

## Source Packet Charlotte Hawkins Brown (1883 – 1961)

**“My philosophy is that position or place can never segregate mind or soul. I sit in the Jim Crow car, but my mind keeps company with the kings and queens I have known.”**

### I. Who Was Charlotte Hawkins Brown?

Charlotte Hawkins Brown was born in Henderson, NC in 1883, to the descendants of enslaved people. Her family moved to Cambridge, MA soon after to escape Jim Crow and segregationist practices of the South. She was an excellent student and in 1901, she returned to North Carolina to teach at a school for Black children in Sedalia. The next year she founded her own school, the **Palmer Memorial Institute**, which served Black students during segregation, when they were restricted from attending schools with white students. The boarding school became renowned as an excellent college preparatory school, one of the few such institutions in the nation for Black students.

Dr. Brown was also a dedicated **civil rights activist** and pioneer. Despite the Jim Crow laws and expectations that surrounded her, she often spoke out against and actively resisted such oppression, even at great risk. She openly refused to accommodate Jim Crow segregation in transportation. Long before the well-known actions of Rosa Parks, Dr. Brown was several times removed from railway cars and filed lawsuits for the violation of her rights.



Palmer Memorial Institute is now a historic site maintained by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

### II. Source Evaluations:

#### A. Video Excerpt on Charlotte Hawkins Brown, from *The Rise & Fall of Jim Crow* (5 min.)

- In what ways was Dr. Brown’s life “a balancing act.”
- The video states that Dr. Brown “... fought fights that people didn’t usually fight in those days, they just went along with the system. But if she could go against the system at any time, that’s what Dr. Brown did.” What examples does the video cite that illustrate this spirit of resistance?
- In what ways did Dr. Brown fight to give her students “something superior to Jim Crowism?”



<https://tinyurl.com/bdhwp9p>

**B. Excerpt from Dr. Brown's 1943 speech, "The Importance of Overcoming Discrimination"**

- What is Dr. Brown's main message in this speech?
- What, according to her, is the "Second Emancipation?"
- Dr. Brown specifically notes that Black people are not bitter, but they are what?
- How is this excerpt an example of what was mentioned in the previous video of her "going against the system?"

**C. Images from Palmer Memorial Institute**

- What strikes you about the images? What do you find most interesting?
- What do these images tell you about student life at Palmer Memorial Institute?

**D. A Grooming Guide for Boys**

- What do you think the purpose of this guide was?
- What might it tell you regarding Dr. Brown's philosophies or goals?

**III. Quote:** Consider Dr. Charlotte Hawkins Brown's words that are inscribed in NC Freedom Park, "My philosophy is that position or place can never segregate mind or soul. I sit in the Jim Crow car, but my mind keeps company with the kings and queens I have known." What message is she conveying? Why do you think the creators of NC Freedom Park selected this particular quote to include? What did they want us to know (about her, and/or about freedom generally?)

**IV. Discuss:**

- Based on everything you have analyzed and discussed, what five words or phrases would you use to describe Dr. Brown?
- What about Dr. Brown do you find inspiring and why?
- Why do you think Dr. Brown is included in Freedom Park?
- What questions would you like to ask her if you could?
- Why is Dr. Brown's life story important, both now and for as well as for future generations?

Excerpt from Dr. Brown's 1943 speech, "The Importance of Overcoming Discrimination"

PAGE 5 - THE IMPORTANCE OF OVERCOMING DISCRIMINATION

demonstrating the very Hitlerism you are seeking to destroy.

We ask not alms--we ask for opportunity; to share in the work of all kinds that is set to save a war-torn world, and in a post-war world to be given a man's and a woman's chance.

Have no fear, my dear women, that given an opportunity to share the toil, compensation for which will make it possible for us to maintain homes, to rear our children in a proper environment, to educate them for a post-war world, that we have any desire to invade your homes, or take undue liberties with your sons or your daughters. What the American Negro wants is <sup>participation in</sup> ~~his inherent rights~~ to the Four Freedoms which America calls ~~them~~ forth to defend. Freedom to work wherever work is needed will usher in for ~~them~~ a second Emancipation which ~~their~~ loyalty and love for America deserve.

We are not bitter, but we are <sup>near</sup> ~~tired~~ of having patience preached to us. We are not disillusioned; we know what we want, and we realize that the ~~dominant races~~ <sup>you they</sup> are slaves to fear ~~so long as they~~ <sup>who</sup> keep their feet on the necks of darker people struggling to rise.

There can be no lasting peace for the peoples of this world so long as the white race ~~seeks~~ to deprive the darker people of their God-given rights to live, to work, to have the education, the leisure, the culture that they covet for themselves.

Thirteen million Negroes appeal to you through me today, to take the lead in not only lifting the ban yourselves, but beg you to cast your votes for FREEDOM for black people throughout the length and breadth of this nation.

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Palmer Institute Students at Memorial Hall, 1910 - [Source](#)



Palmer Institute Girls Tennis Class, 1927 - [Source](#)



Palmer Institute French Club, [Source](#)



Palmer Institute Baseball Team, 1920 - [Source](#)



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A GROOMING THOUGHT

Finally, remember that of all the things you wear, your expression is the most important. Try to look and feel interested in things other than yourself. Touch up your face with a smile. You are never fully dressed without it.

---Allen

- Compiled by Arthur Fisher

W H A T T O W E A R  
Academic School Days

MONDAY

Ensemble A  
Sport Coat, Sport Slacks, White Shirt or Colored Dress Shirt, Tie, Matching Socks, Shoes.

Ensemble B  
Suit (acceptable but not preferred) White Shirt or Colored Dress Shirt, Tie, Matching Socks, Shoes.

TUESDAY

Ensemble C  
Sport Coat, Sport Slacks, Sport Shirt, Matching Socks, Shoes.

WEDNESDAY

Ensemble D  
Palmer Blazer, Oxford Gray or Black Slacks, White Shirt, Black or Maroon Tie, Black Shoes, Socks (Black or Maroon).

THURSDAY

Ensemble E  
Sport Coat, Sport Slacks, Sport Shirt, Matching Socks, Shoes.

FRIDAY

Ensemble F  
Blue Suit, White Shirt, Dark Tie, Dark Socks, White Handkerchief, and Black Shoes.

DRESS FOR VARIOUS OCCASIONS

CHURCH

On Campus Ensemble  
Suit, White Shirt, Matching Tie, Handkerchief, Dark Socks, and Dark Shoes.

Off-Campus Ensemble

Same

MOVIES, DANCES, ETC.

Sport Coat, Sport Slacks, Sport Shirt, Socks, Shoes.

CULTURAL PROGRAMS, BIRTHDAY DINNERS

\*Dark Suit, White shirt, Dark Tie, Dark Socks, Dark Shoes.

\*NOTE: ALSO WORN FOR OFF CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

SHOPPING

Ensemble A  
Sport Coat, Slacks, white or Colored Dress Shirt, Tie, Socks and Shoes.

Ensemble B

Suit, white or Colored Shirt, Tie, Socks and Shoes.

TRAVEL

When traveling as a performing group, the following is worn:

Palmer Blazer, White Shirt, Maroon or Black Tie, Gray or Black Slacks, Black Socks, and Black Shoes.

VACATIONS:

Thanksgiving, Christmas, Week-ends, Etc.

Suit, White Shirt, Matching Tie, Handkerchief, Matching Socks, Shoes - Dark Brown, Black, or Cordovan.

Grooming Guide for Boys, Palmer Memorial Institute - [Source](#)