

Creating the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park



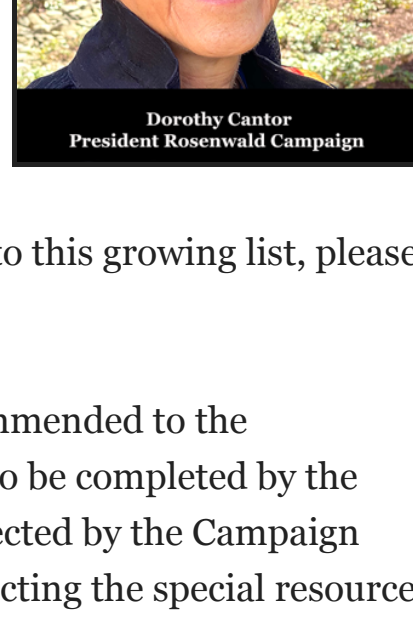
"All the other pleasures of life seem to wear out, but the pleasure of helping others in distress never does."
JULIUS ROSENWALD



President's Message

The spring weather and new foliage are a source of hope after the long hard winter of Covid, as is the increasing number of people who are being vaccinated.

The Campaign continues to gain support for the planned Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park. Currently, 44 non-profit organizations representing a broad spectrum of constituencies, including a number of friends' groups for Rosenwald Schools, have officially signed on in support of legislation to create the park. If you are associated with an organization that would be interested in adding its name to this growing list, please contact me at dorothycenter@rosenwaldpark.org.



We expect the report on the 56 Rosenwald Schools facilities recommended to the Campaign by 14 states for possible inclusion in the planned park to be completed by the beginning of summer. At that time it and all underlying data collected by the Campaign will be submitted to the National Park Service to assist it in conducting the special research study of the sites associated with Julius Rosenwald and the schools. We will make the report available to all interested parties.

This issue includes an article about the long and highly productive relationship between Jane Addams and Julius Rosenwald, as well as an article about Andrew Feiler's new photography book on Rosenwald Schools entitled "A Better Life for Their Children." Both schools mentioned in the article, as well as a number of others in the book, have been visited by Campaign representatives. Earlier this year Andrew became a member of the Campaign's Advisory Council, and we look forward to coordinating with him on preserving the stories of the Rosenwald Schools.

Jane Addams and Julius Rosenwald

By Stephanie Deutsch

Julius Rosenwald started making financial contributions to Hull House in 1902, four years before the initial public offering of Sears, Roebuck stock made him a millionaire. He had heard from his Rabbi, Emil Hirsch, about Jane Addams and the Chicago settlement house she had founded. For the rest of his life, Rosenwald would be an admirer and friend of Jane Addams.

Born in rural Illinois in 1860, Jane Addams grew up in a well to do family with a strong sense of social service and Christian values. Her goal was to become a doctor, but poor health derailed her studies. On a visit to London she found her true calling. With her friend Ellen Gates Starr she visited Toynbee Hall, an early example of what came to be known as settlement houses offering a variety of services to poor industrial workers, often recent arrivals from the countryside. In 1889 she purchased an abandoned mansion called Hull House on Chicago's rapidly changing west side. It became America's first settlement house, a beacon of hospitality in a low-income neighborhood of recent immigrants from Italy, Greece and, later, Russia and Eastern Europe. Hull House was Jane Addams's home,



but it was also a place for English lessons, cooking classes, job placement advice, art exhibitions and more. Chicago's first public playground was established by Hull House.

After Rosenwald's initial donation Jane Addams wrote to thank him and invited him to tour Hull House. He and his wife, Gussie, were impressed by what they experienced there, and the three became friends. For twenty years Julius

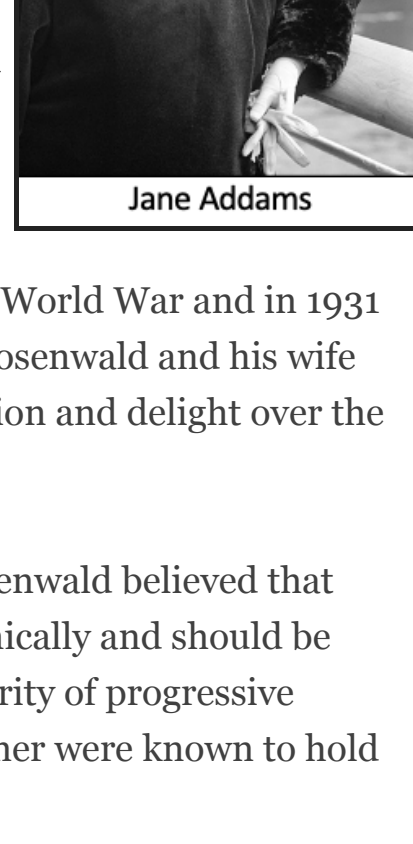
Rosenwald served on the board of Hull House and supported its various activities not just with his own donations but as a member of the finance committee, signing letters asking others for contributions and regularly attending Board meetings.

Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington met in Chicago in May 1911. After Washington invited him to join the board of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, Rosenwald assembled a group of family and friends, including Jane Addams, to accompany him on his first visit to Tuskegee. Impressed by the visit, Rosenwald joined the board.

To mark his fiftieth birthday in August 1912 Rosenwald gave away \$687,000. He chose Jane Addams to make the announcement of the eight donations. Included in that sum was \$50,000 for a "country club" for social workers, something she had promoted. Also among those birthday gifts was \$25,000 to Tuskegee Institute. A small part of that grant was used to partner with six rural Alabama communities to build the first of what later came to be called Rosenwald Schools.

In 1915 Addams again accompanied Rosenwald to Tuskegee and to visit newly built Rosenwald Schools. At the new Pleasant Hill School both of them spoke to the assembled students and community members.

The two friends did not always agree. In 1912 Addams enthusiastically supported Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose candidacy for president. "I hope you do not think me altogether a rash and misguided person," she wrote to Rosenwald who was loyally supporting the candidacy of his friend, the incumbent Republican president William Howard Taft. Julius later wrote to Addams that "in choosing the political course you did, against the advice of your friends, I have no hesitancy in admitting that I now believe that you acted wisely, and I was mistaken."



In her later years, Jane Addams devoted much of her energy to pacifism. She strongly resisted American participation in the first World War and in 1931 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. A telegram from Julius Rosenwald and his wife read "We send affectionate greetings and expressions of gratification and delight over the latest and deserved great honor just conferred on you."

In his biography of Julius Rosenwald, Peter Ascoli noted that Rosenwald believed that "blacks were inherently the equal of whites politically and economically and should be treated as such. This view set him apart from even the great majority of progressive Americans. In Chicago, only Jane Addams and the circle around her were known to hold similar views."

A Better Life for Their Children

Andrew Feiler is a fifth-generation Jewish Georgian who had never heard of Julius Rosenwald until a 2015 meeting with Jeanne Cyriaque, an expert on Rosenwald Schools. That transformative meeting inspired him to tell the story of the schools visually in the new book *A Better Life for Their Children: Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the 4,978 Schools that Changed America*.

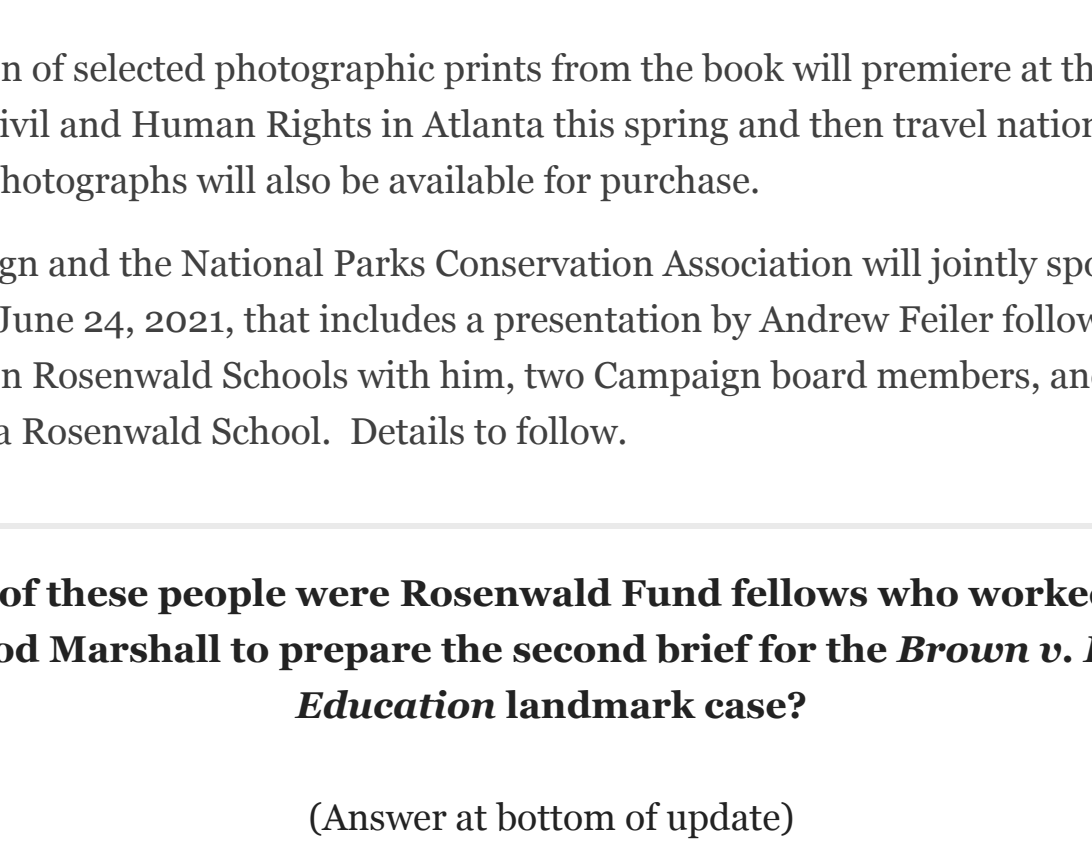
A Better Life for Their Children includes 85 black and white photographs of exteriors and interiors of schools, as well as portraits of people with unique, compelling connections to these schools. Brief narratives written by Feiler accompany each photograph.

