

Spotlight: Charles P. Adams



Read about *Charles P. Adams*, a founder of Grambling State University, on the African American Registry website at the following link:

http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/charles-p-adams-educator-born

Then read the excerpt on the following page from Adams' autobiography. The Mr. Washington referred to in the biography is the renowned African American educator and leader Booker T. Washington (the founder of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, now known as Tuskegee University).

Now answer the following questions based on what you learned from both selections.

1. Where was Mr. Adams born and raised? Locate this place on a map of Louisiana. What large city is this place located near?
2. Where was he educated?
3. Why was he the perfect person, in your view, to help start up an agricultural school?
4. How did students to the school pay for things like room and board?
5. Knowing of their difficulty to pay, why do you think Booker T. Washington's motto of "work" (mentioned in the autobiography selection) even if you had to pay someone to let you work was so important to Adams during his tenure as the school's principal and later as the head of Grambling State University?
6. What was the lesson for students who Booker T. Washington told to work, "even if you had to pay someone to let you work?"
7. Mr. Adams mentions his many struggles at Grambling in the last paragraph of the excerpt. What struggles do you think Adams and his wife faced during their time there? Be specific, it may be necessary to conduct additional research in order to answer this question fully.



From Charles P. Adams'
Autobiography

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also a northerner. While I was waiting to come to Grambling, I went over to the plantation and talked with Mr. Burns about my future work. He told me that my uncle had not done so well with the place since I left. He further asked me to go back to the farm and start raising sugar cane again. He promised to advance me all the money I needed to operate my farm. He contended that the land was very poor in north Louisiana. I decided not to tell him what I would do. I sincerely intended to keep the promise I had made to Mr. Washington. Thus, in spite of what he had said I continued to plan to come to Grambling.

Mr. Washington told our class just before graduation that "you must work if you get paid and you must work if you don't get paid." "Work" was his motto. You had to work if you had to pay someone to let you work. My classmates and I discussed this all the way from the chapel to our rooms and even after going to bed. We thought this was the most awful thing any one could say, especially Mr. Washington. Yet, when I came to Grambling I used this very same motto - work without pay, work with pay and pay someone to let you work. As a matter of record I worked for seventeen years without pay.

All through my struggles here in Grambling I have not forgotten these statements made by Mr. Washington. I am very sure that it was that statement that made me stick through the thick and thin. As it was, there was more thin than thick. My wife and I took courage from Washington's words and they kept us going.

Porter
T. Washington

