

## History Conference Highlights 100th Anniversary of Booker T. Washington's Autobiography

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GAINESVILLE, FL— UF's Department of History is sponsoring "Reconsidering *Up From Slavery*," a conference marking the 100th anniversary of Booker T. Washington's autobiography this Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Washington is widely recognized as one of the leading black figures of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and until the publication of the autobiography of Malcolm X, *Up From Slavery* was the most widely read and reprinted black autobiography. It was translated into numerous languages and is perhaps the most sophisticated example of the "rags to riches" genre that was hugely popular in late 19th-century America.

The 100th anniversary of the book's publication provides an ideal opportunity to bring together seven leading scholars from around the country and UF faculty to discuss Washington and the significance of his autobiography. The enduring legacy of the conference will be the publication of the papers presented at the conference by the University Press of Florida.

The scholars, including several prize-winning historians, will speak on a range of topics regarding Booker T. Washington and *Up From Slavery*, including Washington's controversial visit to Gainesville, Florida in 1903 to speak to a state meeting of school superintendents. The trip to Gainesville was full of irony because William N. Sheats, the superintendent of schools in Florida who was known for making inflammatory comments about race for his political advantage, asked Washington to attend. Washington thought the invitation meant more acceptance of his philosophies, however, Sheats lost the next year's state superintendent election to an opponent whose main campaign issue was Sheats' cozy relationship with Washington. The controversy and political upheaval surrounding Washington's visit to Gainesville 98 years ago is a reminder of the tortured race relations of the era and the difficult path Washington chose to navigate in his campaign for racial equality.

For more information about the conference, please visit the conference webpage at:  
<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/brundage/btwconference.html>.

### Conference Schedule:

#### Thursday, October 4

8:00 p.m.—Opening session and roundtable discussion, Flint Hall, room 50

Friday, October 5 (Friday's lectures will take place in Flint Hall, room 229)

9:00 a.m.—"*Up From Slavery* in its Intellectual and Historical Context"

1:00 p.m.— "Rethinking *Up From Slavery* and Washington's Legacy"

3:00 p.m.— "Washington's Obsessions and Silences: Respectability and Women"

#### Saturday, October 6

9:30 a.m.—Concluding overview and open discussion, Flint Hall, room 005