

MAY 3, 1952

MY DAY

(TR. MK. REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.)

By Eleanor Roosevelt

(WORLD COPYRIGHT, 1952, BY UNITED FEATURE SYNDICATE, INC.  
REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART PROHIBITED.)

NEW YORK, Friday. -- A few days ago I read a newspaper account here that shocked me. A group of people, evidently without much knowledge, had so frightened a school organization in Englewood, N.J., that the school rescinded an invitation to speak which it had extended to Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune.

It seemed to me so preposterous that I waited day by day to see if they had reconsidered, apologized and invited her again to come. But I have seen nothing further, and I cannot let this incident go by without protesting such treatment of an elderly woman who is a leader among the American colored citizens and loved and admired by all American citizens who know her.

Mrs. Bethune is probably a little older than I am. She really worked for her education, and when she had obtained it, literally on a shoestring, she founded a college in Florida to help Negro people. Hundreds of people have helped her because one could not meet her and not recognize her sincerity, her deep and simple Christianity. She has built up this university.

She has headed and worked for the Negro Council of Women, and made it into a strong organization. She has the gift of getting people to cooperate with her. She is the kindest, gentlest person I have every met.

She lent her talents to the Federal service in the National Youth Administration during my husband's Administration, and there are countless other positions and responsibilities that she has taken and filled with honor both for her country, for organizations and for individuals. She is the last person that I can imagine any thinking person would believe to be a Communist.

This is again that pernicious thing that we are allowing to bedevil us--guilt by association.

She is accused I believe, of having gone to Communist-front organizations to speak, even of having belonged to some of these subversive groups.

If she did belong to any, I am sure with her keen mind she soon discovered something wrong and was not a member for long. If she went to them to speak, she undoubtedly did them good. Mary McLeod Bethune would meet the devil and confront him with Christ and I would feel quite sure that she and Christ would triumph.

If it were not so sad to have respected and beloved American citizen insulted and slighted, it would be funny. But those of us who have loved and known Mrs. Bethune for many years, must speak up in her defense. If we do not, then this country of ours is in danger of curtailing the liberties for which our forefathers fought.

I still believe that people should be considered innocent until they are proved guilty under the law. I still think that a life of work and service should carry some weight against the idle accusations of a group of extremists.

I know the danger of Communists in this country, and I know the subversives can do us harm. But it does us much more harm to tear down the fabric of justice and fairness and trust in our fellow human beings/<sup>who</sup> have a life record to disprove an idle accusation.

E. R.