

The Success of African American Entrepreneurs

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African American entrepreneurs have achieved significant success in various industries while breaking barriers in the business world. Annie Malone is one of the notable African American entrepreneurs because she successfully developed black hair products and didn't even graduate high school. She attended Peoria high school in Illinois. She was absent a lot of the time due to sickness but realized she was good at chemistry. Annie enjoyed styling her own hair and her sister's hair. She wanted to find a way to straighten their hair to fit in with American beauty standards. She believed this was a way to improve African American women's standing in society. Despite segregation and sexism, Annie was able to develop and market a hair care product that straightened black hair without causing damage. She was denied access to traditional distribution centers because she was a black woman. So, she sold products door to door and visited black churches and community centers. Annie also developed and patented the pressing comb which is still being used today. She expanded her business by training women to be local sales agents everywhere she went. In 1918, Annie started the Poro college. It was a cosmetics school that trained African American women to style hair. It also provided a space for African Americans and black organizations to meet. The Poro college employed 175 people and franchised outlets in North and South America, Africa, and the Philippines employed approximately 75,000 women. During the 1920s, Annie's Poro brand flourished making her one of the wealthiest African American women. She was committed to social welfare and used her wealth to give back to her community. She donated large amounts of money to countless charities and she donated the site for the St. Louis Colored Orphans' Home. She also raised money for the orphanage and served on their executive board from 1919 to 1943. In 1946, The orphanage was renamed as the Annie Malone Children's Home.