets did not get a chance to employ their defenses. General Hines, greatly affected by his previous conversation with Moton, traveled to Tuskegee to get firsthand information, hear the concerns of white citizens, and settle the matter. Men like Senator Powell were happy to have this chance to voice their opinions; he told the VA officer that "Alabama is not a suitable place for the location of this hospital, especially if it is to be officered and manned

by colored physicians . . . the Negro cannot control even himself." Powell further explained his position with the dubious claim that although Tuskegee had always been run completely by and for African-Americans, "the hand of the Tuskegee white man is on the pulse at all times and the white man controls."¹⁵⁸ Powell made no mention of the Klu Klux Klan's presence, which were largely the result of his verbal pyrotechnics, but it is not unreasonable to assume that he made no objection to their presence. Other whites in the South, however, felt differently.

Many Southerners not native to southern Alabama had realized that a hospital run by whites would result in white doctors and nurses administering to African-American men, and this of course would violate the almighty laws of segregation, which were supported by every powerful man in the South and which had been endorsed by Booker T. Washington himself in his Atlanta Exposition Address of 1895.¹⁵⁹ Whites knew that African-Americans had always gotten their medical care from within the community; this went back to the days of slaves mixing roots and salves to heal the ailments and injuries of their fellow bondsmen.¹⁶⁰ As unpleasant as the thought of African-Americans running a \$2.5 million dollar hospital may have been, it was even more frightening to imagine white women giving intimate medical care to unclothed African-American men. The editorials of Southern newspapers began expressing that belief in their printed criticisms of the Klan's activity. The Macon (Georgia) Daily Telegraph of July 14, in calling for the appointment of African-American nurses, asked the question " . . . what guarantee (if African-Americans are not appointed) has the South that white nurses from the North will not come down and work under a Negro staff?"¹⁶¹ The editor of the Asheville (N.C.) Citizen reminded its readers of the traditions of segregation by pointing out the " . . . established Southern tradition that Negroes should have their own preachers, teachers, and physicians." According to the Citizen, "such a mode of living represents the sanest kind of common sense with regard to the social contacts of whites and blacks."¹⁶²

It was clear that whites outside of southern Alabama were not in agreement with their violent, inflamed brethren within the state. White Alabamians were soon overruled by the consensus of the rest of the south that a segregated hospital was just fine with them. It was easy for Hines to use this turn in public opinion to take a stand against Holmes and his allies. They, like all good politicians, soon sensed the change in public opinion and changed their own positions with it. By 1924, all whites had been removed from the hospital payroll with little incident.¹⁶³ Moton had successfully stood down a major threat of violence and a show of political force from the state's leading politicians. Whereas Washington had always endorsed a policy of accommodation and deference, Moton had made few accommodations and deferred to no one. He had said from the beginning that he wanted an African-American hospital staff, and in the end, that is what he got. He had successfully waged the first open civil rights activism in Tuskegee and its surrounding communities since the 19th century and laid the foundation for future activism.

After the hospital controversy was settled, Moton centered his attention on another issue that surrounded the Institute. That was the problem of Tuskegee's low educational standards. When Moton assumed the principalship, Tuskegee Institute had 1,564 coming from thirty-three states and territories (New Mexico and Oklahoma had not yet become states), and many of them lacked anything more than basic educational skills.¹⁶⁴ In 1904, the only scholastic requirements for admission were the ability to read, write, and perform basic mathematic skills. They also had to be at least 14 years old, in good physical condition, "of good moral character", and in possession of at least two letters of recommendation from "reliable persons in their community".¹⁶⁵ In comparison, the major colleges of the North required that prospective students be able to read and write both Greek and Latin and have knowledge of algebra, geometry, English grammar, and geography.¹⁶⁶ According to Joseph Citro's dissertation Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee: Black School-

Community, 1900-1915, Tuskegee's administrators did become concerned with raising the academic standards for enrollment at the school during Washington's lifetime.¹⁶⁷ Meetings were held among the Executive Council and the larger faculty throughout the first decade of the century for the purpose of keeping "undesirable ones [students] from the Institution."¹⁶⁸ Some of the suggestions raised included asking for better letters of recommendations, sending faculty members to visit prospective students before admitting them, and authorizing the Dean of Women to "weed out worthless girls during the first ten days of the school year."¹⁶⁹ In 1911, Washington informed J.R.E. Lee, one of his top aides, that he would have to raise the standards of admission effective immediately.¹⁷⁰ Many students already enrolled were severely lacking in education, as shown by the grammar of one Tuskegee student who did not return to the campus for classes one September and wrote this letter to Washington explaining why:

"Please pardon me for not writing to you no sooner and telling you how the case stood with me entering school i am sorry to tell you that i could not enter school on the first day it has been my desire to have writing to you before now i am almost sorry to write to you now for fear that you have lost confarence in me and will not pay any attention to this letter i suppose that you have said already that i did not aim to go to school at first but if you does think that i am sorry that you do but i work on a farm with my brother and his wife is not able to help him gather his crop and he begged me so faithfully to stay and help him gather his crop..."¹⁷¹

It was clear that students like this, although undoubtedly not without natural intelligence, lacked the educational background necessary for enrollment at Tuskegee. There were many students just like her, however, at the school during those years. Although some attempts at raising the school's academic standards were made, Washington never really made this a major issue and in fact introduced policy during the early 1900s to increase vocational rather than academic education.¹⁷² It fell on Moton, therefore, to

take the necessary steps for improving the quality of the education offered at Tuskegee.

