

A trailblazing activist in Education and Civil Rights

Mary McLeod Bethune, known as “The First Lady of the Struggle,” was a Florida woman who changed history through her work in education and civil rights. She was a champion for African American education, a leader in voter registration efforts, and an advisor to the President of the United States. Born in 1875 to parents who had been enslaved, she was the first person in her family to be born free and receive a formal education. She believed that learning was the key to a better life and dedicated her career to making education accessible to African Americans. Despite growing up in poverty in the Reconstruction-era South, Bethune rose to greatness through her unwavering determination and faith.

In 1904, Bethune founded the Daytona Educational and Industrial School for Negro Girls. Her goal was to provide African American students, particularly girls, with the opportunity to succeed. Over time, the school expanded and eventually became Bethune-Cookman University (BCU), an institution that continues to educate and inspire students today. Bethune worked tirelessly to raise funds, expand programs, and ensure her students had the opportunities they deserved.

Beyond education, Bethune was also a key figure in the fight for civil rights. She was an advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a member of his “Black Cabinet,” where she lobbied for policies to improve the lives of African Americans. She played a vital role in integrating veteran rehabilitation centers, helped integrate the Red Cross, and served as director of the National Youth Administration, where she worked to create jobs for young African Americans. Mary helped select officer candidates for the U.S. Women’s Army Corps, breaking barriers for African American women in the military. Through her leadership in numerous organizations, she proved that determination and advocacy could lead to real change.

Bethune's impact reached far beyond Florida, shaping national policies and inspiring future generations. She famously said, "*Without faith, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is impossible.*" Her legacy is still alive today, especially through Bethune-Cookman University, which continues to be a pillar of education, culture, and excellence. Known for its outstanding academic programs and legendary marching band, BCU remains a symbol of her lifelong mission.

In 1982, Mary McLeod Bethune was inducted into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame, solidifying her place in history. Her legacy matters to me because she exemplified strength, resilience, and the power of education. Even in the face of racism and inequality, she never gave up on her dream of empowering others. She inspires me to work hard, stand up for what is right, and use education as a tool for success. Education is more than just a path to opportunity it's the key that unlocks doors to a better future.

Bethune's achievements remind me of modern-day leaders like State Representative Persons-Mulika and Agriculture Commissioner English, who continue to break barriers and serve their communities with dedication. Like Bethune, and these leaders, I hope to leave a legacy of grace, faith, and perseverance, ensuring that my work uplifts others.

ENTRY

Student Name: Zoie Jackson			
Title of Entry: a trail blazing activist in Education and Civil Rights			Grade: 8th
Home Mailing Address: 3302 38th St W			Age:
City: Lehigh Acres	State: Florida	Zip Code: 33971	
Home Phone Number: (including area code)			
Parent/Legal Guardian Name: Carlancia Hogan			
Parent/Legal Guardian Cell Phone Number: (including area code) 803-244-8007		Parent/Legal Guardian E-Mail Address: zinzosma@gmail.com	
School Name: Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle School			County: Lee
School Mailing Address: 4750 Winkler Ave			
City: Ft Myers	State: Florida	Zip Code: 33906	
School Phone Number: (including area code) 239-334-1357			
Teacher Name: Jennifer Jeanbart		Teacher E-Mail Address: jenniferhth@leeschools.net	

Release Statement

As parent/legal guardian, I acknowledge that my child created the submitted essay and has followed all contest guidelines and rules. Should he or she win the essay contest, I agree to allow the submitted essay to be distributed publicly. I also understand that if it is discovered my child's essay is not original or fails to comply with all contest rules and submission guidelines, the essay will be subject to automatic disqualification.

I, Carlencia Hogan (print name), am the parent/legal guardian of the individual named above and having read this release and approve of its terms, hereby certify the following:

1. I am the parent/legal guardian of Zoe Jackson
2. My child is a legal resident of Florida and is currently enrolled in grades 6 - 8.
3. I give permission for my child to enter his/her essay in the 2025 Women's History Essay Contest.
4. I have read the official rules of this contest, and I further certify my child has followed these rules and is eligible to participate in this contest.
5. I give the Florida Commission on the Status of Women permission to use, reproduce, reprint, transmit, post, distribute, adapt, alter, edit, and/or display the submitted essay.
6. I give the Florida Commission on the Status of Women permission to use my child's submission and/or my child's name, photograph, voice, video image, biographical information, and his/her essay for promotional purposes including but not limited to, print, radio, television, and Internet promotion, without compensation or prior notice.

I hereby release the Florida Commission on the Status of Women, as well as their employees, commissioners, officers, successors, assigns, licensees, and legal representatives, from any and all liability associated with my and my child's participation in this activity, and I agree not to assert any claim of any nature whatsoever against anyone relating to this activity.

Carlencia Hogan
Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

3/12/25
Date



FLORIDA COMMISSION
on the **STATUS of WOMEN**

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