The extraordinary stories in the book attest to the key importance of education as a liberating force and are especially relevant today. One example is the Cairo Rosenwald School, a one-teacher school built-in 1922-23 not far from Nashville, which was operated as a school until 1959. Six siblings of the Brinkley family attended the school, all of whom went to college. These siblings had ten children, and they all attended college. The school was restored in 2008 - 2009 and is now a community center. The original portrait of Julius Rosenwald still hangs over the door.



The stories also serve to preserve important history of the Civil Rights movement. Bay Springs Rosenwald School, a two-teacher school built in 1925 in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, served as a school until 1958. The land was donated by the grandfather of Vernon Dahmer Sr., who was the head of the NAACP in the area. Dahmer attended the school and later his wife, Ellie, taught there. Following closure of the school, the building was used for voter registration activities. On January 10, 1966, Dahmer was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan. The Imperial Wizard was finally brought to justice and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1998. In 2016 the Mississippi State legislature designated January 10 as Vernon Dahmer Day. Dahmer's son Dennis restored the school, now a community center.

"The book is a plea for preservation of these important structures, for they serve as a locus of memory and history" Feiler said during a recent presentation. "Booker T. Washington, Julius Rosenwald, and the African American communities that contributed so much to the construction of the schools collectively changed America, and in so doing, changed the world."



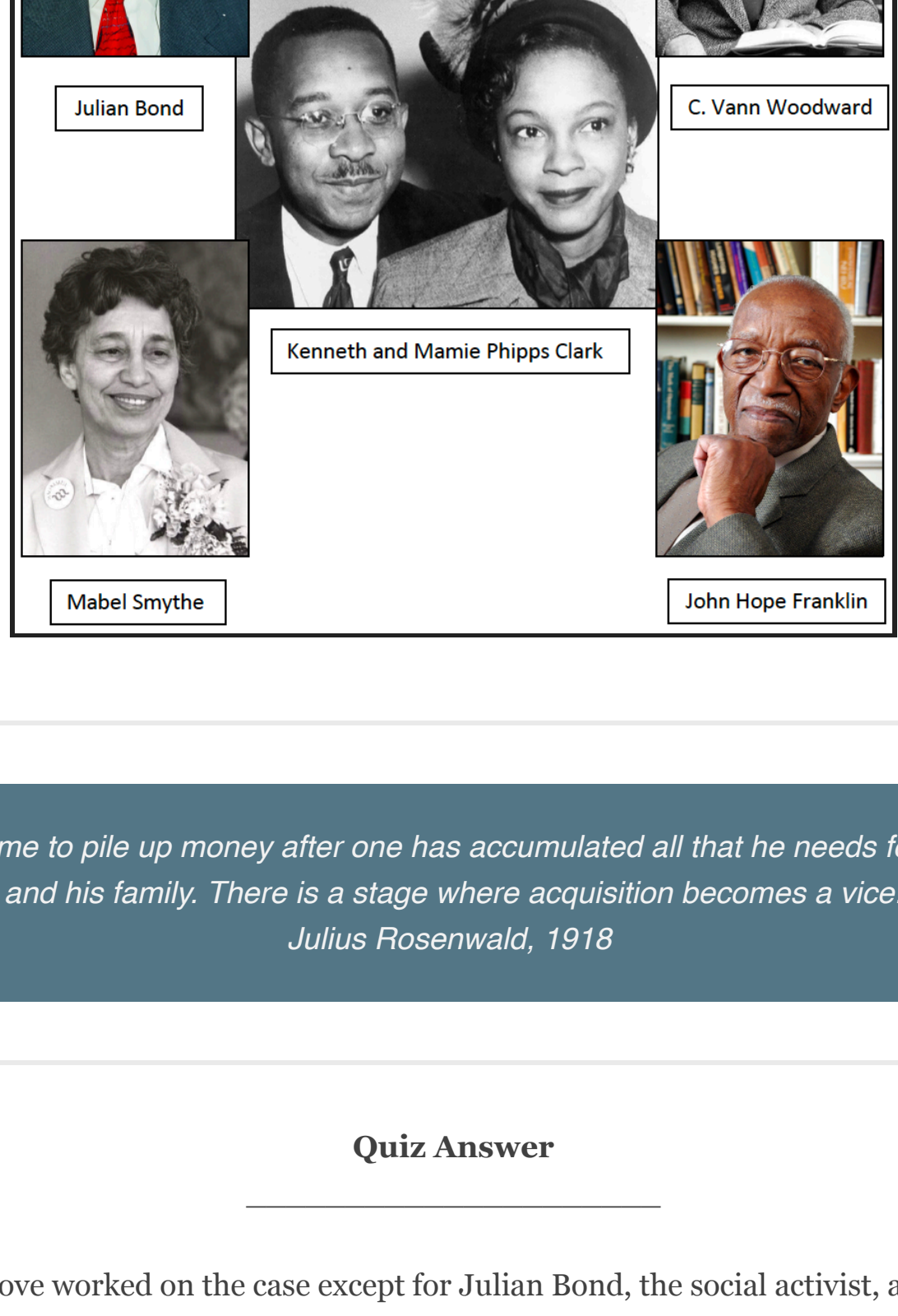
A Better Life for Their Children includes a foreword by the late Congressman John Lewis, who attended a Rosenwald School in Alabama.