The Academic Department at Tuskegee was divided into several sections. There were three Preparatory Classes and four Normal Classes, the lowest of which was the C Preparatory and the highest of which was the Senior Normal Class.¹⁷³ In 1910, three-third of entering students and fully one-half of all students were enrolled in the preparatory classes.¹⁷⁴ This showed little improvement from Tuskegee's first class in 1881, which placed 84 out of 113 students in the preparatory classes. These students spent three days out of the week in the classroom and the three other days (there were no classes on Sunday, although students were obligated to attend campus church service evening chapel talks) working in the industrial shops and agricultural fields.¹⁷⁵ The philosophy was that every student should help to pay for their education by doing physical labor for the school and that no one should graduate without learning a trade; even students enrolled in the Normal classes for teaching were held to this requirement. Tuskegee had originally been designed as a training ground for teachers in Alabama's African-American grade schools, and Tuskegee's first students were in fact required to teach two years in the Alabama school system upon graduation.¹⁷⁶ After 1900, however, the importance of the Normal school decreased and, as Joseph Citro writes, "the word 'Normal' was simply synonymous with 'academic'."¹⁷⁷ Students in this department after 1900 began their freshman studies with classes like Reading and Hygiene and graduated with credits in Gymnastics and Bookkeeping; other classes such as American History and Chemistry were electives. W.T.B. Williams, upon making a detailed study of the Senior Class in 1906, wrote that it closely resembled an ordinary ninth grade class in a public school system.¹⁷⁸ This assessment was apparently acceptable to Washington, who once told an entering freshmen class that "we are not a college and if there are any of you here who expect to get a college training you will be disappointed."¹⁷⁸ Moton, however, was less willing to deny Tuskegee students a full education, although his reasons did not

come only from personal beliefs but were also a response to the changes in southern educational systems that had taken place in recent years.

The low level of education that Tuskegee provided was sufficient during the nineteenth century; many Southerners, both black and white, never received a ninth grade education, and some could neither read nor write. By the time that Washington died, however, higher education was becoming more prominent in American society. Once a luxury afforded only to the rich and influential, college was now a reality for many Americans through the foundation of public institutions and the philanthropy of men like Rockefeller, Carnegie and Vanderbilt.¹⁷⁹ Even those who did not attend college in this new era were in need of some form of advanced education. The mechanization and industrialization of the American workplace meant that trades which had existed for decades were no longer needed; machines could now do the work of several men with greater efficiency and without demanding pay raises, unions, or better working conditions. World War I brought on the greatest industrial mobilization in American history and the farm lost its central place in society.¹⁸⁰ In 1920, the national census reported that for the first time in American history there were more people living in urban areas than in rural areas. In short, the agricultural way of life, although still important, was declining.

The decline of agriculture coincided with a rise in the quality of state educational systems. After World War I, the states saw the need for better education of American youth and were making changes to meet that need; this was especially true in the southern states, which had long been far behind the rest of the country in terms of public education. There had been a time when the only education an average man needed was the ability to sign his name and do some simple calculations; by the time that Moton took over Tuskegee, this was simply inadequate.¹⁸¹ The educational systems of the South saw this and began to raise their standards; new policies held that no teacher who had not graduated from a "recognized

college" could be employed at any public school, white or African-American. Since Tuskegee was considered to be on the same level as a junior high school, graduates of its teaching program could not find work in the south. This meant that Tuskegee's mission to enable its students to find desirable jobs in the outside world could no longer be accomplished.¹⁸² Moton therefore decided to "advance the curriculum of Tuskegee Institute to the college level."¹⁸³

Moton began his college programs by taking small steps. Leaving much of the school as it was, he took a few promising students and began to enroll them (with their permission) in new, more challenging classes that matched those found at colleges and universities. His work paid off; in 1924, six students who had matriculated for four years in the Department of Agriculture were granted the first Bachelor of Science degrees in school history. These students had made it through a new academic program enacted three years earlier under which the minimum passing grade was raised from 65 to 70 percent and the minimum for honors was raised from 75 and 80. Convinced that greater numbers of students could repeat the success of the initial six, Moton created college classes in home economics, business, and education for the purpose of answering the "demand from public school officials of Alabama as well of other Southern states for college trained teachers in the public schools." It was the beginnings of Tuskegee's college program; it was still minor in relation to the rest of the school, however. Many were not as convinced as he was that Tuskegee could become a college. Moton assured them that these classes would be administrated "in line with the methods which have always characterized the work of Tuskegee Institute" and that the doctrine of letting no student graduate without completing some form of vocational work would still be in effect.¹⁸⁴ This answer was apparently satisfactory for many of Tuskegee's associates, and Moton decided that he would take even further steps.

In 1925, a program "for teachers of college grade in Agriculture, Manual Arts, Domestic Science and Elementary subjects" began.

Graduates of this program would be certified to teach in Alabama without needing further education or having to take any more examinations. Six students took advantage of the new program and completed it during the 1925-26 school year. This, however, was not the end of the advances. In a report that he submitted to the Trustees, Moton described his plans for a "college course in Technical Arts" with studies in "industrial arts, shop work and professional subjects." Those enrolled in this two-year program would be qualified to work as vocational teachers in grade schools, high schools and trade schools. They would develop their teaching skills by acting as teacher's assistants and student-teachers in Tuskegee's trade shops and would also enroll in some of the regular classes. Under this new program, the enrollment increased from the six that had begun it in 1924 to ninety-seven in 1926. Although still a minority in the school's population, these students were rising rapidly in number. It was now clear that these students and their new educational programs would become an integral part of Tuskegee's curriculum. To show further support, Moton raised the admissions standards for the incoming freshman class of 1927 so that there would be no students at Tuskegee who were not equipped to excel in the new courses.¹⁸⁵ His greatest improvement, however, was yet to come.

