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THE AUTHOR

Poet, educator, lecturer, short story writer, biographer, actor and world traveler, Roy L. Hill earned his doctorate degree from Rutgers University, after having previously received the Bachelor of Science degree from The North Carolina Agriculture and Technical State University at Greensboro, The Master of Science degree from Boston University, and a Master of Arts from Michigan State University.



He was orphaned at the age of two months and was reared in South Carolina by relatives and in later childhood by a family of Pennsylvania Quakers.

In a tumultuous lifetime, he has served in the U. S. Navy, written plays, poems, short stories, biographies and articles. He authored *Rhetoric of Racial Revolt*, *Rhetoric of Racial Hope*, *Rhetoric of Racial Revolution*, *Two Ways and Other Stories*, *Corrie J. Carroll and Other Poems*, *Who's Who in the American Negro Press*, *Forty-Nine Poems*, *Traffic Lights and Other Poems*. His creative ability led him into avenues of self-expression in addition to the spoken or written word. His interest in drama led him to periodical excursion into acting. His strong interest in music compels him to spend many enjoyable hours at the piano.

His teaching posts include Southern University, Grambling College, South Carolina State College, Pennsylvania State University, State University of N.Y. at Albany, University of Denver, Kansas State University, and Nebraska's Chadron State College.

Hill has taught public speaking, the writing of fiction and poetry, journalism, American literature, World literature, African and Caribbean literature, Afro-American literature, and English literature. Most recently he has taught courses in Black Oratory, The Black Intellectual, Dynamics of Racism and Black Philosophy.

Poet Hill has two LP records: "Roy Hill Reads Poetry" and "Poetry From Two Worlds" and has read poetry from the lecture platforms in Great Britain, Canada, the Soviet Union, the Caribbean and forty-five of the fifty states. In 1971, Dr. Hill was named an Outstanding Educator of America and in 1970, together with Nina Simone, was Artist in Residence at Florida A and M University. He is a member of the English faculty of Rutgers Newark College of Arts and Sciences and previously was the chairman of the Black Studies Department of that college.

"Booker T's Child, The Life and Times of Portia Marshall Washington Pittman" is a story of the daughter of Booker T. Washington, the founder of Tuskegee Institute. It is Booker's story too, and equally a story of black Americans from post-Civil War days to the present. It is a story that could be told only by Roy L. Hill, whose life for more than twenty-years has been inextricably a part of Portia's.

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BOOKER T'S CHILD

PORTIA

Conceived and narrated by Roy L. Hill

Booker T. Washington

The recording of his Atlanta, Georgia address, Sept. 18, 1895

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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BOOKER T. WASHINGTON ADDRESS, 1895

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Booker T's Child By Roy L. Hill



Booker T. Washington & Portia

Booker T's Child, As Portia Marshall Washington Pittman by Roy L. Hill

**Associate Professor of English and Journalism, Alabama State University,
Montgomery, Alabama**

A paper delivered at the 59th Annual meeting of the Association for the study of Afro-American Life and History, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 23-27, 1974.

The Association honored Fannie H. Douglass, grand-daughter-in-law of Frederick Douglass. Portia Marshall Washington Pittman, daughter of Booker T. Washington.

Speech References: Dr. Franklin H. Williams, Mrs. Pittman, Mrs. Nettie W. Douglass, grand-daughter of Booker T. Washington and great-grand-daughter-in-law of Frederick Douglass. Mrs. Fannie H. Douglass, grand-daughter-in-law of Frederick Douglass, and Dr. Eileen Jackson Southern.

A paper delivered at the 59th annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (October 23-27, 1974)

Ladies and gentlemen much of the past treatment of my father, Booker T. Washington, has focused upon the man as industrial educator and an accomodator of the racist modes of thought and behavior which dominated American Life at the turn of the century. My paper attempts to expose the fact that such an assessment is simplistic and overdrawn and that in fact my father, Booker T. Washington was a man of much more complex dimensions than what has been earlier posed. My paper is entitled Booker T's Child. Booker T's Child has three levels of communication: Firstly, Portia Marshall Washington Pittman. Secondly, a generational concept---those persons who are involved out of feelings, beliefs, ideas, philosophy, in carrying on the legacy of Booker T. Washington. Whether they know it or not are my father's Children. Thirdly, the ancestral wisdom, concernig things Afro-American, the longevity of oppression, the struggles, racial memories, both proud harsh, racial continuum, geology--group membership and personal.

