

Overcoming Obstacles

When Benjamin Banneker was 60 years of age, President George Washington appointed him to a three-man team of surveyors headed by Andrew Ellicott to survey what was to become Washington D.C. On March 12, 1791, this quote was found in the Georgetown Weekly Ledger:

Benjamin Banneker is “an Ethiopian whose abilities as surveyor and astronomer proved that Mr. [Thomas] Jefferson’s concluding that that race of men were void of mental endowment was without foundation.”

Being the son and grandson of former slaves, Banneker was always having to deal with prejudice and unfairness. However, instead of lowering his head and bearing the shame of being Black, he embraced his heritage and fought hard in the battle for equality and justice for minorities.

- **Banneker dedicated his almanacs to the cause of equality and peace. He wanted to show by example that African- Americans were as intellectually gifted as any other race of people.**
- **Based on Banneker’s work seen in the journal he sent with the letter to Thomas Jefferson, he was appointed an astronomer on**

the team of surveyors that drew up the outline for the new nation's capital.

- **Banneker used his reputation to promote social change; namely to eliminate racism and war.**
- **The Benjamin Banneker Association 's motto is: "To enrich the lives of African American Students with Mathematical experiences and to encourage their success in mathematics.**
- **Because of all of Banneker's work in astronomy and mathematics, not to mention his effort to save the plans for Washington, D.C., the United States Postal Service issued a stamp in his honor in 1980**