The curriculum changes and additions made between 1924 and 1926 appeared to be small and relatively inconsequential. For this reason, they were approved by the Trustees with little fanfare. Vocational education had by no means been abandoned and the numbers of the students enrolled in the new programs were relatively small; no one but Moton and his close confidants knew exactly what was yet to come.¹⁸⁶ In 1927, however, Moton escalated the curriculum changes and created a full college program. Lest the trustees and other associates of Tuskegee wonder what the principal was doing, he explained his actions in that year's Principal's Report. As Moton put it, administrators of southern school systems "have insisted as never before on standards of preparation for teaching such as have made college work imperative in all schools"; this was

the reason why a college program was now necessary.¹⁸⁷ Moton was faced with the responsibility of adapting Tuskegee's vocational policies to mesh with the new emphasis that school systems placed on university work. He felt "assured of being headed in the right direction and of continuing along the lines which have distinguished Tuskegee Institute in the field of education" despite the difficulties that would come from such a major change in the school curriculum.¹⁸⁸

According to Moton's biographers, the first step involved in "raising vocational education to the college level" was to make additions to the school's facilities and faculty. Tuskegee had to hire new teachers with enough training to teach the courses that would now be offered; many of Tuskegee's teachers had graduated either from Tuskegee itself or from Hampton and therefore did not possess the knowledge necessary to teach in the new program.¹⁸⁹ Acquiring faculty from more advanced institutions was no easy task, however, due to the climate that historically had existed at Tuskegee. Washington had always insisted that his faculty follow his educational and social philosophy as him and independent thought was not encouraged; after a visit to the campus in the late 19th century, W.E.B. DuBois realized that he could never become comfortable there as a Tuskegee professor because of Washington's policy. He later took a position at Atlanta University, which was less demanding of student and faculty conformity.¹⁹⁰ Washington forbid his faculty to drink, smoke tobacco, play cards, or engage in any other form of "improper conduct."¹⁹¹ They were also denied the freedom to teach their classes independently; when a young female instructor tried to introduce new ideas into her classroom, the head of her department admonished her and distributed "a detailed statement of the work she will have to do next year and the methods she will be expected to use."¹⁹²

The teachers often complained that they were being controlled and suppressed just as much as the students. Their unhappiness occasionally manifested itself in the form of petty disputes, nasty

rumors, and all-out confrontations. On one occasion, a teacher accidentally turned out the lights in a room in which a co-worker was busy; the resulting argument was so heated and prolonged that an official committee had to be formed to settle the dispute.¹⁹³ There was another memorable incident on which C.R. Neely, the school bookkeeper, took exception to the way that co-worker Conrad Hutchinson spoke to him in the Paint Shop. Neely hit Hutchinson with a stick, threw fire buckets at him, and left the building to retrieve his pistol; at this point, other faculty members stepped in and restrained him. All of this took place in the presence of students, who were often told of the need for school and race unity by the very men and women who were now fighting. Neely was summarily dismissed from Tuskegee, but although this was certainly good news to Hutchinson, it did not solve the problem of faculty discontent.¹⁹⁴ If not for the fact that Tuskegee's prestige and the shortage of jobs for African-American academics persuaded many teachers to endure the suppression and the tension just to be associated with the school, Moton's recruitment tasks would have been much more demanding.¹⁹⁵ As it was, he still had to promise certain changes in the school atmosphere just to persuade recent graduates of the top colleges and universities to even consider working at Tuskegee; the most important of these involved salary and living conditions.

After World War I, many public universities across the country had raised their salaries. Private schools like Tuskegee were often unable to match these financial benefits. Moton, therefore, had to raise the salaries of Tuskegee faculty in order to entice young professors to work there. There was also, however, the problem of making life comfortable for teachers. The Institute did not provide adequate housing for many professors; unmarried teachers were roomed in the student dormers right next to the students that they taught, but married faculty often had to search out housing within the nearby Greenwood community. This practice of presenting teachers with temporary, unstable housing made it easy for them to pack up and leave the school at any time. Moton, who wanted to

attract a corps of young, talented professors that would remain at the school long after he himself retired, decided to start providing homes not only for married faculty but for unmarried faculty as well in the hopes that they would find partners among each other and settle down permanently in the Tuskegee community.¹⁹⁶

Although the Trustees approved Moton's plans for pay raises and the building of new private homes, they did not provide him with the funding necessary to carry out these actions. The new homes and pay raises would require money from the pockets of wealthy private citizens and philanthropists. The small contributions of average men and women, which in some cases were no greater than twenty-five cents, were financially insufficient but represented the deep emotional support that many African-Americans gave to Tuskegee. To finance his new programs, however, Moton would need more than twenty-five cent donations. He therefore called on the Trustees of both Tuskegee and Hampton and proposed that the two schools jointly run a fundraising drive to garner ten million dollars.¹⁹⁷ The idea was acceptable to both schools, and Moton promptly began a drive that would be jointly conducted by his office and the principal of Hampton over the next few years. They concentrated on soliciting large lump sums of money from a few wealthy individuals rather than pursuing smaller amounts from ordinary citizens; focusing on the working and middle classes would require a longer, riskier fundraising campaign, and Moton did not want to take any chances where his educational advances were concerned.¹⁹⁸

The Ten Million Dollar Endowment Fund Campaign was a success from the beginning. Oil baron John D. Rockefeller gave one million dollars. Kodak owner George Eastman gave one million and promised to donate an additional two million on the condition that "the goal of the campaign is reached by December 31, 1925." The General Education Board, which had helped Moton plan the Endowment Fund campaign, gave one million. A'Lelia Walker, heiress to the first million dollar business ever owned by an African-American woman,

gave \$25,000. With these contributions and the others that came in from businessmen all over the country, the goal of ten million dollars was easily met by the end of 1928.¹⁹⁹ Moton then took his share of the money and began working on the expansions necessary for the college courses and hiring of faculty. When that work was done, there was still enough money left to triple Tuskegee's endowment and thereby give it financial security for years to come. This made it possible for Moton to "make plans and carry them into effect with a reasonable prospect of being able to finance them."²⁰⁰