So while I am humbled by this occaision, I am not overwhelmed by it. I am proud and pleased to be here. A journey in time is but one measure of an institution. What is attained along the way, the aspirations, commitments, plans and hopes for the future by its members, sponsors, and leaders, these are all complelling measures of growth and development.

I was the first child born on the campus of Tuskegee Institute, on June 6, 1883, to Booker T. Washington and Fannie Norton Smith Washington of Malden, West Virginia. If I had been born 18 years earlier, I too would have been a slave.

May I suggest to you ladies and gentlemen, my father's institution, Tuskegee Institute, will stagger the imagination of those who have not visited it as well as those who have viewed it. I am personally pleased to pay tribute to my father's memory, work, and contributions. Most men find unique beginnings but in today's context, Tuskegee's beginnings seem increasingly significant, not the peace,

not the character, but the idea behind the institution and perhaps more important the strategy which led my father to its establishment. Consequently, increasing significance is seen in my father, notwithstanding the well deserved recognition which he achieved in his own day and in his own time. As a matter of fact, it is highly conceivable, at least to me, that with just a little mirrored expansion one might see my father and those contemporaries who supported his efforts, all alone, peacefully smiling as he gazes upon us today. Obviously, we would not be where we are today if it were not for the Tuskegee Institute of yesterday. I allude of course to the historic controversy between my father and Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, that is so often discussed and so widely reported. However, differences in viewpoints about educational approaches have existed throughout history. My most recent readings thinking on the subject suggest that much of the Washington-DuBois controversy is a figment of historians' imagination. I found little, if any, evidence of a two way dialogue nor even, for that matter, an informal debate between the two men. But perhaps there was a conflict in the terms of educational strategies, that is what or which education should come first and for whom in view of the social, economic, and political conditions in the United States. At that time, my father's educational strategy and tactics were influenced by the agony, if you will, of his direct experience with the pervasive, post reconstruction, racial hatred which he personally observed in high places of society and our government. On the other hand, Dr. DuBois' intense frustration and terse utterances were related to his inability to get his own ideas financed as well as to the success that my father enjoyed. In addition, Dr. DuBois was an unusual and exceptional intellectual whose perception about education were based on his astute knowledge of the classics and the tradition of elitism within the educational system. But enough of that, for I am convinced after all of my reading and thinking in recent weeks, that time and time alone will expose what I consider today to be the fallacious and opportunistic historical misinterpretations of this matter.

My father was not only a controversial figure but a man of many paradoxes which fact invariably tends to discourage many statements about him in contemporary times. Whether these tentative conclusions of mine will be validated is not important. What does matter is that they offer a challenge to me on this occasion and I suppose, being truthful, which I consider myself to be, I feel some responsibility for setting the record straight. Alice Roosevelt, a personal friend of mine is speaking out again. So it is time for my father's 91 year old child to consider the man in the proper light.

My father made two trips to Europe. He never made a physical trip to Mother Africa, though he was oriented psychologically toward Mother Africa. My father was deeply involved with Mother Africa and was perhaps one of the first black Americans to be concerned and to express this concern about Africa for Africans. Although our contemporary scene is characterized by an explosion of black consciousness which takes the form, at least in part, of a growing and deepening interest in Mother Africa, particularly through the efforts of many of us who are trying to identify not only ourselves but our role in relation to Mother Africa and to establish an anthropological connection with Mother Africa. It still remains a fact that very few of us and very few historians apparently have recognized the leadership that my father took in this regard. When my father was in London in 1899, it was natural that he was sought out by the West Indian, African, and American Negro organizers of the 1900 Pan-African Conference.¹ This is one bit of documentation of the fact of my father's interest and involvement in African Affairs. It seems to me that it is important in an historical sense sometimes to look back, and to try to the best of our ability to bring some things into the proper perspective. That my father was as deeply and emotionally involved with Mother Africa as was Dr. DuBois seems to me to be an incontrovertible fact. My father, was influenced, as were other black men of the time, by the notion that black men belonged to two continents...physically they were apart of America but psychologically they felt some basic tie to Mother Africa.

