Hope, John

(b. June 2, 1868, Augusta, Ga., U.S.--d. Feb. 20, 1936, Atlanta, Ga.), American educator and advocate of advanced liberal-arts instruction for blacks at a time when the opposing views of Booker T. Washington for technical training held sway. Hope became the president of Atlanta University, the first graduate school for blacks, and he was one of the founders of the Niagara Movement, which was a forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Hope was the son of a white father and a black mother. In 1894 he graduated from Brown University, Providence, R.I. He taught at Roger Williams University (Nashville, Tenn.) until 1898 and then became professor of classics at Atlanta Baptist College (later Morehouse College). He was appointed the first black president of Morehouse in 1906.

After Washington made his "Atlanta Compromise" address in 1895, calling for blacks to concentrate on achieving technical proficiency and to abandon, at least for the time being, the struggle for political and social equality, Hope publicly disagreed with him. Hope proclaimed the need for full social and political equality and argued that technical skill would prove worthless without it.

Hope served as a YMCA secretary with black soldiers in France in 1918-19. Returning disillusioned by the way the soldiers were treated and by race riots in the United States, he and Will W. Alexander, a white Southerner, helped organize the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. Hope became its first president.

In 1929, when Morehouse and Spelman, a black women's college, affiliated with Atlanta University and took responsibility for undergraduate studies, the university devoted itself solely to graduate work. Hope was the unanimous choice for president of Atlanta University and served in that position until his death.