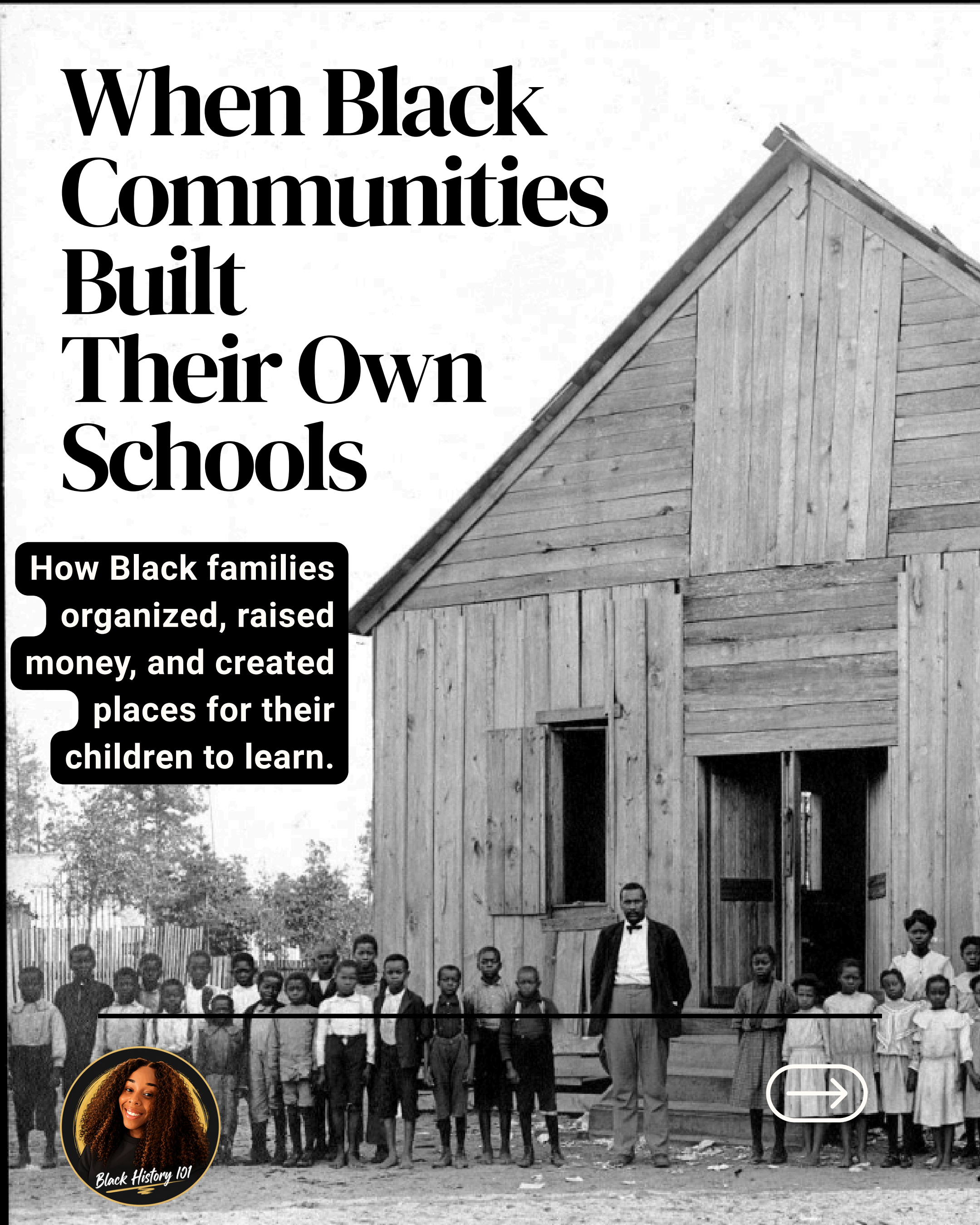


When Black Communities Built Their Own Schools

How Black families organized, raised money, and created places for their children to learn.