Despite his numerous successes in civil rights, public speaking, and fundraising, Moton's decisions about curriculum improvement brought him criticism from those who felt that the Major was straying from Washington's vision. When he had fought for an African-American staff at the VA hospital, many had seen it as the proper action to take in a racially segregated society. Turning Tuskegee from a vocational school to a liberal arts college, however, was something that many could not appreciate. In 1927, there were still many people who thought that African-Americans lacked enough natural ability to fully appreciate a college education. Leading anthropologists and scholars of the time were convinced that highly educated African-Americans who tried to make a name for themselves in the professional vocations were only fooling themselves and making a mockery of their race.²⁰¹ The "Zip Coon" stereotype, which portrayed educated blacks as buffoons who tried to take on white characteristics but failed, was still a reality at this time and had not been erased from the minds of many whites.²⁰² There were others who admitted that African-Americans could benefit from a liberal arts education but felt that Tuskegee should not be the place that provided it. For forty-five years, the Institute had been the leading center of African-American vocational and agricultural training; this training was the hallmark of Washington's message and the philosophy of an entire way of life. It was, they said, improper for Tuskegee to stray from that conservative tradition. This group included among its followers several members of the Board of Trustees and therefore posed a considerable threat to

Moton's plans. Any major changes in Tuskegee's curriculum and appearance had to be approved by a majority of the Trustees. If enough of them believed that he was wrong, he would be helpless to make anything more than the most minimal improvements. He therefore had to take steps to convince the Trustees that his ideas were proper for the school which was still closely associated with Booker T. Washington over a decade after his death.²⁰³

One point in Moton's favor was the fact that he did not abandon vocational and agricultural education. None of the programs that involved agriculture and the trades were terminated during his tenure; in fact, he built new facilities for these departments several times during his principalship. Moton's actions simply involved the expansion of the school to include liberal arts; it was a case of addition, not replacement. He nevertheless had to use inventive methods to get the approval of the trustees and the finances of the philanthropists if the liberal arts department was ever to become a permanent reality. This inventive method was the clever public relations campaign that had existed throughout his presidency but became especially useful in 1927. Moton's continual glorification of Washington, which made it seem that he was only trying to carry on the Founders' legacy in new, necessary ways, made the difference in his plea to the Trustees and contributors. Flattering remarks about the Founder appeared in the speeches that he gave, the articles that he wrote for magazines and newspapers, and the ceremonies that he created and governed. The memory of Washington is evident in all of these things; it is what allowed Moton to change Tuskegee Institute. He made it appear that he was drawing closer to Washington so that he could pull further away from him.

Ralph Ellison's book Invisible Man describes a certain statue on Tuskegee's campus that had long intrigued him. Even after his days at Tuskegee were in the distant past, he still puzzled over the meaning of the statue. He writes:

"Then in my mind's eye I see the bronze statue of the college Founder, the cold Father symbol, his hands outstretched in the breathtaking gesture of lifting a veil that flutters in hard, metallic folds above the face of a kneeling slave; and I am standing puzzled, unable to decide whether the veil is really being lifted, or lowered more firmly in place; whether I am witnessing a revelation or a more efficient blinding."²⁰⁴

The statue that Ellison wrote of is the famous bronze rendering of Booker T. Washington that was created in 1922 and dedicated on April 5th of that same year as part of the Founder's Day exercises.²⁰⁵ Eight feet in height, the statue was designed by American sculptor Charles Keck. It shows an eight-foot-tall form of Washington standing rigidly as he removes the "veil of ignorance" from a kneeling slave and presents him with "education and industry." Washington and the slave both stand upon an eight-foot granite base which sweeps out to either side forming a crescent-shaped seat.²⁰⁶ Inscribed on the sides and front of this base are quotes from the Founder's speeches and a brief word describing the monument as a "loving tribute to the memory of . . . [the] . . . great leader and benefactor." Moton paid for this massive piece of art through a fundraising campaign run by Emmett Scott, who solicited funds from the working-class and agrarian members of "Dr. Washington's own people" and raised the necessary \$25,000.²⁰⁷ Thousands came to the unveiling on the occasion of the Annual Founder's Day Exercises, which became a tradition under Moton's presidency and served as an excellent way of paying tribute to Washington's life and work.

Founder's Day began in 1916 as Moton pondered how to continue Washington's legacy while at the same time leaving his own mark on Tuskegee. So little time had passed since Washington's death that anything too out of the ordinary would have been viewed as undignified, and Moton's choices for a new event, program, or policy were limited. Over the winter and spring months that passed, Moton could not imagine what could be done to establish himself as a strong principal without offending the Tuskegee community, which was still

in a state of mourning. His opportunity finally came at the annual meeting of the Trustees in April. This meeting had been held every year in the history of the school but had never been more than an occasion to show the Trustees around the school and solicit donations. Moton, however, envisioned it as a major campus-wide event to celebrate Washington's memory. The Trustees, who had also been looking for a way to express their fondness for the Founder, were eager to help Moton in his plan. "Founder's Day" soon grew into the largest annual event on Tuskegee's campus. It served as an opportunity to dedicate the new buildings that Moton was building by the dozens. It was a time to show northern friends and Trustees (some of which had never seen the school) not only around the Institute but also around local farms that had benefitted from the agricultural advances of Tuskegee's top scientist George Washington Carver. It became a day for class reunions to be held and for alumni to see their alma mater and talk with students and faculty, who were given a break from their scholastic duties for this special occasion. Everyone who was associated with Tuskegee came to the campus in May for the Founder's Day Exercises. The highlight of the day was always the Founder's Day address, which was given every year by a different prominent white American on the subject of Washington and his work.²⁰⁸ Notable figures like Josephus Daniels (ex-Secretary of the Navy), Dr. Talcott M. Williams (Dean Emeritus of the School of Journalism of Columbia University), and Dr. John H. Finley (Editor of the New York Times) were invited to share their fondness for the late principal and how he had affected some aspect not only of their lives but of the face of America.²⁰⁹ Moton never gave the address, but even he could not have worded his praise for Washington better than those men did in lines such as these:

