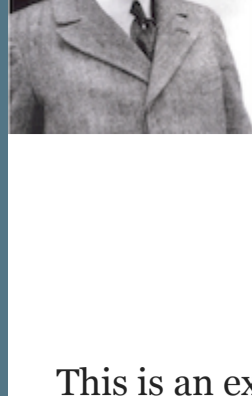
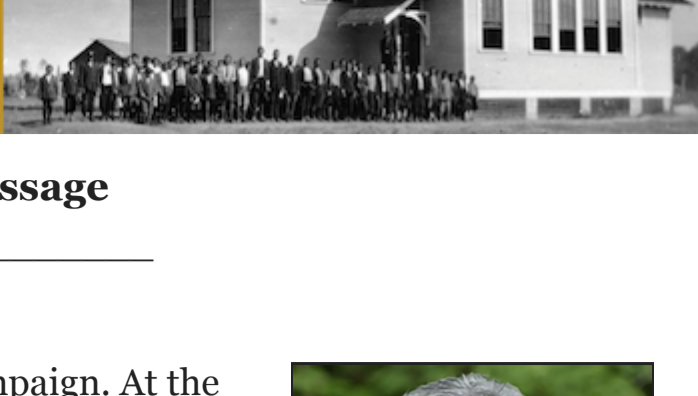


# Creating the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park



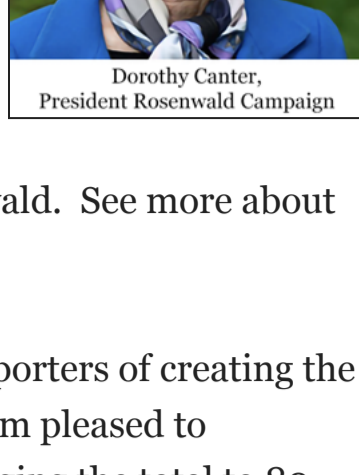
"All the other pleasures of life seem to wear out, but the pleasure of helping others in distress never does."

JULIUS ROSENWALD



## President's Message

This is an exciting time for the Rosenwald Park Campaign. At the end of August we issued the final report on the 56 Rosenwald School facilities recommended to the Campaign. The first article presents information on the key findings of the report, which is available on the Campaign's website.



Dorothy Canter, President Rosenwald Campaign

The Campaign is thrilled by and appreciative of the September 9 letter sent by 18 US Representatives to President Biden requesting that the Presidential Medal of Freedom be awarded to Julius Rosenwald. See more about that below.

As of August 31, 66 non-profit organizations had become official supporters of creating the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park. I am pleased to announce that since then 14 more organizations have signed on, bringing the total to 80. They represent a broad range of constituencies including support groups for two Rosenwald Schools. The Ciesla Foundation was one of the organizations. Its founder Aviva Kempner made the memorable documentary "Rosenwald," which was the inspiration for establishing the Campaign in 2016.

We need only 20 more organizations to sign on to meet the Campaign's goal of 100 by year's end. Please help us reach the goal by emailing me at [dorothycenter@rosenwaldpark.org](mailto:dorothycenter@rosenwaldpark.org) with your recommendations of additional organizations to contact. Also let me know if you would like a copy of the current list of organizations.

In the last month I visited three more Rosenwald Schools. All were rewarding and enlightening experiences. The groups that support Rosenwald Schools are highly motivated and dedicated to preserving their legacy. Campaign Board members continue to give presentations, mostly virtual but a few now in person, to interested groups. We would like to share the story of Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools with educational groups of all ages. Contact [info@rosenwaldpark.org](mailto:info@rosenwaldpark.org) if you would like to plan a presentation.

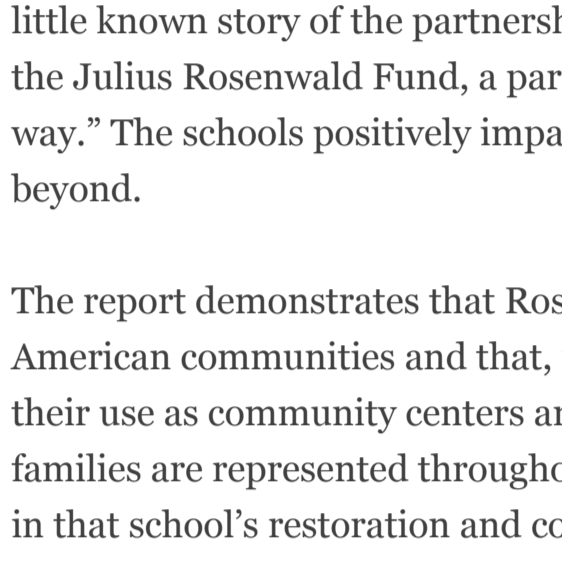
I hope that you enjoy the articles below. Stephanie Deutsch's article on Julius Rosenwald and the YMCAs addresses the first important contributions he made to help improve the lives of African Americans. And how many people knew that Eleanor Roosevelt served on the Board of the Rosenwald Fund? For those of you who remember the radio broadcaster Paul Harvey, especially read the "Rest of that Story" below.