In this regard, my father was a man who can be described as having been ahead of his time. He was in a sense a part of the avant garde of his generation. First he has this interest in Mother Africa which commenced during his childhood and at a much earlier age than, such an interest has evolved among more contemporary black Americans. Second, he was imbued with interest as it related to the struggle of the black man in America. This was a natural outlook in view of his personal struggles which required him to adopt a tremendous amount of discipline, self initiative, and self-study in order to accomplish his goals. He was one of the earliest black American educators to recognize the necessity of offering Black Studies. He demonstrated a commitment to this by writing The Story of the Negro. Third, he was personally involved with Mother Africa in other ways. He sent numerous agricultural specialists to Africa from his institution in order to facilitate development. He helped to organize the first educational and economic study commission from Tuskegee to Mother Africa. This effort culminated in the eventual establishment of Booker T. Washington Institute of Africa in Liberia, West Africa. So it is from these achievements and related experience that I have derived certain meaningful lessons which have contemporary significance, which I want to relate to you.

My father often related to me the conversations which he heard at the Big House in which the whites recounted the major dimensions of their heritage in which they took pride. He often asked rhetorically, "What was there of me and where I came from?" "What was spoken about the life of my people, both in Mother Africa and in America to which I might point with pride and satisfaction?" Having posed such questions he commenced a long journey of inquiry and self-study in order to unearth the substantive answers which he so longed to know. Because of the limitations of available Black Scholarship and literary achievement his successes were limited to his best interpretations of the many and diverse references concerning Negroes which were available at this time. He visited Harvard University. The Black men who studied there had acquired a substantial knowledge of Greek, Roman,

and English Civilizations, and in their conversations with my father they communicated a pride which they felt over their acquired knowledge of the language and the history of the English and French people. Like so many other blacks of the period, they had studied the history of New England and the original colonies, the Mayflower, Plymouth Rock, Jamestown, Virginia, etc, in depth.

My father learned from this experience that no where in all of their education had these black men been provided with an opportunity to learn anything about their own race, its history, or African history. He left that experience with a firm and deep commitment to the idea that every Negro boy and girl should learn something about his racial heritage, and not from the frame of reference of the strange and mysterious Dark continent.

Contrary to what you the audience may have been lead to believe, my father was very aware of the existence of racism as an endemic and painful reality of American life. His response to this reality was to demonstrate his feelings of empathy and sympathy for his people by committing himself to spending his life working among them in an effort to improve their lot in society.

My father rejected much of the destructive imagery which surrounded the teaching and writings about Mother Africa and the Afro-American and continually emphasized the need for treating such matters from a positive perspective. You can find my father's understanding of the history of blacks in America and in Mother Africa as well as a remarkable awareness of the need to share what he knew about Africans as he recounted the Story of the Negro. Therefore, the lesson which I gather from my father's life story underlies the importance of knowledge about black people. "There is much in the story of the struggle if one were able to tell it as it deserves to be told, not merely to the black man, but also to the white man." But because our perception of man's physical world is much larger than it was in My Father's day, and because we have now come to realize that racism has no geographical boundaries, I would simply project My Father's

feelings by saying that today the story needs to be told everywhere to all people on the earth. The speech in Atlanta, 1895, and his work at Tuskegee made him internationally famous. The world should be informed of his progress.

From that African experience My Father learned a additional lesson which again, in my judgement, placed him ahead of his time. My father sensed the need for a wealthy, cultural education in order for Blacks to achieve more effective communication and involvement as leaders, teachers, and workers in circumstance and conditions which they had not previously experienced.

My father was certain we had an ancestral, but not a deep culture, for the years and circumstances had so diminished our culture, that it had to be reconstructed. The Negro American had become essentially a new type spread across the face of this new land with no regard to the considerable diversity within his racial ancestry and has developed even greater complexity during the ensuing years. Any trace of so called black blood within a person was used by the law to characterized that individual as a Negro-a fact that few Americans wished to reminded of inspite of the reality. Booker T. Washington's legacy points to an ignoble demention of American history and at the same time a rather heroic demention of Afro-American history. Consider the symbolism of a people who are caught up in such a vacious crucible of subordination and oppression and yet despite this attempt to deny them virturally any demention of human dignity and human rights. They are still able to exhibit a partically rich and vital resiliency which manifest itself in a continual struggle to gain liberation in a society which alledged to be the world's greatest democracy. Booker T. washington efforts must be seened within this historical context.

