

In the past, African Americans were not allowed to have an education. Despite the obstacles of slavery, segregation, and racism, some persistent African Americans were able to learn, to achieve their dreams, and to inspire other people. Two of these people are Phillis Wheatley and Martin Luther King, Jr. They put aside anger and fear and were determined to make a difference in the world.

Phillis Wheatley was a slave during the Revolutionary War. She was born in West Africa; she was taken from her family when she was about seven and shoved into a slave ship called the *Phillis*. The trip to Boston was treacherous; it was a miracle that she survived. Thankfully, when Phillis reached Boston, Susannah Wheatley saw Phillis and took pity on her. Phillis, wrapped in an old carpet and looking as if she was going to die, was scooped up by Mr. Wheatley. The Wheatleys named Phillis after the slave ship that brought her to Boston. Slaves often were given the last names of the slaveholders.

Mrs. Wheatley soon realized how smart Phillis was when she came downstairs and saw Phillis covered in white chalk. Mrs. Wheatley looked at her brand new wallpaper and saw that Phillis was trying to write the alphabet with the chalk. Susanna wasn't mad; she insisted that Phillis study. Mary, Susanna's daughter, tutored Phillis. Phillis learned different languages and read many books, including the Bible. Phillis began to write poems when she was about twelve. She eventually published poems about the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, and other affairs. The Wheatleys felt that Phillis's intelligence was a treasure.

Like Phillis Wheatley, Martin Luther King, Jr. studied the Bible and got an education even though he faced incredible difficulties. King was born in Atlanta, Georgia and had to go to a segregated school. The high school King attended was named after a very important African American named Booker T. Washington, who also encouraged African Americans to get an education. In high school, King was recognized as an excellent speaker and was on

the debate team. He studied very hard at school and graduated early. After winning an oratorical contest in high school, King and his teacher were on a bus traveling back to Atlanta, when they were ordered by the bus driver to stand up so white people could sit. King was outraged by this situation.

King began college when he was 15 years old because he passed the entrance exam for Morehouse College. The College was open to accepting juniors in high school if they could pass the exam because most college students had enlisted to serve in World War II. After graduating, King decided to become a minister so that he could help people and make positive social changes. He attended Crozer Theological Seminary and continued his study of religion at Boston University. Because of his education, King was able to make a difference in how African Americans were treated by giving the "I have a dream" speech and several important protests.

In conclusion, these two important African Americans were fortunate in that they were surrounded by people who valued their education. But, it wasn't just luck that led to their accomplishments, it was their perseverance and passion for making changes in the world. Phillis Wheatley was able to achieve her dream in poetry and writing, and Martin Luther King, Jr. achieved his dream of working toward civil rights. Education helped them express themselves and their strong beliefs about freedom and equality.