

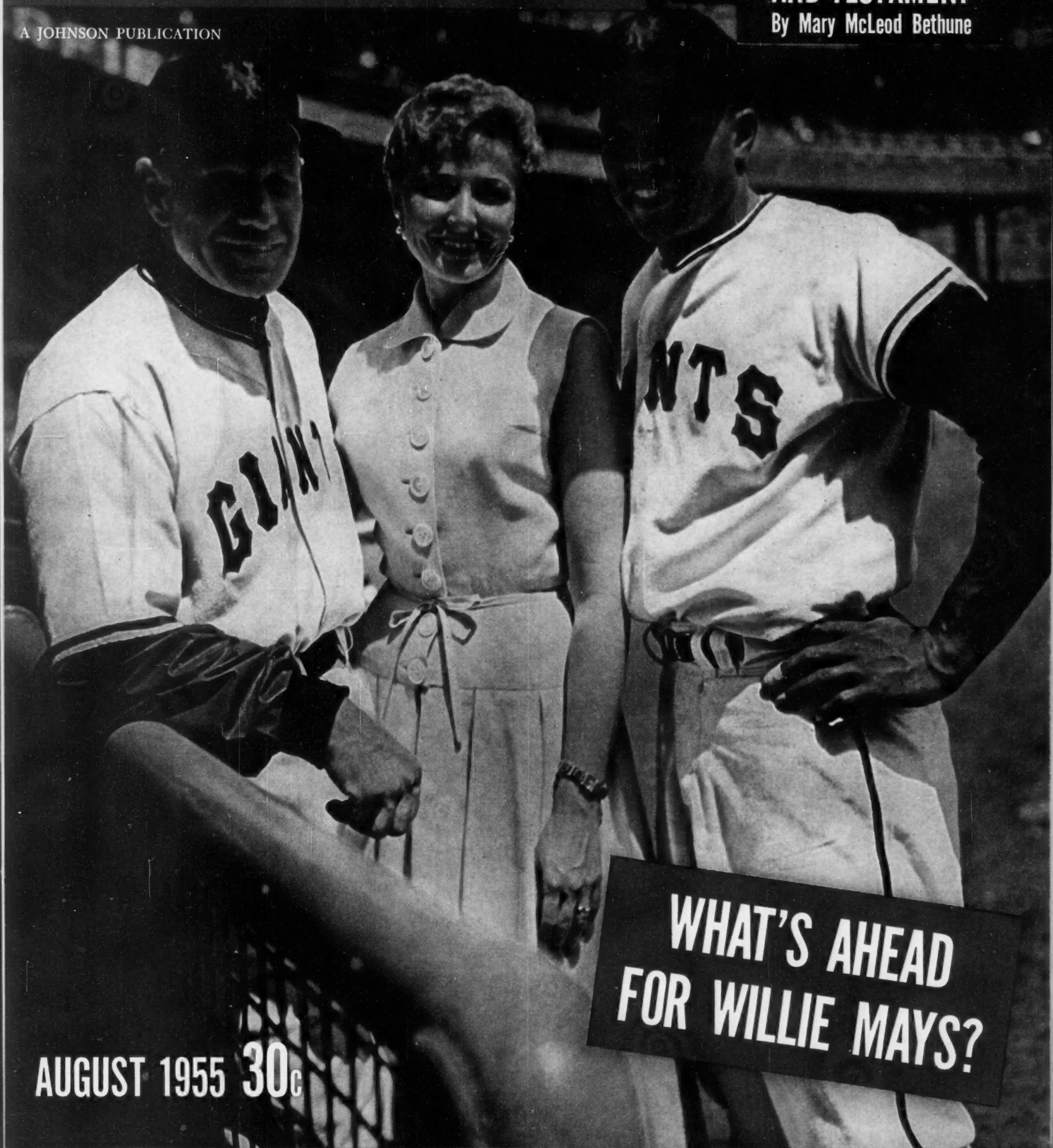
# EBONY

A JOHNSON PUBLICATION

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RIGHT-HAND MAN

MY LAST WILL  
AND TESTAMENT

By Mary McLeod Bethune



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VOL. X NO. 10

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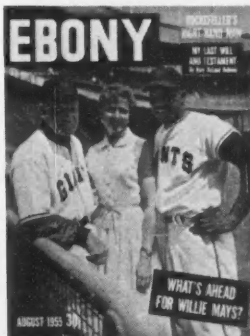
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**COVER**