The Campaign appreciates your continuing support for creating this important Park.

Together we will succeed!

## The Report on Recommended Rosenwald Schools

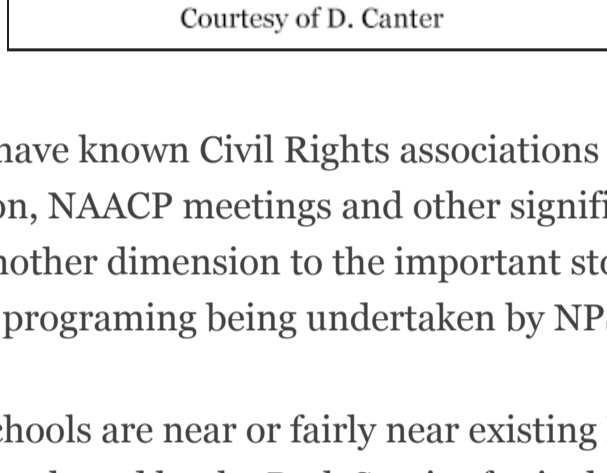
At the end of August 2021 the Campaign issued its report, "Identifying and Evaluating Rosenwald School Facilities Recommended for Inclusion in a National Historical Park." This represents the culmination of the process started in the summer of 2017 when State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) from 14 of the 15 southern states in which Rosenwald Schools were built recommended 55 schools and one teacher home for



consideration for possible inclusion in the planned Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park. In the succeeding years Campaign representatives have visited 33 of these schools and the teacher home in 12 different states. Additional school visits were postponed in the Spring of 2020 due to the onset of the Covid pandemic.

The report provides further evidence that Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools are of national historic significance and that a National Historical Park would be an important enhancement to the US National Park System. The proposed Park would help ensure the continued preservation of these important cultural resources and highlight the positive but little known story of the partnership of nearly 5,000 African American communities with the Julius Rosenwald Fund, a partnership that helped their children "make a way out of no way." The schools positively impacted American history in the twentieth century and beyond.

The report demonstrates that Rosenwald Schools served as valued institutions in African American communities and that, in many cases, this continues into the present through their use as community centers and small museums. In some instances, generations of families are represented throughout a given school's history, including active involvement in that school's restoration and continuing interpretation.



Noble Hill-Wheeler Memorial Center  
Courtesy of D. Canter

At least five of the schools have known Civil Rights associations and many were used as centers for voter registration, NAACP meetings and other significant activities. This rich Civil Rights history adds another dimension to the important story they have to tell and could be incorporated into programing being undertaken by NPS or at the state level.

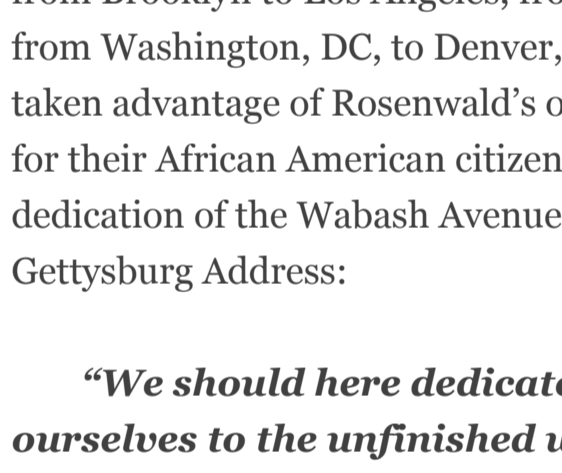
Importantly, most of the schools are near or fairly near existing National Park Service units, a plus should they be selected by the Park Service for inclusion in the planned National Historical Park.

The report is available as a [PDF file download here](#). For more information on the report, please contact [dorothycenter@rosenwaldpark.org](mailto:dorothycenter@rosenwaldpark.org).