"I think that no program can be effective that forgets what Booker Washington has done to lay the foundation of Negro progress in America and in the world."²¹⁰

"Among the great Americans of our day, I cannot name one who so surrendered himself to the discharge of duty and sought naught

else...None have had a saner vision, a wider view, a steadier courage, a more impartial judgement. I learned from him in every way."²¹¹

"I have long felt that he was visioned the right way to deal with our national problems of races, in a manner most likely to produce the best effects from the standpoint of the entire nation and of all elements of its people."²¹²

The speeches and other ceremonies conducted during Founder's Day Exercises were an excellent means for Moton to publicly praise Washington's memory. They deflected any criticism that might have resulted from curriculum changes or hospital controversies; the words that were spoken each May served as a sign that Moton still clung to Washington's ideas. If Moton was now rejecting Washington, the argument went, he would not be devoting so much time and energy towards the Founder's Day activities. A man who has departed from his mentor's teachings will publicly affirm his own newfound ideas; he will not continue to praise his teacher and deflect attention away from himself. That is exactly what Moton did. No better example exists than the statue, which remained a permanent, year-round sign of Moton's devotion to the Founder. Although Moton and many of his compatriots at those activities of more than seventy years ago have long since passed, the bronze figure of Washington still stands as a reminder of what Moton accomplished in those early years of the century. The statue and the speeches that have been quoted here, along with the 1929 report to the Trustees, were as good a tool for educational change as Moton ever devised.

Although the principal did not speak during Founder's Day activities, he found numerous other opportunities to publicly speak his thoughts. As president of Tuskegee, it was expected that he would regularly produce articles and public addresses; many saw him as the "foremost figure of his race" and therefore the representative of the African-American race for the entire world.²¹³ It was not acceptable for him to simply engage in running Tuskegee's day to day affairs; he had to make his thoughts known to the world

so that concerned whites would know what was important to educated African-Americans. Washington had worked hard to make the principal of Tuskegee a public figure; Moton now found that he could not avoid following this hard-fought tradition. He therefore began to submit articles to the newspapers and journals across the country and around the world. It was a credit to his abilities that these writings on the "status of the negro" were received with a great deal of praise.²¹⁴ He wrote on African-American progress since emancipation, the shame of white racism, the need for hard work, and the value of friendships with whites of both the north and south. These were essentially the same things that Washington had always championed in his speeches and writings; Moton, however, went a step further. Because Washington had made these points first, it was easy for Moton to include praise for the Founder when he repeated the ideas. This was his practice from January 2nd, 1916, when he spoke before Tuskegee students and faculty at Sunday chapel service and emphasized that he "wished . . . to carry on his [Washington's] work. His tribute to Principal Washington . . . were impressively earned." Moton spoke at length about Washington's "great purpose and great cause" of "bringing . . . peace on earth and goodwill toward men, good will between black men and white men, and Northern men and Southern men." It was his conclusion, however, that truly exemplifies the public praise of Washington that he was to engage in for the next twenty-five years. Moton said:

"Doctor Washington . . . made possible the Tuskegee Institute of today, not merely the grounds and buildings, not even this splendid body of students, but transcendently more significant and beautiful, . . . gave us the "Tuskegee Spirit-the spirit of cooperation and consecration' . . . if we are to be true to *this great and sacred trust*; if we are to carry out the aims and purposes of Booker T. Washington . . . we must each cherish and maintain the spirit."²¹⁵

There is no evidence to suggest that Moton did not truly believe in the words that he spoke or the tradition that he vowed to carry on. This does not change the fact in light of the national devotion

towards the Founder, this speech brought him great personal gain. The words spoken in on that January evening in 1916 were an excellent foundation for the flattery that Washington posthumously received from Moton in the years to come. His autobiography, which was published in 1920 and was entitled Finding a Way Out, did not discuss his long friendship with the Founder, but it did contain all of his speech given at the January 2nd Chapel service and cited quotes from other men that praised Washington's work. From their very first encounter when Moton was a student at Hampton, he saw that "Booker T. Washington would eventually be recognized as one of America's most distinguished citizens."²¹⁶ Five years later, he was asked to write something for the prestigious London Times. It had been approximately fifty years since African-Americans had established themselves in the South as freedmen, and the publishers of the Times wanted Moton's opinion on the progress that his people had made in that time.²¹⁷ He wrote a piece appropriately entitled "The Negro of Today: Remarkable Growth of Fifty Years." William G. Willcox, the Chairman of Tuskegee's Board of Trustees, contributed an introduction that described Moton as "the first champion of Negro progress, his influence constantly being exerted against all those who are preaching to the colored man the doctrines of race hatred and revolt." This was followed by Moton's eighteen-page article, which covered everything from African-American religion to advances in the sciences and race relations. Moton praised the African-American for his advances and achievements in the arts, sciences, and professional fields. He also praised some of the important men who had made this progress possible, the greatest of which, in his opinion, was Washington. The Founder was mentioned several times as an insightful commentator on the nature of his people and as a pioneer in African-American education. Yet he was also an average citizen who took time to laugh and enjoy life, Moton reminded his readers, as this brief story shows:

"...Dr. Washington used to say, with his characteristic humor, that 'if ever you discover a Negro who was not either a Baptist or a

