

## Dr. Charles Richard Drew

Charles Richard Drew was born in Washington, D.C. on June 3, 1904 to Thomas and Nora Drew. Dr Drew's mother quit her job as a teacher after he was born to care for him and her other children.

Charles attended Stevens Elementary School and Paul Dunbar High School. He lettered on the football, baseball, basketball, and track teams and won the *James. E. Walker Memorial Medal* as the school's outstanding all-around athlete. The family also lived close to a farm where horses were raised and trained. Charles loved spending time at the farm after school. He became an expert rider and learned how to care for and groom the horses.

Charles attended Amherst College and after graduation in 1926, he taught biology for two years at Morgan State University. He entered medical school at McGill University in Montreal in 1929 and graduated second in his class in 1933. While at McGill, he was elected to the *Alpha Omega Alpha National Honor Society* for medical students and also starred on the track team.

After graduation, Dr. Drew returned to Washington D.C. to serve a surgical residency at Howard University's Freedman's Hospital. In 1938 he attended Columbia University on a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship. In 1940 Dr. Drew became the first African American to earn a *Doctor of Science in Medicine Degree*, (M.D. Sc.). Dr. Drew's doctoral thesis involved research into the properties and preservation of blood plasma. His thesis, "*Banked Blood*" established Dr. Drew as the leading authority on the preservation of blood plasma.

During the early years of World War II the British were in desperate need of blood for their wounded soldiers and in 1940 Dr Drew was chosen to lead the *Blood for Britain* program. Dr Drew arranged for plasma to be flown to Great Britain and set up several blood banks in the country.

In 1941 Dr Drew was chosen to lead the American Red Cross blood bank program, however a War Department directive stated that, "*It is not advisable to indiscriminately mix Caucasian and and Negro blood for use in blood transfusions for the U.S. Military*". Dr Drew protested against this blood segregation (**which has no basis in scientific fact**) and as a result was forced to resign his position. (*The United States Military did not end segregation of it's blood supplies until 1949*).

Following his service in World War II Dr Drew returned to Howard University where he taught until his death in 1950. Dr Drew also served as Chief of Surgery at Freedmen's Hospital and was elected to the *International College of Surgeons* in 1946. He was appointed as a surgical consultant for the Army's European Theater of Operations in 1949.

Dr. Charles Richard Drew was killed in an automobile accident after giving a speech at the Tuskegee Institute on April 1, 1950. The Charles R. Drew Postgraduate Medical School was established in California in 1966.

**Sources:**

*Encyclopedia Britannica*

*Encyclopedia Africana*