An exhibition of selected photographic prints from the book will premiere at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta this spring and then travel nationally. Individual photographs will also be available for purchase.

The Campaign and the National Parks Conservation Association will jointly sponsor a webinar on June 24, 2021, that includes a presentation by Andrew Feiler followed by a discussion on Rosenwald Schools with him, two Campaign board members, and an alumnus of a Rosenwald School. Details to follow.

Which of these people were Rosenwald Fund fellows who worked under Thurgood Marshall to prepare the second brief for the *Brown v. Board of Education* landmark case?

(Answer at bottom of update)



It is a crime to pile up money after one has accumulated all that he needs for himself and his family. There is a stage where acquisition becomes a vice.
 Julius Rosenwald, 1918

Quiz Answer

All of the above worked on the case except for Julian Bond, the social activist, and leader of the Civil Rights movement, who was born in 1940. However, his father, Horace Mann Bond, an early Rosenwald fellow, did.

The husband and wife team Kenneth and Mamie Phipps Clark conducted a famous experiment showing dolls of different skin colors to African American children and determined that awareness of racial differences had a profoundly negative effect on their self-esteem and sense of identity. In 1940 the Rosenwald Fund awarded them a joint grant and then renewed Mamie Clark's fellowship for two more years of doctoral work, all of which provided the key psychological basis for the NAACP's argument against school segregation.

Historian C. Vann Woodward received a Rosenwald fellowship in 1940 for post-doctoral research. For the case, he focused on Reconstruction and its demise, which led to the Jim Crow era. John Hope Franklin's fellowships in 1937 and 1938 helped fund his doctoral studies at Harvard. He prepared a monograph for the legal team on the emergence of legally enforced segregation toward the end of the 19th century. Both Woodward and Franklin went on to become pre-eminent, widely respected American historians.

Economist Mabel Murphy Smythe received a Fellowship in 1941 toward her doctoral degree in labor economics and law at the University of Wisconsin. She served as the Deputy Director of Nonlegal Research of the team.

Horace Mann Bond's position paper for the NAACP Legal Defense team addressed the views of Congressmen and state legislators towards the application of the Fourteenth Amendment to public schools. He had a long association with the Rosenwald Fund, receiving fellowships in 1931 and 1932 that supported his doctoral studies in education. In 1945 he became president of Lincoln University.

Over a dozen Rosenwald Fellows brought their talents and professional accomplishments to building the case against segregation in education. This is a powerful example of the success of the Rosenwald Fund fellowship program in meeting a key goal of strengthening Black leadership to help bring about social change. The Fund's investment in people is still paying dividends today.

Stephanie Deutsch, editor

We need your support to continue.

For questions and suggestions, please write to info@rosenwaldpark.org.