Methodist, some white man had been tampering with his religion.'"218

The inclusion of this humorous anecdote was a clever means by which Moton could mention and pay tribute to Washington without straying from the theme of the article. Men and women of England who had never known Washington or heard him speak could read this article and know that he was an insightful and humorous man who was devoted to solving the problems of his race. Moton was able to make this point without losing the purpose of the article. He devoted the rest of it to outlining the African-American's work in missionary endeavors and church building, education and self-help, economic progress, farming, trade and industry, business, professional trades, women's issues, and the recent contributions to the war effort, both in dollars and in blood. He concluded by saying that African-Americans and southern whites have made great strides in "the discussion of those things that affect their common interests" but that this progress in race relations will not continue if the white man does not dedicate himself to providing the African-American with:

"...ample protection in his home, unrestricted opportunity for his labor, impartial administration of the law, equitable distribution of public funds in all that pertains to civil life, and an ungrudging participation in all those interests that command the support and loyalty of worthy Americans."219

Moton, with characteristic conservatism, did not openly call for social equality or the end to segregation. This plea would be heard in the speeches of Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. DuBois, but Moton, like Washington before him, refrained from explicitly naming these issues just as Washington had.²²⁰ It was likely that a person who read this article would be convinced that Moton was likewise dedicated to carrying on Washington's plans just as if Washington would were he still alive.

Moton repeated those same themes in an article written for the November 1924 issue of the Baltimore-based publication Manufacturer's Record. The article, which was entitled "The Negro in the South", mentioned the work that Washington and Julius Rosenwald had done to establish schoolhouses for African-American children in Macon County and the subsequent support for other such schools which was catalyzed by their initial efforts. Moton used the example of the schoolhouses to make the argument that given the chance, African-Americans could make a "decided improvement" in their educational and mental skills. While Washington himself was mentioned only once in the article, his ideas were frequently cited, especially the need for African-Americans to turn to whites for support and aid. He mentioned that the first step necessary for establishing an African-American school was to "go directly to...white friends to solicit aid toward their support"; this, he wrote, usually resulted in better educational conditions for children of both races, which to him was a sign of "educational statesmanship of the highest order." Education was, however, just one area in which whites could be invaluable to their African-American neighbors, according to Moton. The principal believed that African-Americans should solicit and openly accept help from whites in every aspect of life. He solidified this point in his conclusion, which centered around the activity of a large southern business of African-American ownership. This business was in danger of going bankrupt until the owners turned to a wealthy white businessman and begged him for help. The white man resisted giving such charity until he realized the "relation of this enterprise to negro life in general" and the significance of "what it would mean to have a concern of this kind among negroes fall when there are white men in the community whose word and financial assistance can save them." He then promptly gave enough to the struggling businessmen to keep them from solvency and agreed to look over their affairs from time to time so that they would not fall into such dire straits again. Moton concludes that this story was a perfect example of "the kind of thing that is going on in different ways every day between black and

white in the South"; it marked the ideal form of interaction between the races.²²¹

Like Moton in the Record, Washington had called for African-Americans to improve themselves not from within but by soliciting the friendships and aid of their white neighbors. Moton's article can therefore be seen as a tribute to Washington's beliefs. Although Washington had created his philosophy nearly thirty years earlier and had died without seeing the massive changes in society that characterized the 1910s, Moton was still willing to publicly cling to those beliefs even though national events had made Washington's ideas somewhat dated. This article, however, was printed almost exactly one year after the resolution of the Veterans' Hospital controversy; Moton may have publicly claimed Washington's philosophy in speeches and writings, but his actions were not the ones that Washington would have taken. This two-sidedness of word and action might seem to be a sign of confusion, schizophrenia or merely political maneuvering. None of these, however, explain the true motives behind Moton's activities. The principal, by clinging to the old beliefs in his writings, was trying to soften any perception that he was becoming radical or out of touch with the Tuskegee mentality. It was a means by which he could answer concerns among the trustees, philanthropists and conservatives of both races. The article was a weapon that Moton could use to quiet dissent; by quoting it, he decisively answered any questions about his alleged newfound radicalism.

Washington's memory was found in numerous other speeches made by Moton over the years. In 1922, Moton gave the keynote address at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. and praised the African-American for his contribution to the birth, growth, and restoration of the nation. He mentioned Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington as the two greatest figures of his race and the physical justification for emancipation. After pointing out the progress that African-Americans had made since freedom and praising the improvement in race relations that had been an

integral part of this progress, Moton ended with a tribute to Lincoln's hope for "an ideal for the Republic that measured at full value, the worth of each race and section, cherishing at the same time the hope under God that all should share alike in the blessings of freedom." He expressed his hope that this spirit would remain strong in 1922 as "[the] two races are charged under God with the responsibility of showing to the world how individuals as well as races...make themselves helpful and even indispensable to each other's progress and prosperity." The speech was received with great praise among people of both races the next day. Upon returning home to Tuskegee, Moton was presented with a bronze vase by the Tuskegee faculty to indicate "the high regard in which you are held personally...[and] your sympathetic attitude toward all men."²²² Newspaper editors across the country were equally pleased and rewarded Moton not with vases but with the written word. One writer at the Mobile (Alabama) Register wrote that:

"Dr. Moton spoke with good judgement and becoming modesty. There was no attempt at self-advertisement, and no undue glorification of his people. He recognized, he said, the incongruous position of the Negro in the American republic, but also saw in it the opportunity for the Negro to justify his emancipation."²²³