## YMCAs for African Americans: Rosenwald's First Use of Challenge Grants

In December 1910, two representatives of the national YMCA came to visit Julius Rosenwald in his office at Sears, Roebuck to ask if he would consider donating \$25,000 for a Y facility for African Americans in Chicago. Rosenwald had long been a supporter of YMCAs, believing in their mission of providing accessible, affordable places to stay as well as opportunities for recreation and socializing in a wholesome setting. These services were especially valuable to young, single working people, often newly arrived in the city. Rosenwald had been instrumental in providing a large Y for employees at the sprawling new Sears, Roebuck plant and had contributed to a new facility near his home in Hyde Park on the condition that the money raised be used, in part, for a YMA facility to benefit the population in which he was increasingly feeling called to invest – African Americans.

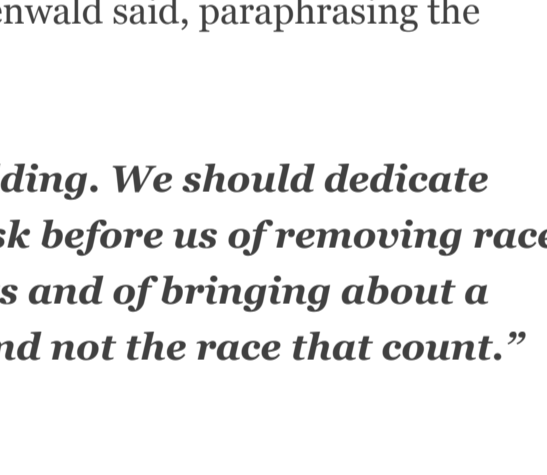
So he agreed and said that, yes, he would certainly make the solicited donation for a Chicago YMCA for African Americans provided the same amount could be raised from the local community. Then he said something that took his visitors by surprise. Rosenwald stated that he would donate \$25,000 to any city in the country that he could raise \$75,000 for a Y building for its Black community. Rosenwald's biographer Peter Ascoli writes that his "guests were speechless. Their host turned to them and added with a smile, 'Well, I guess you can't build more than one a month, but I hope you can.'"



Wabash Avenue YMCA, Chicago; Wikipedia

When Booker T. Washington heard about Rosenwald's offer, he called it "one of the wisest and best-paying philanthropic investments."

The YMCAs built with challenge grants from Rosenwald provided facilities previously all but unknown to African-Americans -- swimming pools, gymnasias, cafeterias, reading and class rooms, employment bureaus, and dormitories For years these YMCAs were one of the very few places where African-American travelers could find comfortable and safe sleeping accommodations outside of the homes of relatives and friends.



Washington, DC, YMCA; Courtesy D. Canter

By the time this program ended in 1933, 24 cities – from Brooklyn to Los Angeles, from Chicago to Dallas, from Washington, DC, to Denver, and in between – had taken advantage of Rosenwald's offer to build YMCAs for their African American citizens. In 1913, at the dedication of the Wabash Avenue YMCA in Chicago, Rosenwald said, paraphrasing the Gettysburg Address:

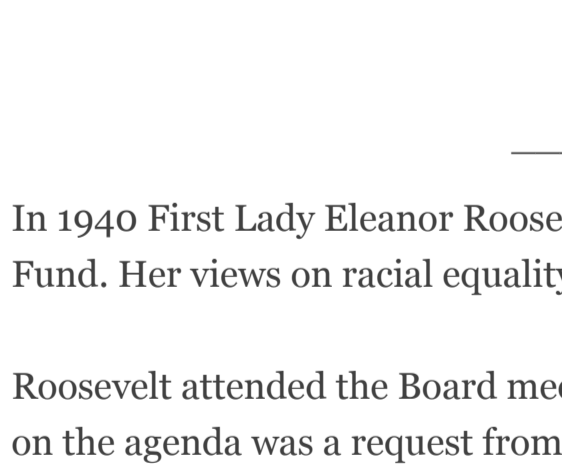
***"We should here dedicate more than this building. We should dedicate ourselves to the unfinished work, to the great task before us of removing race hatred of which, unfortunately so much exists and of bringing about a universal acceptance that it is the individual and not the race that count."***

By Stephanie Deutsch

## Toward A Congressional Medal of Freedom for Julius Rosenwald

On September 9, 2021, Congressmen Steve Cohen (D-TN) and Danny Davis (D-IL) sent a letter to President Biden requesting that he award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Julius Rosenwald

***"for his lasting contributions to the advancement of African American education and culture during the twentieth century."***



Davis was the lead sponsor, and Cohen an original cosponsor, of H-3250, The Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools Act of 2020, which became law on January 13, 2021. Sixteen other Representatives signed the letter, 11 of whom were also cosponsors of the law. The Campaign thanks the 18 Representatives for taking that this action. Julius Rosenwald is certainly worthy of receiving this very prestigious award.

