

Black History Month Beyond the Basics: Remembering Cortez Peters

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As February comes to an end, we round out Black History Month with a guest post by Pamela M. Tuck, author of *As Fast As Words Could Fly*. We asked her **if there was one person she could choose to be as well-known or remembered as Rosa Parks, who would it be and why?**



In a segregated all-black school, a young student was empowered by an African American motivational speaker from Washington, DC. It was 1960s North Carolina and this speaker, in the student's mind, was famous. The young student was my mother, Pauline Teel, and the speaker was **Cortez Peters**.



Cortez Peters, Sr. taught himself to type, at the age of 11, on a used typewriter his father had received in a trade. His "hunt and peck" system later developed into a fast and accurate method that garnered him the title of World Typing Champion, with speeds over 100 words per minute. He was the founder of the Cortez W. Peters Business School, which debuted in 1934. It was one of the first vocational schools in Washington, DC to prepare African Americans for business and civil services. The opening of his school became a pivotal point in history for African Americans.

Cortez Peters, Jr. began typing at the age of 12. He eventually surpassed his father's world record with a typing speed of 225 words per minute with no mistakes.

Both Peters Sr. and Peters Jr. made a career out of teaching their craft to others.

At that unforgettable school visit, Cortez Peters awed my mother and the other students with his rhythmic typing finesse. My mother remembers how his typing mimicked the tunes of many songs, and how he made artistic configurations on his paper. She stated, "He would use all A's to form the letter A, and all B's to form the letter B." His phenomenal typing



ability was an amazing entertainment for the students, but his accomplishments as an African American entrepreneur made him an empowering role model.

Cortez gave his formula of success to the students in 3 simple words: Determination, Inspiration, and Perspiration. **Determined** not to let anyone or anything stop them from reaching their dreams. **Inspired** to do whatever it takes to accomplish their dreams. And work hard (**Perspiration**) to make those dreams

come true.

Cortez Peters' formula for success became ingrained into my mother and was one of the driving forces that helped shape her into the successful woman she became. Enough so, that she passed the formula on to me and I have passed it on to my children.

With the impression Cortez Peters made on my mom, I guess it seems fitting that her high school sweetheart, my dad, [turned out to be a local typing champion](#). Ironically, Cortez Peters and my dad unknowingly shared the same formula for success, and *As Fast As their Words Could Fly*, change was taking place, history was being made, and dreams were coming true.