



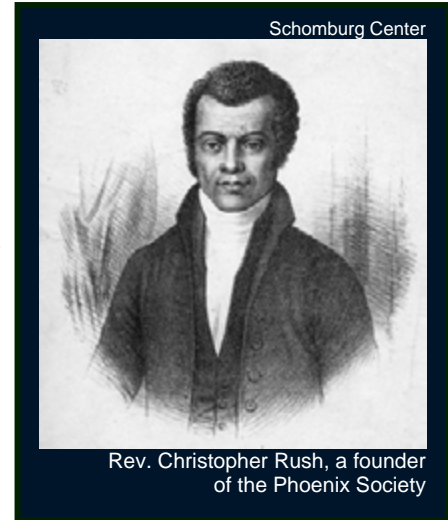
Goals of THE PHOENIX SOCIETY of New York

The Liberator, 29 June 1833

In 1833 several black leaders in New York City formed the Phoenix Society to promote the education of the city's African Americans — children and adults alike — through classes, lectures, lending libraries, job centers, and the mutual support needed to pursue these goals. The Society began several programs yet folded later in the decade for lack of funds. Other black mutual aid and literary societies in the city continued to pursue the goals envisioned by the Phoenix Society.

THIS SOCIETY WILL AIM TO ACCOMPLISH THE FOLLOWING OBJECTS:

- T**o visit every family in the ward [city district], and make a register of every colored person in it — their name, sex, age, occupation, if they read, write and cypher [do arithmetic];
- T**o induce them, old and young, and of both sexes, to become members of this Society, and make quarterly payments according to their ability;
- T**o get the children out to infant, Sabbath, and week schools and induce the adults also to attend school and church on the Sabbath;
- T**o ascertain those persons who are able to subscribe for a newspaper that advocates the cause of immediate abolition of slavery and the elevation of the colored population to equal rights with the whites;
- T**o encourage the females to form Dorcas Societies [groups, usually church-based, formed to collect clothing for the poor];
- T**o help to clothe poor children of color, if they will attend school — the clothes to be loaned, and taken away from them if they neglect their schools, and to impress on the parents the importance of having the children punctual and regular in their attendance at school;
- T**o establish circulating libraries, formed in each ward, for the use of people of color, on very moderate pay;
- T**o establish mental feasts [meetings for “intellectual cultivation and improvement” (*The Liberator*)¹], and also lyceums for speaking and for lectures on the sciences; and to form moral societies [groups promoting members’ ethical conduct, often including temperance and church attendance];
- T**o seek out young men of talents and good moral character, that they may be assisted to obtain a liberal education;
- T**o report to the Board all mechanics who are skillful and capable of conducting their trades to procure places at trades, and with respectable farmers, for lads of good moral character — giving preference to those who have learned to read, write and cypher;
- A**nd in every other way to endeavor to promote the happiness of the people of color, by encouraging them to improve their minds and to abstain from every vicious and demoralizing practice.



National Humanities Center, 2007: nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/. In Herbert Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1951), 140-141. Copyright © 1969 by Herbert Aptheker. Permission pending. Footnotes and formatting added. Complete image credits at nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/imagecredits.htm.

¹ Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 78.