Willie Mays, Leo Durocher and Laraine Day form a trio that has almost become a symbol of the world champion New York Giants baseball team. Willie is the young player with a penchant for making the impossible play. Leo is the vociferous manager—the lovable baseball veteran who says what he thinks when he thinks it. Laraine is the loyal fan with a vested interest—she is Mrs. Durocher in private life. For more on Willie, see page 35. Cover photo by Joe Covello—Black Star.



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**Mary McLeod Bethune** draws admiring glances from students as she walks through campus of her beloved Bethune-Cookman College. Listed as one of 50 greatest women America has produced, she founded school on Daytona Beach, Florida, in 1904 with \$1.50 and six Negro students, saw it grow into a million dollar institution.

# MY LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

As life drew to a close, America's First Negro Lady prepared for her people a legacy of love

BY MARY McLEOD BETHUNE

SOMETIMES AS I sit communing in my study I feel that death is not far off. I am aware that it will overtake me before the greatest of my dreams—full equality for the Negro in our time—is realized. Yet, I face that reality without tears or regrets. I am resigned to death as all humans must be at the proper time. Death neither alarms nor frightens one who has had a long career of fruitful toil. The knowledge that my work has been helpful to many fills me with joy and great satisfaction.

Since my retirement from an active role in educational work and from the affairs of the National Council of Negro Women, I have been living quietly and working at my desk at my home here in Florida. The years have directed a change of pace for me. I am now 78 years old and my activities are no longer so strenuous as they once were. I feel that I must conserve my strength to finish the work at hand.

Already I have begun working on my autobiography which will record my life-journey in detail, together with the innumerable side trips which have carried me abroad, into every corner of our country, into homes both lowly and luxurious, and even into the White House to confer with Presidents. I have also deeded my home and its contents to the Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation, organized in March, 1953, for research, interracial activity and the sponsorship of wider educational opportunities.

Sometimes I ask myself if I have any other legacy to leave. Truly, my worldly possessions are few. Yet, my experiences have been rich. From them, I have distilled principles and policies in which I believe firmly, for they represent the meaning of my life's work. They are the product of much sweat and sorrow. Perhaps in them there is something of value. So, as my life draws to a close, I will pass them on to Negroes everywhere in the hope that an old woman's philosophy may give them inspiration. Here, then, is my legacy.

● *I leave you love.* Love builds. It is positive and helpful. It is more beneficial than hate. Injuries quickly forgotten quickly pass away. Personally and racially, our enemies must be forgiven. Our aim must be to create a world of fellowship and justice where no man's skin, color or religion, is held against him. "Love thy neighbor" is a precept which could transform the world if it were universally practiced. It connotes brotherhood and, to me, brotherhood of man is the noblest concept in all human relations. Loving your neighbor means being interracial, interreligious and international.

● *I leave you hope.* The Negro's growth will be great in the years to come. Yesterday, our ancestors endured the degradation of slavery, yet they retained their dignity. Today, we direct our economic and political strength toward winning a more abundant and secure life. Tomorrow, a new Negro, unhindered by race taboos and shackles, will benefit from more than 330 years of ceaseless striving and struggle. Theirs will be a better world. This I believe with all my heart.

● *I leave you the challenge of developing confidence in one another.* As long as Negroes are hemmed into racial blocs by preju-