Any meaningful analysis of this distinguished American and illustrious founder of Tuskegee Institute does reveal the paradoxical complexity of the man that he was. My father, himself would no doubt have been in comfortable accord with this view of himself. For it was he who in retrospect spoke of his divided self and often confused

purposes, and yet many of the things he thought and did had seemed only natural for him within the context of the social conditions and circumstances of his time. Frist, the idiotic tragedy of slavery itself of which he was a part. Second, the tragedy of being black in the aftermath of slavery, and third, the wholesale public denunciation of the then Negro to the extent that many of my brothers and sisters came to internalize important feelings of self deprecation and self hatred. My father was a man with no past, no culture, no history, nothing. Black people have accepted this definition in varying degrees and at great cost to their personalities. Even Dr. DuBois, in a moment of self-doubt, wrote this moving passage: "Beyond the thought lurks the afterthought. Suppose that all the world is right, and we are less than men; suppose this mad impluse is all wrong and some locked mirage coming through the untruth a shriek in the night for the freedom of men who themselves are not sure of their rights to be men." It is obvious then that my father was not alone in harboring such distrubing assetments in the Private world of his mind.

Portia

When I was a very little girl at Tuskegee, I heard the black pianist called Blind Tom(Thomas Greene Bethune, later known as Thomas Wiggins). I found in music both a means of expression and a key tht unlocked the door to and avenue of my own upon which to move. "It was Blind Tom who played a Liszt Rhapsody that inspired me so early at Tuskegee. Until this day I have not forgotten that moment.

My father told the world that I had talent in the area of music and language in his autobiography, Up From Slavery. He often told me if I continued to do well that he would send me to Germany to study.

As I now recall. my father employed a Mr. Tally from Fisk University to teach me German at Tuskegee. And, I took music from a few renowned piano teachers at Tuskegee and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Dr. Roy L. Hill & Portia

Credit: Wide World Photo

An article from the now defunct Philadelphia North American described my arrival and first weeks at college. It appeared on Sunday, November 3, 1901, and bore a headline reading PORTIA WASHINGTON, DAUGHTER OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS FOUNDER OF TUSKEGEE, becomes a REAL WELLESLEY GIRL".

The piece begins, appropriately enough, with a report on Portia as Booker T. Child, the daughter of a man who in the step of one generation (had) made himself the leader of his race. "When Booker T. Washington went to college," the rather breathless article continues, obviously quite sincere---if remarkably unsuccessful---in its effort not to sound patronizing, he tramped as a ragged, forlorn little black boy from a Southern Negro Cabin to Hampton, where he helped pay his way through the Institution by sweeping the floors and working on holidays and vacations.

When his daughter commenced her collegiate education the other day, he, himself, took her in a Pullman car to Boston and thence to the fashionable women's college, where she was placed under the care of the dean with all the ceremony and distinction that is shown a millionaire's daughter.

And she has been as carefully reared, this Negro girl, as any of Boston's own cultured children...it is evident in an air of good breeding and a refinement of manner, which are as well marked as though her color were white.

She is 18 years old, she says, but with her slim, straight frame and her skirt yet ankle length, she looks not more than 16. She is only a little school girl in her ways, scarcely yet a college young woman, very childlike and unsophisticated. One looks in vain for the qualities of independence and leadership which she might have been expected to have inherited from her mother, whose executive ability called her to the presidency of a national federation, and from a father who is the founder of Tuskegee, but, there is no evidence, so far at least, that the little Wellesley girl has any endowment from all of this achievement.

After one year at Wellesley I transferred to Bradford College, Bradford, Massachusetts. Professor Samuel Downs was once my piano teacher and also Miss Peabody. I played the piano for all of the socials and chapel exercises. I even played the president to sleep, often with lullabies. Music was my whole life at Bradford. I guess they referred to me as all music. I had two love--music and papp. I composed a waltz and played it for commencement at Bradford and my father was commencement speaker. As I look back now, he spoke about his work at Tuskegee. Miss Peabody had studied piano in Germany with Martin Krause. It was Miss Peabody who recommended me to Martin Krause. My father was always progressive in his thinking and he always wanted the very best for me. He knew that America was a young country and music was slow in its development. He knew that talented musicians had to go to Europe in order to gain recognition here. My father could not have believed in the assimilation theory because, I took more from Germany than I gave in the the areas of culture and training. Most of the established Black artists were in Europe; the opera houses and the great culture centers were there too. Students of the arts worshipped the great masters in Europe. My professor, Martin Krause was a pupil of Liszt. Before going to Europe to study, my father had a charming woman on the faculty by the name of Jane Ethel Clarke, a 1901 graduate of Oberlin College. Miss Clarke was my official chaperone in Europe. She was a gracious woman and was called a ravishing beauty by European observers. We stopped in London and visited Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. He arranged for me Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child. When I arrived in Berlin, I played Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child for Martin Krause.