The Omaha Bee was similarly generous in its praise, but it made space for a criticism of those African-American leaders who did not possess Moton's perceptiveness. The writers at the Bee mentioned Moton in the same breath as Washington for his dedication to "shaping the course of the Negro" and commented on his recognition that African-Americans had never wavered in "patriotic fervor" despite the insults flung against them. For these reasons, Moton was a better representative of his race than the "loose-tongued prophets of radicalism." Moton, they said, was "slowly working out his own salvation, moving alongside his white brother to a higher plane of mental and moral existence" while other African-American leaders sought only to divide the races and strive for social equality at a time when many African-American were not ready for it.²²⁴ It was clear

that Omaha's respect for Moton came with an additional dislike for African-Americans who did not follow Moton's ideology. A few years later, the men of this midwestern city would drive Earl Little and his family out of the state for his dedication to Marcus Garvey and his "radical beliefs" about the status of the African-American. Earl's youngest son Malcolm, who would eventually become Malcolm X, would never forget this childhood memory.²²⁵

The accolades that Moton received in the newspapers of Omaha and Mobile were typical of the way that many whites felt about him in the 1920s. Many drew comparisons between him and Washington as the most insightful commentators on race relations of the past forty years. Moton was able to exploit these comparisons to diminish the criticism that he received for his changes to the school. When Alabamians became furious at Moton's perceived challenge to white supremacy, other whites across the country remembered his kind words at the dedication ceremony and his long history of Washingtonian conservatism; as shown by the newspaper editorials of 1922, many of them even defended him and criticized their white brethren in the "Heart of Dixie." In that day and age, when a dispute arose between white and black, it was rare that white onlookers would defend the black side; Moton was one of the few who could enjoy this kind of support. It was useful to him in 1927 when he received criticism for his expansion of Tuskegee. Because he framed these actions in the context of Washington's philosophy, he did not receive the criticism that would have come had he said that Washington was wrong and that it was time to completely change Tuskegee's direction.²²⁶ Creating a college-level liberal arts department, he said, was merely an extension of Washington's beliefs for a changing world.²²⁷

Moton fully explained his feelings in a special edition of the 1929-1930 Annual Report to the Trustees. This report was sent to the Trustees every year since 1881 as a means of communicating the numbers and demographics of the student body, school improvements, the status of the treasury and endowment fund, and

any future plans that would need to be taken under consideration. Many of the Trustees were Northerners who were only occasionally able to travel to Tuskegee; the report was the principal's tool for keeping them up-to-date on Tuskegee's status. In 1930, however, Moton used the Annual Report to present justification for his collegiate programs. Tuskegee's fiftieth anniversary was fast approaching and Moton wanted to acknowledge that historic incident while at the same time answering questions about the new department. He began his report with an review of Tuskegee's beginnings and a look at its present condition, which required, he believed, the formulation of a "program for its progress in the light of prevailing conditions." When Dr. Washington began his work in 1881, the national illiteracy rate for African-Americans was 75%, compared to 10% in 1929; the percentage of African-Americans enrolled in public school was 41%, compared to 68% in 1929; there were only two public high schools in the entire country for African-Americans in 1881, compared to 500 in 1929.²²⁸ Moton saw these statistics as a sign that the "status of the Negro" and "relations between the two races" had dramatically and beneficially improved in fifty years. He considered Tuskegee to be a major cause for this improvement; the Institute had set the standard for "methods . . . universally accepted as consistent with the most sound educational theory . . . [and] racial advancement." Many other educators around the world shared this opinion and viewed the "practical type of education which has been fostered at Tuskegee Institute" as "fundamentally necessary . . . in every country."²²⁹ This passage paid tribute to Washington as an innovator in education and a major contributor to the mental improvement of African-Americans. Washington had done this not as a means of changing society, however, but as a way of responding to it.

According to Moton, Washington and Tuskegee had followed an uncharted path, guided not by internal forces or wills but by the needs of the African-American population and the willingness of whites to help cater to those needs. Because Tuskegee had always followed the demands of society, it was risky to "project too far in

advance the plans for the development of the Institute; the school did not have enough money for complicated long-term plans and could not get it through philanthropy." By the end of the 1920s, however, Tuskegee's financial affairs were in excellent order and it was at last possible to form plans for the schools' future.²³⁰ These plans were first enacted in 1927 with the creation of the college department, which composed such a small percentage of the school's total enrollment(124 out of a total 1486) that vocational educational was neither de-emphasized nor abandoned.²³¹ Despite the importance of college education in the changing society, the trades still held some importance and opportunity for employment. Moton did not want to damage the futures of those interested in trades by eliminating the trade schools. As long as apprenticeships in factories and trade unions were denied to African-Americans, he wrote, Tuskegee would continue to provide vocational training so that young men could find work in the technical enterprises.²³² What he did want to do was continue vocational and college courses at Tuskegee so that graduates would have knowledge of both fields; the two departments were meant to be "supplementary to each other in the program of the Institute, and not be mutually exclusive." To those who said that Tuskegee was breaking with tradition, Moton wrote that:

"Tuskegee is pioneering in a new field of college work; that is to say, it is attempting to develop vocational courses up to the same standards as are required for courses in liberal arts, but they are projected, not in imitation of such courses, but according to the objectives that have all along been contemplated in the field of vocational education."²³³

In his report, Moton sought to answer other charges brought against him since 1927. There was the complaint that by trying to enter the field of college education, Tuskegee would come into competition with other such institutions. Moton also faced the charge that college work was better left to other schools and that Tuskegee should stick to its history of vocational education. He answered the

first charge by writing that there were no other schools, save for Hampton, that possessed Tuskegee's mix of college work and vocational education for African-Americans. The second response, however, is what tied his actions to Washington.