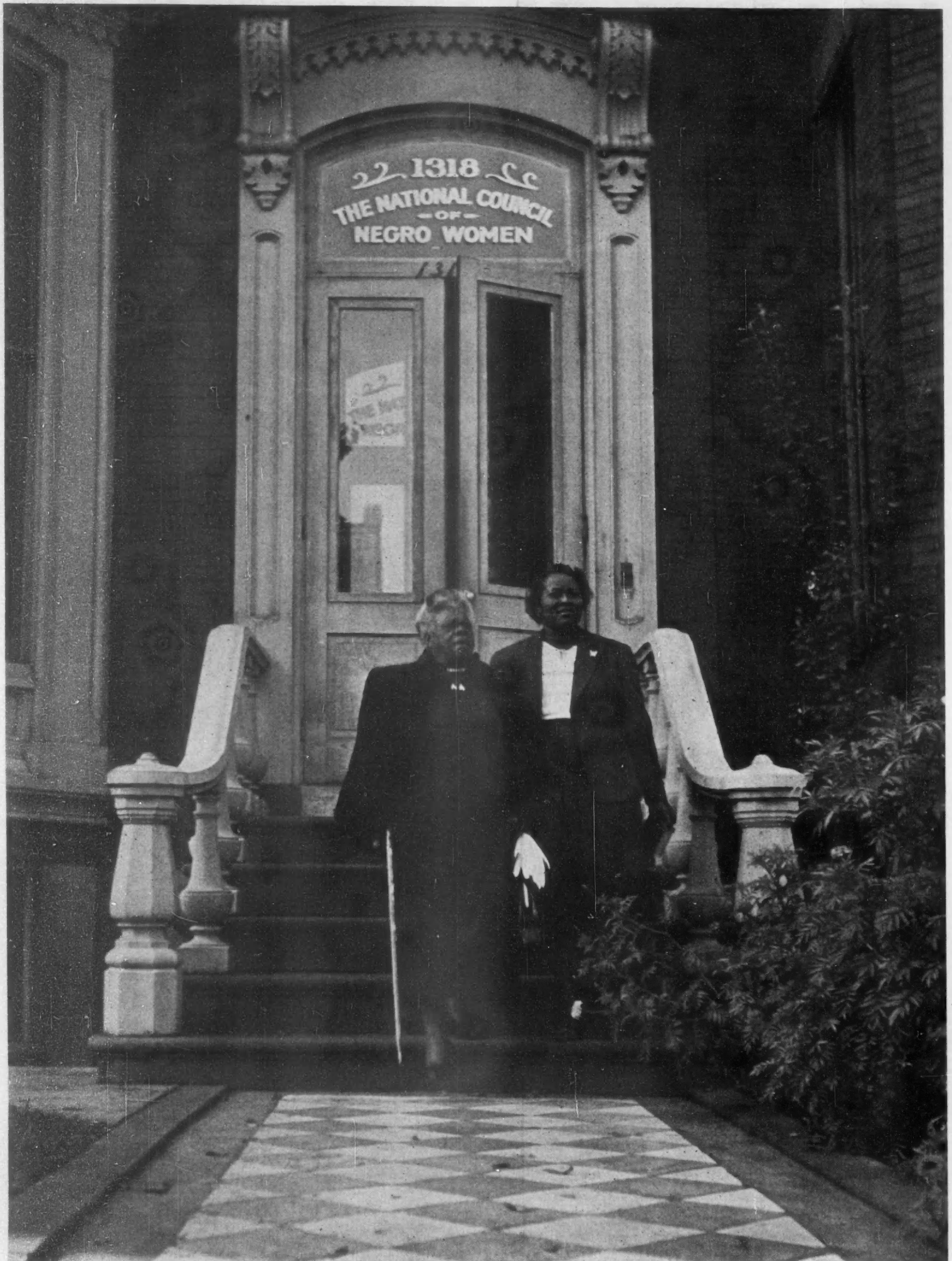
Realizing death was near, Mary McLeod Bethune wrote this article several months ago, exclusively for EBONY. A woman of heroic stature, Mrs. Bethune felt strongly about many things and she wanted to put them down on paper before her death. EBONY cooperated with her on this project. The end she foresaw came before our scheduled date of publication. After a full day's work, she collapsed and died of a heart attack on May 18. A woman of outstanding achievements, Mrs. Bethune was founder and president emerita of Bethune-Cookman College, Daytona Beach, Fla., founder of the National Council of Negro Women, and special adviser to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman. Her last literary will and testament, we believe, will become one of the great historical documents of our times.



Eleanor Roosevelt, Mrs. Bethune, TV star Ed Sullivan join hands in brotherhood gesture at NCNW luncheon, one of Mrs. Bethune's last public appearances.



