



# The Clerk's Black History Series

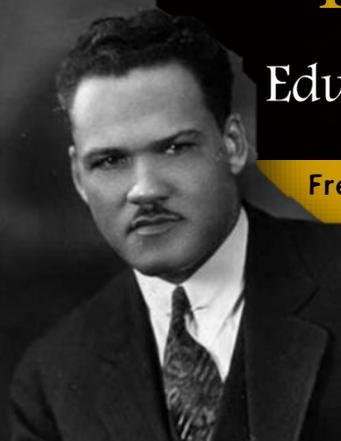
## Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



## Frederick Douglass Patterson

(October 10, 1901 – April 26, 1988)

Educator, Founder of the United Negro College Fund  
and Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipient



Frederick Douglass Patterson was born on October 10, 1901 in Washington, D.C. to Mamie Lucille and William Ross Patterson. He was named after the great orator, author and activist Frederick Douglass. In 1903, both of Frederick's parents succumb to tuberculosis leaving various family members of his family in Texas to care for him. Eventually his older sister Wilhemina took him in and enrolled him into private school - paying nearly half of her \$20 a month salary. Frederick thrived through Prairie View Normal and Industrial Institute (now Prairie View A&M University) and flourished in college, earning three advanced degrees, both a doctorate in veterinary medicine in 1923 as well as a Master of

Science in 1927. In 1928, he lead the Tuskegee veterinary division while working on his doctorate of philosophy. In 1932, he received his second doctorate from Cornell University and became the Director of the School of Agriculture. In early 1935, at the age of 33, Frederick became the third President of Tuskegee (Institute) University, following in the footsteps of the university's first president, Booker T. Washington. He married Catherine Elizabeth Moton, the daughter of Tuskegee University's second president, Dr. Robert R. Moton.

In 1944, Dr. Frederick D. Patterson founded the School of Veterinary Medicine at Tuskegee. Under his tenure, the veterinary program was so highly regarded that the state of Alabama granted funds for white students to study veterinary science there; this was a very unique occurrence in the segregated South. His efforts at Tuskegee transformed the university with such prestigious graduate programs that is still flourishes today. Tuskegee continues to graduate nearly 75 percent of African-American veterinarians.



Dr. Patterson also spearheaded the university's engineering program, allowing skilled African-Americans access to high level technical jobs across the nation. His interest in flying and subsequent flying lessons led him to train African - American youth to fly military airplanes in the late 1930's. His action not only encouraged the government to establish a training site but also a full air base in Tuskegee. History would recognize that nearly 1000 African-American's would complete their first training at Tuskegee Army Air Field. Half of the students of the Air training program served overseas during World War II as combat pilots. Known as the Tuskegee Airmen the pilots boasted a spotless record as not one bomber was lost to enemy planes in 1,500 missions. This feat contributed significantly to the eventual desegregation of the American armed forces.



On April 25, 1944, Dr. Patterson, recognizing the need for advancing education to lessen the poverty gap and to strengthen the financial stability of private black colleges, established the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). As a result of his work, Dr. Patterson received an invitation to sit on President Harry S. Truman's "President's Committee on Civil Rights" in 1946. The committee's efforts led to some historic developments such as Community College and Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which brought direct institutional support to America's smaller colleges and universities.



Dr. Patterson was later appointed as director at the Phelps-Stokes Fund, a philanthropic foundation primarily concerned with the education of African Americans from 1953 to 1958. He then served as president of the fund from 1958 to 1969. While there, he advocated for the education of African-Americans, Native Americans, Africans, and disadvantaged white youth. From 1964 - 1966, he served as president and CEO of the UNCF organization. On June 23, 1987, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Ronald Reagan in recognition of his lifetime of leadership and success in the educational field. On April 26, 1988, Dr. Frederick Douglass Patterson died of a heart attack at the age of 86 in New Rochelle, New York.