Moton wrote that Tuskegee's mission had always been to provide an education that would allow graduates to meet "the demands of their time and environment." It had, in his words, "always been a finishing school-to employ an older terminology-never a preparatory school."²³⁴ Because the demands of the outside world had changed since 1881, Tuskegee would have to change as well. Institute graduates could still make a living with knowledge of the agricultural and vocational sciences, but those who wanted to become teachers or administrators at African-American schools would now need more advanced training to successfully compete for jobs. Even those still interested in the vocational fields would benefit from some liberal arts training. The country was no longer the agrarian society that had existed in 1881; it was now an industrial giant with many jobs that could not be filled by people who lacked a liberal arts education. Because Tuskegee was a finishing school, Moton did not wish to provide merely a foundation of education that required completion at more advanced schools. This had never been the goal of the Institute; Washington had never meant for his students to be dependent on other schools in order to find jobs. A Tuskegee education was supposed to be all the education that a young African-American man or woman needed to make a living. If Tuskegee was to successfully pursue its mission to educate its students to meet the needs of the outside world, it would need the new college courses that Moton was introducing. Without the new courses, Tuskegee graduates could not be employed by southern educational departments as they had been in 1881. Failure to develop these courses, according to Moton "would be suicidal."²³⁵

The argument about the changes in America's job requirements made a strong connection between Washington's philosophy of the past and Moton's actions of the present. Few could argue with the

claims that Moton made about the school's mission, and no one associated with Tuskegee was brave enough to suggest that Washington might have been wrong. There were many undisputed truths found in Moton's argument. It was true that a college education had not been an essential stepping-stone to success in 1881. It was true that an education in agriculture and the vocational fields had been a great asset in a time when much of the population consisted of barely literate farmers who lacked even a grade school education. It was true that industry had replaced agriculture as the backbone of American economic power and that a vocational education would no longer be sufficient for comfortable employment in the South. These facts were not in question, especially when a man with such physical presence and command of respect was the one stating them. Moton was able to use them to his advantage; after reading his argument, anyone who rejected his ideas also appeared to be rejecting the idea of African-Americans employment.

According to Moton, Washington's policy had been this; Tuskegee should provide an education that enables African-Americans to find work and then help other African-Americans. The strictly vocational and agricultural focus, even where normal training was concerned, had satisfied this policy in the pre-World War I days. Since then, however, the stakes had been raised, and Tuskegee, according to Moton, also had to rise. As he expanded the school's curriculum, he was simultaneously expanding Washington's theories, which had been with enough flexibility to enable such expansion. A comparison to the Constitution will further illuminate this point. The Constitution has been described as a collection of theories about human rights and politics that were written at one point in time but were made flexible enough to be applied to unforeseen situations and changes in society. Washington's theories, according to Moton, were developed in the late 19th century but were flexible enough to be applied to society in 1927. The creation of a college department did not signify a break with Washington's ideas; it represented a stretching of Washington's ideas. Other African-American leaders like Garvey and DuBois had to separate themselves from Washington in order to

make their points clear, and in the process they alienated themselves from Washington's followers. DuBois had actually praised Washington in 1895 after the Exposition, but he soon found that he could not maintain a close relationship between Washington's theories and his own opinions.²³⁶ Garvey did not even attempt to form a link between himself and Tuskegee; he found it easier to explicitly condemn Washington and Moton for their policies.²³⁷ Moton, however, managed make the changes that he wanted at Tuskegee and still maintain a link to Washington. The Annual Report was his greatest weapon in that regard; after it was published and sent to the Trustees (and subsequently distributed among other Americans), Moton gained new support for his "rapid strides towards raising vocational educational to the college level."²³⁸

Robert Russa Moton retired in 1935, citing his age and poor health as motivation.²³⁹ He was succeeded by Frederick Douglass Patterson, an instructor of veterinary science and husband to Moton's oldest daughter. Patterson, who was born in 1902, was the first principal of Tuskegee who belonged to the 20th century and also the first fully educated president, having earned an undergraduate degree and several doctoral degrees before finding employment at the Institute.²⁴⁰ Patterson inherited a school that had changed considerably in the past twenty years. Moton had taken control of a vocational trade school and transformed it into an institution that offered college degrees. Looking back at his work at Tuskegee, it appears that Moton generated nothing but success. By the 1940s, Tuskegee had been transformed from a well-respected vocational school to a well-respected liberal arts college. Although it still offered some trade programs such as home economics and agriculture, it was known more for its liberal arts program at this point. Many graduates of the school during this period were able to find employment as teachers, businessmen, doctors, lawyers, and military officers.²⁴¹ The elite Air Force unit known as the Tuskegee Airmen, which flew hundreds of bomber escort missions during World War II and never lost a plane to enemy fire, contained among its ranks dozens of Tuskegee graduates, including Daniel "Chappie"

James, who went on to become one of the Air Force's greatest officers.²⁴² Other graduates of the school in the 1930s and 1940s went on to form the core of the black bourgeoisie that emerged during the Civil Rights Movement. While desegregation of southern colleges drew many talented young men and women away from Tuskegee, Morehouse and other historically black schools and took them to white institutions, Tuskegee remained a well-respected school with bright students and an able faculty.²⁴³ All of this success can be traced back to Moton's fight to introduce a college program in the 1920s. His work would have been carried out at a later point even if he had not done it himself; the rapid expansion of colleges and the opportunity for college education that took place after World War II most likely would have carried Tuskegee along with it and forced the school to broaden its own curriculum or be left behind. That does not, however, diminish the value or significance of what Moton did. He laid the foundation of Tuskegee's entry into the collegiate forum and made it possible for the school to become a prominent university. This was also the case with the hospital controversy. Moton's defiant actions against the white supremacists of Alabama marked the first major civil rights activism in Tuskegee for years. It laid the foundation for voter registration drives, boycotts, legal victory over racial gerrymandering, and political activism among Tuskegee students.²⁴⁴ All of this was made possible in part by the stand for African-American rights that Moton took in 1922. Tuskegee students, faculty, and friends, citizens of southern Alabama, and indeed every African-American in the country who cared about education was benefitted by Robert Russa Moton's devotion to the great and sacred trust.

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