Mamie Eisenhower greets Mrs. Bethune, welcomes her and group of women leaders to White House. During FDR regime, Mrs. Bethune headed Negro division of NYA.



Leaving headquarters of National Council of Negro Women, in Washington, D. C., Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune chats with secretary and good friend, Arabella Denniston. Mrs. Bethune organized 800,000-member NCNW in 1935, was its president until 1949. Although she gave up office some time ago, she was active in Council until death.



**Honored on TV** program, Mrs. Bethune hugs son, Albert, after surprise re-union arranged by Ralph Edwards (1), *This Is Your Life* MC. Oak walking stick belonged to late President Roosevelt, whose widow presented it to Mrs. Bethune.



**Walls of campus office** where she directed activities of her Foundation are filled with autographed pictures. In 1905, then struggling cosmetic maker Madam C. J. Walker (upper left) and Mrs. Bethune vowed world would hear from them.

### MY LAST WILL *Continued*

dice and pressure, it will be necessary for them to band together for economic betterment. Negro banks, insurance companies and other businesses are examples of successful, racial economic enterprises. These institutions were made possible by vision and mutual aid. Confidence was vital in getting them started and keeping them going. Negroes have got to demonstrate still more confidence in each other in business. This kind of confidence will aid the economic rise of the race by bringing together the pennies and dollars of our people and ploughing them into useful channels. Economic separatism cannot be tolerated in this enlightened age, and it is not practicable. We must spread out as far and as fast as we can, but we must also help each other as we go.

● *I leave you a thirst for education.* Knowledge is the prime need of the hour. More and more, Negroes are taking full advantage of hard-won opportunities for learning, and the educational level of the Negro population is at its highest point in history. We are making greater use of the privileges inherent in living in a democracy. If we continue in this trend, we will be able to rear increasing numbers of strong, purposeful men and women, equipped with vision, mental clarity, health and education.

● *I leave you a respect for the uses of power.* We live in a world which respects power above all things. Power, intelligently directed, can lead to more freedom. Unwisely directed, it can be a dreadful, destructive force. During my lifetime I have seen the power of the Negro grow enormously. It has always been my first concern that this power should be placed on the side of human justice.

Now that the barriers are crumbling everywhere, the Negro in America must be ever vigilant lest his forces be marshalled behind wrong causes and undemocratic movements. He must not lend his support to any group that seeks to subvert democracy. That is why we must select leaders who are wise, courageous, and of great moral stature and ability. We have great leaders among us today: Ralph Bunche, Channing Tobias, Mordecai Johnson and Walter White. (The latter is now deceased.) We have had other great men and women in the past: Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Mary Church Terrell. We must produce more qualified people like them, who will work not for themselves, but for others.

● *I leave you faith.* Faith is the first factor in a life devoted to service. Without faith, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is



**Attending faculty meeting** in the library of Bethune-Cookman College, Mrs. Bethune addresses teachers on subject of school's history and its revered traditions. College has interracial faculty. Grand Old Lady frequently had breakfast with members of staff, both administrative and faculty. Richard V. Moore is current college president.

# Famous Names In New York

Miss Rose Morgan

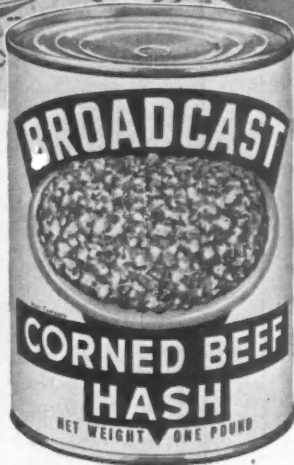
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## BROADCAST CANNED MEATS



In her garden on grounds of college, Mrs. Bethune takes stroll with great-grand-niece, Agnes Marie Miller. Though illness curtailed activities during last months, she spent several hours daily dictating letters to her friends all over the world.

### MY LAST WILL *Continued*

impossible. Faith in God is the greatest power, but great, too, is faith in oneself. In 50 years the faith of the American Negro in himself has grown immensely and is still increasing. The measure of our progress as a race is in precise relation to the depth of the faith in our people held by our leaders. Frederick Douglass, genius though he was, was spurred by a deep conviction that his people would heed his counsel and follow him to freedom. Our greatest Negro figures have been imbued with faith. Our forefathers struggled for liberty in conditions far more onerous than those we now face, but they never lost the faith. Their perseverance paid rich dividends. We must never forget their sufferings and their sacrifices, for they were the foundations of the progress of our people.

