

## Isaac Myers

### Entrepreneur, Labor Leader, Ship Chalker

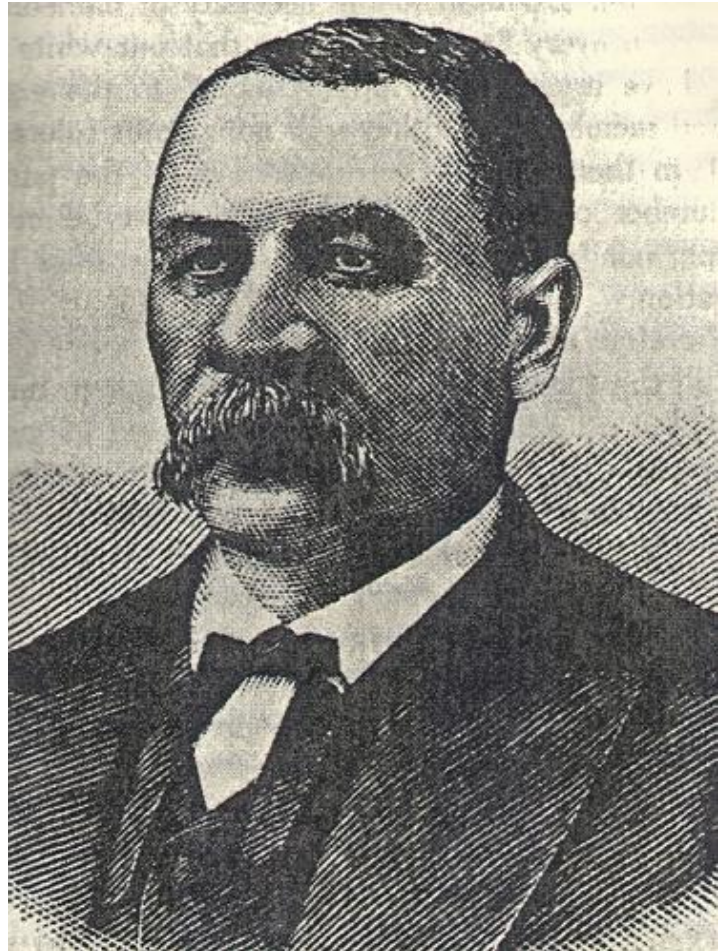
Isaac Myers was a prominent businessman and labor leader in Baltimore. He was born in 1835 to free parents in Baltimore, Maryland. He grew up in Maryland at a time when it was still a slave state. **He created a shipyard that chocked and repaired boats. It would have looked very similar to the rail system you see next to the living classroom.**

In his early years he attended school at a private religious school run by a local minister. African Americans were not allowed to attend public school. At the age of 16 he apprenticed to a James Jackson, a prominent local ship caulker. By the age of 20 he was supervising a crew of ship caulkers. Ship caulking was a profession predominantly done by African Americans.

The Civil War disrupted the ship building and repair industry and Isaac went into the grocery business. Setting up a grocery Co-op in 1864. This endeavor was short lived and Isaac returned to Boat chalking in 1865.

After the Civil War African American ship caulkers had newfound competition from recent European immigrants. In response Isaac organized a cooperatively owned shipyard, "Chesapeake Marine Railway and Dry Dock Company". In addition he led efforts to create a Ship "Caulkers union the 'Colored Caulkers Trade Union Society" in 1868. His efforts and leadership of the labor organization attracted national attention from other labor unions.

In response to African Americans not being allowed national labor unions Myers created the "Colored National Labor Union" which he was president of until 1872 and was succeeded by Frederick Douglass. Myers continued on with a variety of organizing efforts and accomplishments. At one point he was the first African American Postal Inspector.



#### References

[Wikipedia, Isaac Myers](#)

Boat Yard and Railway at Living Classrooms