

National Negro Business League ^[1]

National Negro Business League

by Robert C. Kenzer, 2006

See also: [Colored Merchants Association](#) ^[2]

The National Negro Business League was created by [Booker T. Washington](#) ^[3] in 1900 to encourage black entrepreneurs in the United States. While one of the most visible aspects of the league was its national leadership and structure, its foundation actually was based on local chapters at the municipal level that came together to form state organizations. By 1915 there were local chapters in 24 North Carolina communities, most of which had more than 1,000 residents.

The league primarily attracted the elite among North Carolina black businessmen. The cost of individual membership in the league, and the fact that participation in black fraternal societies such as the [Masons](#) ^[4] may have been more advantageous for black entrepreneurs, possibly discouraged many businessmen from joining. Prominent black businessmen who were leaders of the National Negro Business League in North Carolina included Richard Fitzgerald, owner of one of the state's largest brick-making firms; [Berry O'Kelly](#) ^[5], probably North Carolina's wealthiest black businessman during the early twentieth century; and [Charles C. Spaulding](#) ^[6], a director of the [North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company](#) ^[7].



The National Negro Business League at their annual meeting, 1909. Dr. Booker T. Washington at front center. Image from the North Carolina Digital Collections. ^[8]

Additional Resources:

Bernardo, Joseph. "National Negro Business League (1900 -)" BlackPast.org. <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aah/national-negro-business-league> ^[9] (accessed November 28, 2012).

"The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow: Jim Crow Stories: National Negro Business League" PBS.org. http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_org_business.html ^[10] (accessed November 28, 2012).

"National Negro Business League." Coolidge-Consumerism Collection, Library of Congress. <http://memory.loc.gov:8081/ammem/amrlhtml/dtnegbus.html> ^[11] (accessed November 28, 2012).

"The National Negro Business League." *An Era of progress and promise: The Clifton Conference* Priscilla Pub. Co. 1910. p.413. <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/u/?p249901coll37.4567> ^[12] (accessed November 28, 2012).

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Royal Photo Co. "The National Negro Business League Louisville, Ky., August 18, 1909." *An Era of progress and promise: The Clifton Conference*. Priscilla Pub. Co. 1910. p.413. <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll37/id/4566> ^[8] (accessed November 28, 2012).

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Authors:

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From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.^[17]

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