



## A Few Facts and Some Comments

Born into poverty, Burroughs suffered discrimination both as a woman and because of her dark skin – the latter from her own people at a time when light skin was considered more socially acceptable. But, she rose above these obstacles. “They tell me my grandmother, Maria Poindexter, would say: *Yes, honey, I was in slavery, but I wasn’t no slave. I was just in it... They slaved my body, but they didn’t slave my mind.*”

She was drawn to her high school teachers who were smart, organized, walked with good posture, required obedience, and kept her engaged. The teachers were equally impressed with her abilities and determination and encouraged critical thinking and reasoning rather than rote learning.

Her life teaches our children *How to Think, not What to Think*, emphasizing the importance of recognizing opportunity, accepting responsibility, and seizing the challenge. She lived by three rules given to her by her father: “Nannie, you should never steal, always tell the truth, and do what you’re told to do the best you can and in a hurry.”

- “I am Somebody---I am a moulder of character in dynamic Nannie Burroughs” - Dr. William Holmes Borders, Morehouse College Department of Religion, circa 1954. The complete poem set to music with commentary by 20<sup>th</sup> century African American luminaries is available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-6JcyLrmHE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-6JcyLrmHE)
- “...I wanted to go up the rough side of the mountain, because I knew I would get to the top. But, if I went up the smooth side, I might slide back down...” *Nannie Helen Burroughs, first female spring commencement speaker at Tuskegee Institute, 1934.*
- “My mom raised me to be successful and not to be a knucklehead and do the wrong things. She still talks to me this day about those things...I try to act as a man of character if no one is watching me or if the world is watching me.” Deshaun Watson, Quarterback, Clemson University Football.  
<http://bleacherreport.com/articles/2657066-deshaun-watson-hates-dual-threat-qb-code-word-wants-to-be-face-of-cfb>
- “It’s crazy how much pride people have when it’s something they worked for and not something they’re given.” Warrick Dunn, NFL Running Back.  
<http://collegefootball.ap.org/article/keys-home-gave-deshaun-watson-and-family-new-start>
- After her speech, a white woman rose to her feet and exclaimed. “I do not deal in superlatives, but Miss Burroughs has given a matchless address. She is not only up-to-date in her understanding and analyses of great questions, but she is 50 years ahead of her time.” *Women’s club meeting, Lakeland, Florida 1934. Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress*
- “Miss Burroughs’ influence over her people can hardly be estimated... Measured, not as a Negro woman, but as a woman, she had extraordinary ability and her living faith in God and in all her children, of whatever race, her spirit of service and sacrifice energized her gifts as only faith and love can do.” *A Final Tribute - 1964 Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress*