

◆◆◆◆◆ NORTH CAROLINA ENTREPRENEURS ◆◆◆◆◆

HIRAM RHODES REVELS: TEACHER, PASTOR, SENATOR, AND ENTREPRENEUR!

◆ **Learning Outcome:** *Students can describe how Hiram Rhodes Revels served the people of the United States before, during, and after the Civil War.* ◆



Hiram Rhodes Revels

Hiram Rhodes Revels was born in 1827 in Fayetteville, North Carolina. He was a free black person at a time when most black people in the United States were enslaved. His parents were also free. They worked hard to provide him with an education, which Mr. Revels put to good use. Mr. Revels was constantly looking for ways to help others. He became a minister and a teacher before the Civil War. He was active in organizing black Union troops during the Civil War. After the war, he became a member of the state legislature of Mississippi. He was the first black man to serve in the United States Senate.

Most entrepreneurs start businesses. But some entrepreneurs use their skills to achieve success and help people in other ways. For example, Mr. Revels used the skills of an entrepreneur to succeed and help other people as a teacher, a minister, and a political leader.

Mr. Revels attended a school for young black people in North Carolina, but he wanted more education, so he went north. He attended Beech Grove Quaker Seminary in the state of Indiana and Darke County Seminary in the state of Ohio. In 1845, he was **ordained** (appointed) as a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. As a minister, he traveled around the country, preaching in eight states.

During the Civil War, Mr. Revels organized two **regiments** (military units) of soldiers for the Union Army in Maryland and Missouri. While he was in Missouri, he also set up a school for black children. Later he served as a chaplain for the Union Army.

After the war, Mr. Revels became a minister in the town of Natchez, Mississippi. He also was chosen to be an **alderman** (a member of the city's Legislative Branch) in Natchez and was then elected to Mississippi's state legislature. Because this was the **Reconstruction** period (1865–1877) immediately following the Civil War, black people were not prevented from voting and serving in office in the South. (This freedom would be taken away again after 1877.) Throughout the Reconstruction period, Mr. Revels was admired for his powerful voice and eloquence in speaking.

The Mississippi state legislature chose Mr. Revels to represent Mississippi in the U.S. Senate. In 1871, the state was just rejoining the Union after it had fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Mr. Revels was chosen to finish out the term of a senator who had not been present in the Senate since the Civil War started. Instead of serving for six years (the full Senate term), Senator Revels served for one year until the next scheduled election. In the Senate he was respected

VOCABULARY WORDS

- ◆ Ordained
- ◆ Regiments
- ◆ Alderman
- ◆ Reconstruction

as a moderate person who had the interest of both blacks and whites at heart. After serving in the Senate, Senator Revels became president of Alcorn University, a university for blacks in Mississippi. It still exists today as Alcorn State University.

READING REVIEW QUESTIONS:

What characteristics made Hiram Revels an entrepreneur, even though he did not create a business?

Describe three things that Hiram Revels did to help others during the Civil War.

How did Hiram Revels serve the people of the state of Mississippi in the years immediately following the Civil War?
