

# RUTH BATSON



Ruth Batson was born on August 3, 1921, in Roxbury, Massachusetts to Jamaican immigrants. Growing up, Batson attended the Everett School and graduated from Boston Latin Academy. In 1940, Batson married her husband, John Batson, and raised three daughters who all attended school in Boston.

The lack of educational reform and the growing decline of Boston schools led Batson to run for School Committee in 1951. Although she was not elected, her campaign resulted in a partnership with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and increased her involvement in politics. Batson volunteered to work for John F. Kennedy's office during his first campaign for the Senate, and again when he ran for president in 1960. During this time, Batson was also elected president of the NAACP New England Regional Conference. In 1964, Batson became the first African-American woman to be elected to the Democratic National Committee.

During the Civil Rights movement, Batson formally accused the Boston School Committee of enforcing "de facto segregation" within their schools. She organized a series of marches, protests, and boycotts with urban and suburban families to raise public awareness of the issue. Her efforts led to the creation of the Racial Imbalance Act of 1965, which penalized schools by withholding state and federal funding if they remained segregated and unequal.

At the same time, Batson and fellow parent Ellen Jackson established the beginnings of the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) Program, arranging transportation for students in Boston to attend schools in neighboring suburban districts with open seats. Support from Brookline, Newton, Wellesley, Arlington, Braintree, Lincoln, and Lexington Public Schools soon followed. In 1966, with Brookline as a charter community, the METCO program was officially established with federal grant funding and legislation that supported open enrollment. As their executive director, Batson expanded the program to transport over 1000 children to 28 communities in Massachusetts.

In 1969, Batson stepped down from METCO to establish the Ruth M. Batson Educational Foundation, which awards grants to African-American students, educational institutions, and community organizations. Batson worked as an associate professor at the Boston University School of Medicine from 1970 to 1986 and was also the executive director of the Museum of African-American History in Boston from 1986 to 1989.

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