



Transcript

Benjamin E. Mays

(NARRATION 01)

Benjamin E. Mays...minister, educator, scholar, and an apostle of peace...

Mays was a significant mentor to civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and was among the most articulate and outspoken critics of segregation before the rise of the modern civil rights movement in the United States.

(SOT)

LAWRENCE CARTER

"Mays is one of the most significant figures in American history."

(SOT)

DR. JOSEPH PATTON III

CEO for GLEAMS Human Resources Center

"Without Mays there would be no Martin Luther King, there would be a Barack Obama for that matter."

(NARRATION 02)

a look back at the life of the man known as the Father of the Civil Rights Movement.

(:10)

(MAIN TITLE)

(NARRATION 03) EARLY LIFE



Benjamin Elijah Mays was born the youngest of eight children in the community of Epworth in Greenwood County on August 1, 1894.

A son of former slaves, Mays' childhood played a key role in shaping the monumental figure that he would become.

(SOT)

LOY SARTIN

"They were a very religious family. At night his mother would call them into her room and pray for us. Mays said she would pray especially for me because I was the baby."

His earliest memory was of a white mob that approached his family's home on horseback with guns drawn, forcing his father to remove his hat and bow before them repeatedly.

The mob was associated with the Phoenix Riot which began in Greenwood on November 8, 1898.

(SOT)

Vernon burton

"He was born at what's called the nadir of race relations the worst period in American history Rights were taken away but he fought from day 1."

The atmosphere of hate, lynching, violence and forced segregation made a lasting impression on Mays, and his child-hood on his family's tenant farm became the defining period of his life.

It was then that he realized he wanted something better for his life.

He developed an insatiable desire to get an education.

(NARRATION 04) EDUCATION

(SOT)

Vernon burton



“Mays went to a small brick-house school. His teachers immediately noticed...they would say things like Benny is very bright. He wanted to go to school but his father saw education as a waste.”

After attending the Brick house School in Epworth and two years at the Baptist-sponsored school in McCormick, Mays left Epworth to attend the High School Department at SC State College in Orangeburg, SC.

He graduated as Class Valedictorian at the age of 22 in 1916.

After a year at the African-American College of Richmond Union university in Virginia, he realized his dream of competing with Northern whites and enrolled at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.

(SOT)

Dr. Allsopp

“His desire to learn and get an education was also driven by the fact that he didn’t believe that there was any group that were superior from an education standpoint. So he was longing to have that opportunity to go north because he felt that the schools were greater.

The Bates experience was liberating for Mays. Here he developed his first white friends and was treated with respect.

He was captain of the debate team and played on the football team. He was named an honor student his sophomore year and graduated with honors in 1920.

Shortly after graduating from Bates, he married Ellen Harvin whom he had met at State College during high school. Mays accepted a position at Morehouse College in Atlanta to teach higher math in 1920. His wife died in 1923 following an operation in an Atlanta hospital.

Mays completed his Masters Degree in 1925 at the University of Chicago. and to pastor Shiloh Baptist Church. In 1925, Mays taught English at SC State College and met his second wife there, Sadie Mays. They married in 1926 and moved to Tampa to serve with the Tampa Urban League. In 1928 Mays served as National Student Secretary of the YMCA in Atlanta he took leave to conduct a national study of African-American churches from 1928 to 1930. In 1933, he wrote



his first book was published, The Negro's Church. From 1934 to 1940, Mays served as Dean of Religion at Howard University in Washington, D.C. In 1935, Mays completed his work and earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Religion from the University of Chicago.

(SOT)

Dr. Andrew Young

“He saw education as a pathway to fulfill his own destiny but also to fulfill the destiny of an entire nation and he was devoted to developing a generation of educated leaders not just 1 or 2.”

(NARRATION 06) MOREHOUSE

It was as President of Morehouse College that Mays achieved his widest scope of influence in civil rights and education. Mays became president of Morehouse in 1940.

(SOT)

Dr. Franklin

“Those years were the critical years for Morehouse College emerging on the front end of the Great Depression and over the course of those 27 years really becoming a national asset and leadership academy. That was largely due to the vision he organized on this campus.”

In 1944, because of the early admissions program established by Mays, Martin Luther King was admitted to the college at age 15 as were other gifted high School eleventh graders. The legendary President of Morehouse College influenced the lives of thousands of students over his long 27 year tenure.

(SOT)

Dr. Cook

“Dr. Mays would always speak to the student body at Sale Hall Chapel on Tuesday and legend has it when Dr. Mays was scheduled to speak no student cut chapel. He was so inspiring, illuminating and I think one of the keys to his life was the proverbial challenge to students to do



better. To aspire to higher possibilities to have great ideals to be moved by something important, something abiding.

He effectually became known as “Buck bennie” because of his fundraising efforts to get students through school.

(SOT)

billye aaron

“He worked quietly under the radar to advance the cause of education at Morehouse. He made a tremendous impact.”

It wasn’t known until after his death that Dr. Mays had built a relationship with margaret mitchell, author of gone with the wind.

(SOT)

andrew young

“This was a time in the Depression and It only cost 81 dollars to keep a college student in school and he wrote everybody he could think of to ask them would they send one student to college...and I think he wrote Margaret Mitchell at least a dozen times. And I think she came to the realization that their weren’t enough black doctors when her maid became ill and couldn’t receive care...a women near and dear to her heart. So she went to Dr. Mays and said if there were students that could qualify to be a physician she would pay their tuition as long as he would tell anybody. And so there must have be 30-40-50 physicians that she educated.

