

Hugh M. Browne

Hugh Mason Browne (1851–1923) was an educator who worked with such prominent African Americans as Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, and Charles Chesnutt. Browne was especially concerned with education, and traveled to Liberia to compare the education system there to the one in the United States.

Browne attended Howard University, graduating with a B.A. in 1875 and an M.A. in 1878. He also received a B.D. degree from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1878 and was ordained for ministry in the Presbyterian Church.



Browne traveled to Germany and Scotland, then returned to the US to pastor Shiloh Presbyterian Church in [New York City](#). In August 1883, Hugh went to Liberia where taught intellectual and moral philosophy at Liberia College. While there, he learned about the challenges involved in assimilation of former slaves into an African setting and about the problems and cultural differences affecting Liberian social, economic, and educational development.

Browne was also a practical man, interested in improving the lives of everyday people. He invented a machine that trapped sewer water and stopped it from flowing back into a house. This helped residents live healthier lives. Browne was granted the patent on April 29, 1890.

In 1896 Browne criticized the Liberian government and education system. However, he had a plan for reorganizing educational and administrative systems, but his candor created problems and personal difficulties. He was restricted from teaching in Liberia.

Browne went to West Africa to teach physics then returned to Washington DC and taught at the Colored Preparatory and M Street High School, then went on to teach at Hampton Institute in Virginia until 1901. Browne sought to improve educational systems and services to African Americans through a balanced approach of theory and practice, academic with industrial training, and equal development of the mind and body through intellectual stimulation and physical education.

In 1902, Browne married and moved to Philadelphia where he became the principal of the Institute for Colored youth (ICY). He invited Booker T. Washington to speak at a formal dedication ceremony of Browne's first campus building in 1905.

Browne was widely respected for his leadership of ICY and other intellectual endeavors until his retirement in 1913. ICY changed names and is presently the Cheyney [University of Pennsylvania](#) was recognized as the oldest of the historically black [colleges and universities](#) (HBCUs).