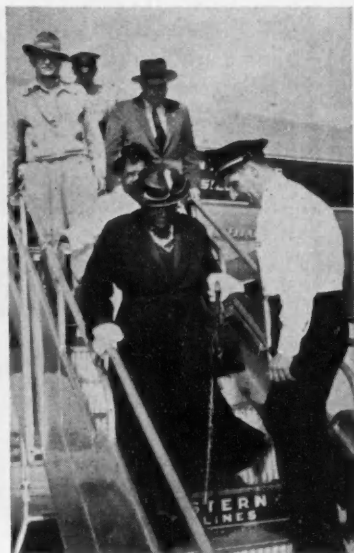
• *I leave you racial dignity.* I want Negroes to maintain their human dignity at all costs. We, as Negroes, must recognize that we are the custodians as well as the heirs of a great civilization. We have given something to the world as a race and for this we are proud and fully conscious of our place in the total picture of mankind's development. We must learn also to share and mix with all men. We must make an effort to be less race conscious and more conscious of individual and human values. I have never been



Family group shows Mrs. Bethune with great-grandchildren, nieces Lucille Wilson (rear left), Mrs. Jerona Lee Miller (seated), Mrs. Georgia McLeod Zanders (right). In 1954 Mrs. Bethune got "Mother of Century" award, Spingarn Medal in 1935.



Helped out of car, Mrs. Bethune goes to church. She was devout Christian, practiced "Love thy neighbor."



Last plane ride made by educator was to Texas where she received plaque from Beauty School owners sorority.

sensitive about my complexion. My color has never destroyed my self respect nor has it ever caused me to conduct myself in such a manner as to merit the disrespect of any person. I have not let my color handicap me. Despite many crushing burdens and handicaps, I have risen from the cotton fields of South Carolina to found a college, administer it during its years of growth, become a public servant in the government of our country and a leader of women. I would not exchange my color for all the wealth in the world, for had I been born white I might not have been able to do all that I have done or yet hope to do.

• I leave you a desire to live harmoniously with your fellow men. The problem of color is world-wide. It is found in Africa and Asia, Europe and South America. I appeal to American Negroes—North, South, East and West—to recognize their common problems and unite to solve them.

I pray that we will learn to live harmoniously with the white race. So often, our difficulties have made us hyper-sensitive and truculent. I want to see my people conduct themselves naturally in all relationships—fully conscious of their manly responsibilities and deeply aware of their heritage. I want them to learn to understand whites and influence them for good, for it is advisable and sensible for us to do so. We are a minority of 15 million living



Meditating, Mrs. Bethune sits on side of bed. Deeply religious, she said once: "I believe in God, and so I believe in Mary Bethune." She often read passages from *The Optimist's Good Morning*, book given to her by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

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### MY LAST WILL *Continued*

side by side with a white majority. We must learn to deal with these people positively and on an individual basis.

• I leave you finally a responsibility to our young people. The world around us really belongs to youth for youth will take over its future management. Our children must never lose their zeal for building a better world. They must not be discouraged from aspiring toward greatness, for they are to be the leaders of tomorrow. Nor must they forget that the masses of our people are still underprivileged, ill-housed, impoverished and victimized by discrimination. We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends.

Faith, courage, brotherhood, dignity, ambition, responsibility—these are needed today as never before. We must cultivate them and use them as tools for our task of completing the establishment of equality for the Negro. We must sharpen these tools in the struggle that faces us and find new ways of using them. The Freedom Gates are half a-jar. We must pry them fully open.

If I have a legacy to leave my people, it is my philosophy of living and serving. As I face tomorrow, I am content, for I think I have spent my life well. I pray now that my philosophy may be helpful to those who share my vision of a world of Peace, Progress, Brotherhood and Love.



Trail-blazing for race, Mrs. Bethune trudges up drive to White House. Late President Roosevelt's customary greeting to her was: "I'm always glad to see you, Mrs. Bethune, for you always come asking help for others—never for yourself."



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