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## **Bullock Museum highlights the legacy of Rosenwald schools with new exhibition**

Photographs by Andrew Feiler and artifacts from Texas schools tell story of Rosenwald schools that educated the Civil Rights generation

**OCTOBER 22, 2024 (AUSTIN, TX)** — *A Better Life for Their Children: Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the 4,978 Schools that Changed America* opened at the Bullock Texas State History Museum on Saturday, October 19. The bilingual exhibition tells the unique history of Rosenwald schools through photographs and stories by contemporary photographer Andrew Feiler, as well as artifacts from Texas Rosenwald schools.

From 1912 to 1937, the Rosenwald schools program sought to combat the racial education gap in the segregated South. Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck & Company and one of the earliest and greatest philanthropists in American history, and Booker T. Washington, first president and principal developer of the Tuskegee Institute, partnered with Black communities to build 4,978 schools across 15 southern and border states. Texas was a major beneficiary of the Rosenwald program, receiving funds that led to the construction of approximately 466 schools as well as homes for teachers and industrial shops in 82 different counties. These schools drove dramatic educational improvements for African Americans and fostered the generation who became leaders of the Civil Rights Movement.



"We're so pleased to bring this little-known but inspirational story to the forefront as our special exhibition this fall," said Margaret Koch, Director at the Bullock Museum. "Through Andrew Feiler's photographs and the preservation efforts of former students and descendants of the Rosenwald school legacy, we hope our visitors will reflect on the power of investing in an educational structure that strengthened communities, broke through racial stereotypes, and created leaders on both local and national levels."

Of the original 4,978 Rosenwald schools constructed across the South, only about 500 survive. While some have been repurposed and a handful are still active schools, many remain unrestored and at risk of collapse. To tell this story, Andrew Feiler drove more than 25,000 miles, photographed 105 schools, and interviewed dozens of former students, teachers, preservationists, and community leaders in all 15 of the program states. The exhibition features 23 of Feiler's black and white photographs of Rosenwald Schools and accompanying stories.

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In addition to the photographs and narratives written by Feiler, the Bullock Museum seeks to add to Texas' part of the story through artifacts borrowed from Hopewell School in Cedar Creek, Columbia School in West Columbia and Pleasant Hill School in Linden. Artifacts include a school desk, 1950s vending machine and a Smith-Corona typewriter used by teachers to type up exams. Also in the exhibition is a portrait featured in one of Feiler's photographs. The portrait depicts Martin McDonald and Sophia Veal, formerly enslaved Texans who donated land for the construction of the Hopewell Rosenwald School in 1919.

Despite their large impact in the South, the story of the Rosenwald schools is not widely known. Through this exhibition, the Bullock Museum hopes to bring awareness to this important part of Texas history.

"Education is the backbone of the American Dream, the onramp to American opportunity, and the Rosenwald schools are an important milestone in this most essential of American legacies," said Feiler. "It's a great privilege to be able to work in partnership with the Bullock to help bring people into this important history through stories and photographs."

The Bullock Museum will run a full programs of events centered around the exhibition, including talks by Feiler, a screening of *Rosenwald*, a documentary film produced by Aviva Kempner, family activities and Bullock Member events.

*A Better Life for Their Children: Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the 4,978 Schools that Changed America* is on view at the Bullock Museum through February 23, 2025. The exhibit is presented in both English and Spanish. For more information, visit [TheStoryofTexas.com](http://TheStoryofTexas.com).

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*A Better Life for Their Children: Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the 4,978 Schools that Changed America*

Photographs and Stories by Andrew Feiler

The Bullock Museum, a division of the Texas State Preservation Board, is funded by Museum members, donors, and patrons, the Texas State History Museum Foundation, and the State of Texas.

## **ABOUT THE BULLOCK MUSEUM**

The Bullock Texas State History Museum, a division of the State Preservation Board and an accredited institution of the American Alliance of Museums, illuminates and celebrates Texas history, people, and culture. With dynamic, award-winning exhibitions, educational programming for all ages, and an IMAX® theater with one of the largest screens in Texas, the Museum collaborates with more than 700 museums, libraries, archives and individuals across the world to bring the Story of Texas to life.