(NARRATION 07) RELATIONSHIP TO MLK

Perhaps the most significant relationship that he developed was with Martin Luther King Jr. Mays became both a spiritual and emotional mentor to King, and Dr. King admitted that he was led to the ministry because of the influence of Dr. Mays especially during his famous Tuesday morning chapel sermons to the students.

(SOT)

andrew young



“because he didn’t have any boys he always looked at Martin Luther King as a son and Martin looked at him as a spiritual father.”

Indeed, Dr. King was imbued with the non-violent approach by the teaching of Dr. Benjamin E. Mays who had discussed nonviolence with Mahatma Ghandi for 90 minutes during a world tour of the YMCA on December 31, 1936.

(SOT)

Dr. Allsopp

“I would believe that this influence Uncle Benny and his messages to the students here and I can just picture a young Martin Luther King sitting in his chair soaking in all of this and it forming some of .”

(SOT)

andrew young

“if there hadn’t of been a Benjamin Mays there would not have been a Martin Luther King Jr. He was very much a product of Dr. Mays religious thinking. He was very much a product of Dr. Mays influence from Gandhi and he turned to Dr. Mays for advice.”

Indeed, Dr. King’s influence in the civil rights movement is prementely emprinted into the fabric of america’s history. on April 1968 MLK was shot and killed in Memphis tn.

Dr. Mays delivered the eulogy at the funeral of Martin Luther King, Jr. before a crowd of 200,000 people and world television coverage on the campus of Morehouse College, April 9th, 1968. Dr. King had handpicked Dr. Mays to deliver his eulogy in the event of his death.

(NARRATION 08) CIVIL RIGHTS

During Dr. Mays’ presidency of Morehouse College, he met hundreds of national and international leaders.

(SOT)

Samuel dubose cook



“He was one of the great architects of the civil rights movement. Not only in training individuals but in writing his books, leadership in churches, as a pastor, college president. He set the standard. And he was uncompromising.”

(SOT)

Dr. Franklin

“He was appointed by president JFK to serve on a commission for civil rights and he played a role in the world council of churches on its commission on race and race relations. So Mays was involved in the global and national level in high level conversations about the future of our nation- of what kind of America we’d be post-segregation.”

During Dr. Mays’ long tenure as President of Morehouse, he traveled, and spoke, and wrote extensively about the evils of segregation and lynching in the South. It was Mays’ famous sermon in Evanston, Illinois in 1954 at the 2nd Assembly of the world Council of Churches that internationalized the Civil Rights Movement.

(NARRATION 09) BASEBALL

in 1966 the braves baseball franchise moved from milwaukee to atlanta. Jackie robinson broke racial barriers more than a decade earlier but for black players entering in a new city, in the deep south at the peak of the civil right movement this was a whole new ball game.

(SOT)

hank Aaron

“When we first moved here it was the first team of major league caliber to ever move this far south to play baseball. And of course he was one of the guys, one of the persons really that made things a lot easier for myself and some of the other black ball players.”

(SOT)

hank Aaron

“I think the only thing Dr. Mays talked to me about- he talked to me about playing baseball. He said I was here to play baseball. The other things just let other people handle you know like the



civil rights and etc. Let other people handle it. My job was to play baseball and believe me it was a big job, but it was the kind of advice that probably to this day I look back and say you know for him to have said that really meant an awful lot to me because being the first ball club to play in the south there was other problems we had and so I'm very appreciative of what he said it meant an awful lot to me because nothing else I could do but play baseball."

Despite hate mail, death threats against him and a plan to kidnap one of his daughters, Aaron broke Babe Ruth's homerun record on April 8, 1974 when he hit his 715th homerun.

(NARRATION) DESEGREGATION OF ATL SCHOOL

After Dr. Mays retired from Morehouse College in 1967, he did not 'retire.'

(SOT)

Andrew Young

"Not only did he raise a generation of leaders at Morehouse but he was also responsible for leading Atlanta schools through their desegregation crisis."

In 1969, he was elected to the Atlanta Board of Education, and three months later was elected by the board to serve as its first African-American board president.

(SOT)

Andrew Young

"They really worked to save public education and to integrate it without alienating anybody and everybody so we ended up with a mandatory integration which meant anybody that wanted to go from majority system to a system where they'd be a minority they could do it."

atlanta schools were intergated without an incident unlike some other cities, IN WHICH violence broke out. Dr. Mays served in the position as school board president from 1969 to 1981.

(NARRATION 00) WHO HE WAS/IMPACT ON SC

In every facet of Mays' career, he excelled and was held in the highest regard as an educator and community leader.



In recognition of his influence in education and racial equality, Mays received more than 65 honors and awards from state, national, and international organizations and served as a member, representative, and official of more than 18 national and international organizations.

He also delivered addresses to more than 250 colleges and universities in the United States, and was awarded 56 honorary doctorate degrees by US and foreign colleges and universities.

(SOT)

Andrew Young

“I think he took Jesus quite literally with this was the purpose of life. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to heal the sick, to set at liberty those who are oppressed. And I don’t think you can find a better legacy than that.”

Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays died on March 28, 1984, four months short of his 90th birthday.

(SOT)

Franklin

“He is one of the first citizens of SC and a great representative and ambassador for American values and democracy to the world. He is a renaissance man himself and so much a self-made man who demonstrates we can overcome the difficulties in life no matter what the circumstance...but it’s going to require hard work and lots of effort.”

Mays’ south carolina birthplace remains as stark physical evidence of his early life and is a reminder of the struggle that he experienced and the restrictions placed on him simply because of his race.

(SOT)

Hank aaron

“It’s just amazing I don’t know who else, president, vice president, whoever they may be, to have made an impact in this world as much as Dr. Mays did.”