Historical precedence exists for making the award posthumously, as it was given to President John F. Kennedy following his assassination in 1963.

As the letter stated, "The high honor of the Presidential Medal of Freedom is reserved for those who make significant contributions to the national interests of the United States, and Mr. Julius Rosenwald did just that by forever directing our national interests toward equity and justice through his lasting work."

The Campaign is examining a number of ways in which to support this request, including seeing whether one or more Senators will join this effort by writing a similar letter and initiating a letter writing campaign with at least one other interested nonprofit organization.

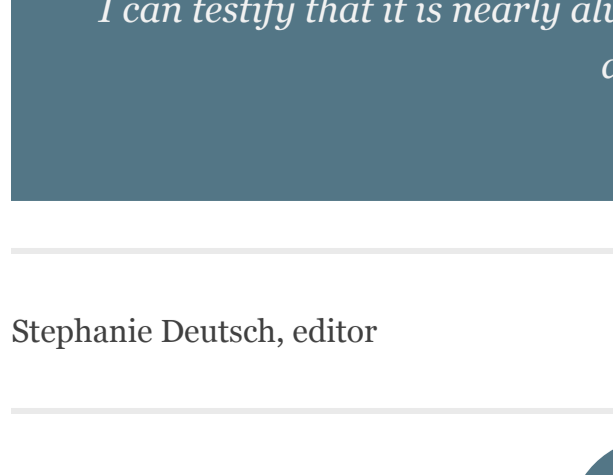
Stay tuned and ready for action!

## Did You Know?

In 1940 First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt joined the Board of Trustees of the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Her views on racial equality were clearly in alignment with those of the Fund.

Roosevelt attended the Board meeting held at Tuskegee Institute in March 1941. One topic on the agenda was a request from Tuskegee Institute President Frederick Douglas Patterson for a loan of funds to expand the facilities to provide for a flight-training program at the school. Until that time the US military had not allowed African Americans to be trained as pilots but as the country prepared for the possibility of war Congress had approved an all-African American unit for the Army Air Corps.

On March 31 Eleanor Roosevelt visited the training site and was impressed by the staff and trainees. She decided to take a test flight as a sign of support for the program. Her pilot was Charles "Chief" Anderson, the first African American to earn a pilot's license and the program's chief flight instructor.



Eleanor Roosevelt  
Charles "Chief" Anderson

Quentin Smith, a trainee at the time, remembered that when Roosevelt announced that she was going to take the flight "the Secret Service men almost had a conniption, but what can you tell the First Lady when she says, 'I'm going to do this?'" And so she did, flying with Anderson for 40 minutes in the small plane above the Alabama countryside.

Later she proudly gave a snapshot of the two of them in the plane to FDR. That photo ran in newspapers throughout the nation and remains famous today.

With Eleanor Roosevelt's encouragement, the Rosenwald Fund trustees approved a loan of \$175,000 to help finance the building of Robert Russa Moton Field, a loan fully repaid two years later. At the graduation ceremony for the first five African Americans to earn pilot's wings, the speaker was Rosenwald Fund president Edwin Embree.

Throughout World War II, the First Lady followed the activities of the all-African American squadron that came to be known as the Tuskegee Airmen or Red Tails. Under the command of African American West Point graduate Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., who went on to become a four star General, they had a distinguished record, demonstrating courage and skill that made clear their equality with white pilots. The Tuskegee Airmen were grateful to Eleanor Roosevelt for the rest of their lives.

**And the rest of the story...** In 1998 Robert Russa Moton Field, which was named after the second President of Tuskegee, became the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site, a unit of the National Park System. Robert G. Stanton, the first African American Director of the National Park Service, oversaw its creation. Stanton is now the Vice-President of the Rosenwald Park Campaign.



P-51 Mustang Tuskegee Airmen  
Courtesy of Jeff Berlin

The more one searches, the more connections one makes!

*I can testify that it is nearly always easier to make \$1,000,000 honestly than to dispose of it wisely.*  
Julius Rosenwald

Stephanie Deutsch, editor

**DONATE**

**We need your support to continue.**

For questions and suggestions, please write to [info@rosenwaldpark.org](mailto:info@rosenwaldpark.org).