"What is that you are playing?" Krause asked. I told Mr. Krause that was the music of my people. Mr Krause said, "You have lots of talent but no technique. That is so typical of you Americans." I was assigned a Professor Schmidt to assist me with my technique and I practiced 6 hours every day for 3 years. When I returned to America I gave concerts in New York and Washington D.C. and other major cities to help Clarence Cameron White (and countless other struggling black artists) who were getting started with their studies in the U.S. to eventually go to Europe to study. I really don't think I was all that good, but I presumed that everybody wanted to see Booker T's Child or hear her play the piano. I needed work in Choral Directing so I studied one summer at Columbia University. My schoolmate and dear friend that summer was John Works, Sr. of Fisk University.

My father had been partly responsible for the education of William L. Dawson, who became a world renowned composer and conductor and who raised the Tuskegee Choir to international fame. Dawson and I, due to artistic temperments, were not compatible at times. When Joseph Douglass, the violinist, came to Tuskegee, I was his accompanist. Alice Nelson Dunbar, the wife of the poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and I were friends of many years, we spent many pleasant hours together in Boston. I was in the early black cultural group formed in America because my father wanted my training in Europe and New England to be given to our people here. I directed the Music at the Booker T. Washington School, Dallas, Texas and later I worked at Tuskegee under President R.R. Moton. I directed the Tuskegee Choir. The Black Composer, R. Nathaniel Dett had given me a lot of help in my directing his music and the music of Harry Burleigh.

My father had several great poets and artist come to Tuskegee Institute. It was the cultural center for the Macon, Alabama Black Belt. Abby Mitchell for whom I had given a party in Berlin, came to teach voice at Tuskegee. Hazel Harrison who paved the way for my housing situation in Europe, taught at Tuskegee. After I retired from teaching music and directing the Choir at Tuskegee, I opened up my own music school there.

Oh, Well, I have given my technique and classical training to my people and have lived to get excellent reports and comments for around the world.

I play the piano briefly now! I played for the public on October 4 and 5, 1974 at Bradford College, Havervill, Massachusetts. It was my 69th class reunion.

I have always known how to make a little magic. I guess that is what is is really all about.

Booker T. Washington

(Address delivered at the opening of the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia, on September 18, 1895.

Mr. President and gentlemen of the Board of Directors and citizens:

One-third of the population of the South is of the Negro race. No enterprise seeking the material, civil, or moral welfare of this section can disregard this element of our population and reach the highest success. I but convey to you, Mr. President and Directors, the sentiment of the masses of my race when I say that in no way have the value and manhood of the American Negro been more fittingly and generously recognized than by the managers of this magnificent Exposition at every stage of its progress. It is a recognition that will do more to cement the friendship of the two races than any occurrence since the dawn of our freedom.

Not only this, but the opportunity here afforded will awaken among us a new era of industrial progress. Ignorant and inexperienced, it is not strange that in the first years of our new life we began at the top instead of the bottom; that a seat in Congress or the state legislature was more sought than real estate or industrial skill; that the political convention or stump speaking had more attractions than starting a dairy farm or a truck garden.

A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A second time the signal, "Water, send us water!" ran up from the distressed vessel and was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A third and fourth signal for water was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket; and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River.

To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with a Southern white man who is their next door neighbor I would say, "Cast down your bucket where you are." Cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom you are surrounded.

To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, were I permitted, I would repeat what I have said to my own race, "Cast down your bucket where you are." Cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides. Cast down your bucket among these people who have without strikes and labor wars tilled your fields, cleared your forests, builded your railroads and cities, and brought forth treasures from the bowels of the earth come to make possible this magnificent representation of the progress of the South.