Parents Demanded Schools That Protected Their Children

1834 | Rochester, New York

BLACK CHILDREN FACED RACIAL HARASSMENT IN SCHOOL. IN RESPONSE, 32 BLACK RESIDENTS PETITIONED FOR A SEPARATE SCHOOL WHERE THEIR KIDS COULD LEARN WITHOUT HAVING TO DEAL WITH THAT. THESE FAMILIES PUSHED FOR EDUCATION WHILE ALSO REFUSING TO ACCEPT THE CONDITIONS THEIR CHILDREN WERE BEING FORCED TO ENDURE.



Organizing to Fund a School

1835 | Lockport, New York

BLACK RESIDENTS ORGANIZED TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND PROVIDE A PLACE TO WORSHIP. THEY SET OUT TO RAISE \$150 THROUGH SUBSCRIPTIONS TO BUILD SOMETHING THAT WOULD SERVE BOTH PURPOSES. BY POOLING WHAT THEY HAD AND APPEALING FOR SUPPORT, THEY BUILT A SCHOOL AROUND WHAT THEIR COMMUNITY NEEDED MOST.



Building Schools During the Civil War

1862–1863 | Roanoke Island, North Carolina

IN 1862, MARTHA CULLING, A FORMERLY ENSLAVED WOMAN, OPENED A SCHOOL THAT SERVED 120 STUDENTS A DAY. BLACK RESIDENTS CHIPPED IN WHAT LITTLE THEY HAD TO KEEP SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES RUNNING. BY 1863, SIX SCHOOLS WERE SERVING MORE THAN 1,200 CHILDREN AND ADULTS, EXPANDING ACCESS TO EDUCATION EVEN AS THE CIVIL WAR RAGED ON.



A Church Became a Classroom

After 1866 | Sharpsburg, Maryland

AFTER BUILDING TOLSON'S CHAPEL IN 1866, THE BLACK COMMUNITY USED THE CHURCH FOR SCHOOLING INSTEAD OF PAYING TO PUT UP A SEPARATE BUILDING. BOTH CHILDREN AND ADULTS ATTENDED CLASSES THERE.

FREEDMEN'S BUREAU-APPOINTED TEACHERS STARTED THE WORK, AND LOCAL BLACK TEACHERS EVENTUALLY TOOK IT OVER, KEEPING THE CHAPEL RUNNING AS A SCHOOL UNTIL 1899.



Communities Helped Build Thousands of Schools

1913–1930s | The South

IN 1913, BOOKER T. WASHINGTON AND JULIUS ROSENWALD TEAMED UP TO BUILD SIX SCHOOLS IN RURAL ALABAMA. AS THE PROGRAM GREW, BLACK COMMUNITIES RAISED THE MONEY TO KEEP BUILDING. BY THE EARLY 1930S, THAT PARTNERSHIP HAD SUPPORTED ROUGHLY 5,000 SCHOOLHOUSES ACROSS 15 STATES, GIVING BLACK CHILDREN UNDER SEGREGATION ACCESS TO FAR BETTER FACILITIES.



What Their Efforts Made Possible

RURAL BLACK STUDENTS WITH ACCESS TO ROSENWALD SCHOOLS STAYED IN SCHOOL OVER A YEAR LONGER THAN THOSE WITHOUT. RESEARCHERS ESTIMATE THESE SCHOOLS DROVE NEARLY 40% OF THE NARROWING OF THE BLACK-WHITE EDUCATION GAP FOR SOUTHERN STUDENTS BORN BETWEEN 1910 AND 1925.

THE NUMBERS SHOW THAT BLACK COMMUNITIES THAT FUNDED AND BUILT THEIR OWN SCHOOLS DIRECTLY EXPANDED OPPORTUNITY FOR THEIR CHILDREN.



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