Equal parts educator, politician, and social visionary, Mary McLeod Bethune was one of the most prominent African American women of the first half of the twentieth century—and one of the most powerful. Between 1936 and 1944 Bethune was director of Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration (NYA) and chair of an informal Black Cabinet, a group of federally appointed black officials who met regularly to plan strategy and set black priorities for social change. Using her clout as a top-ranking African American administrator in the Roosevelt administration, Bethune lobbied for African American concerns and was instrumental in seeing that African Americans received help from the federal government. Bethune founded the National Council for Negro Women in 1935, established the organization's flagship journal Aframerican Women's Journal,[3][4] and resided as president or leader for myriad African American women's organizations including the National Association for Colored Women and the National Youth Administration's Division of Negro Affairs.[5] She also was appointed as a national adviser to president. Marian Anderson celebrated contralto and Mary McLeod Bethune, Director of Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration at the launching of the SS Booker T. Washington with unidentified workers who helped construct the first Liberty ship named for an African American at the California Shipbuilding Corporation's yards by Alfred T. Palmer. Mary McLeod Bethune was an educator and activist, serving as president of the National Association of Colored Women and founding the National Council of Negro Women. She founded the National Council of Negro Women in 1935. Bethune died in 1955. Early Life. Born Mary Jane McLeod on July 10, 1875, in Mayesville, South Carolina, Mary McLeod Bethune was a leading educator and civil rights activist. In 1936, she became the director of the Division of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration.