

## A Challenge to Aim High

My hometown of Cookeville in Middle Tennessee, up on the Cumberland Plateau, was about 45 miles from McMinnville, another small town and a place I sometimes visited.

One of its most famous citizens was Carl Rowan, the son of Johnnie, a cook and cleaner, and Thomas Rowan, who stacked lumber. Carl was determined to get a good education, and graduated from Bernard High School in 1942 as class president and valedictorian. He studied at Tennessee State University and Washburn University, and was one of the first African Americans to serve as a commissioned officer in the United States Navy. He graduated from Oberlin College and was awarded a master's degree in journalism from the University of Minnesota.

In government, Rowan was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State under President John F. Kennedy, and then a delegate to the United Nations during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Among other posts, he was U.S. Ambassador to Finland in 1963. But it was as a journalist that he claimed national fame. His columns were published in more than 100 newspapers across the United States.

In his autobiography, *Breaking Barriers*, Rowan told about a teacher who greatly influenced his life. "Miss Frances Thompson reached into her desk drawer and pulled out a piece of paper containing a quote attributed to Chicago architect Daniel Burnham," he wrote. "I listened intently as she read: 'Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans, aim high in hope and work. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us.'"



More than 30 years later, Rowan said he gave a speech "in which I said that Frances Thompson had given me a desperately needed belief in myself. A newspaper printed the story, and someone mailed the clipping to my beloved teacher. She wrote me:

*You have no idea what that newspaper story meant to me. For years, I endured my brother's arguments that I had wasted my life ... When I read that you gave me credit for helping to launch a marvelous career, I put the clipping in front of my brother. After he read it, I said, 'You see, I didn't really waste my life, did I?'"*

Rowan was emotionally moved by her reply. And why not? For Frances Thompson, the assurance that she had made a meaningful investment in the quality of that one life – not to mention the many others that she no doubt touched in a similar way – validated the worth of her existence on this earth.

(more)

Consider the important role you have been given in Life Care and Century Park. You have the power – the kind that Frances Thompson had – to motivate and inspire those you lead.

Challenge them to dream big – “to make no little plans ... to aim high in hope and work.”

The Bible encourage all of us to do so.

*Now glory be to God, who by His mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of – infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts or hopes (Ephesians 3:20 TLB).*

– Beecher Hunter