Charles Richard Drew was born on June 3, 1904, in Washington, D.C. He was the oldest of five children in a middle-class African American family. His father was a carpet layer and his mother was a teacher. From his early years, Drew showed a keen interest in science and medicine. In high school, he was an exceptional athlete, excelling in swimming, basketball, football, and track. His athletic prowess earned him a scholarship to Amherst College in Massachusetts, where he graduated in 1926. Despite facing racial prejudice, he was determined to pursue a career in medicine and was inspired by his mentors at Amherst to apply to medical school. Unable to afford tuition at an American medical school, Drew applied to McGill University Faculty of Medicine in Montreal, Canada, where he was accepted. At McGill, Drew excelled acadically and was awarded the J. Francis Williams Fellowship, a prize for the student with the highest scholastic average. He graduated in 1933, second in his class of 127 students. While at McGill, Drew also conducted research on blood transfusions, which sparked his interest in this field. He was particularly interested in the preservation of blood, which would become the focus of his groundbreaking work. After graduating from McGill, Drew returned to the United States and became a surgical instructor at Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, D.C. At the same time, he began working on his doctorate at Columbia University in New York City under the guidance of Dr. John Scudder. His doctoral thesis, 'Banked Blood: A Study in Blood Preservation,' was based on his extensive research on blood plasma and blood transfusions. His research demonstrated that blood could be separated into plasma and red blood cells and stored for later use. This was a revolutionary discovery that would change the field of medicine. During World War II, Drew was appointed as the medical director of the American Red Cross Blood Bank, a position he held from 1941 to 1942. In this role, he developed a system for the collection and distribution of blood and plasma. He established mobile blood donation stations, known as 'Bloodmobiles,' and trained personnel to collect blood from donors. His system was highly efficient and resulted in the collection of thousands of pints of blood for the war effort. However, he faced significant racial prejudice in this role, as the American Red Cross initially insisted on segregating blood from black and white donors, a policy that Drew strongly opposed. In 1942, Drew resigned from the American Red Cross in protest over the policy of racial segregation of blood. He returned to Howard University, where he became a professor and the head of the Department of Surgery. He continued his research on blood and established the first blood bank at Howard University Hospital. He also continued to advocate for the end of racial discrimination in medicine and was instrumental in training a generation of African American physicians. In addition to his work in medicine, Drew was also deeply committed to civil rights. He used his position as a prominent physician to advocate for racial equality in medicine. He was particularly concerned about the lack of opportunities for African American students in medical schools and worked tirelessly to increase their representation. He also spoke out against racial discrimination in the provision of medical care, arguing that all patients, regardless of race, deserved equal treatment. In 1944, Drew became the first African American to be awarded the Spingarn Medal by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for his contributions to the field of medicine. The Spingarn Medal is the NAACP's highest award and is given annually to a person of African descent who has made outstanding contributions to their field. Drew's life was tragically cut short on April 1, 1950, when he was involved in a car accident in North Carolina. He was only 45 years old. Despite his untimely death, his legacy lives on. His research on blood preservation and transfusion has saved countless lives, and his efforts to combat racial discrimination in medicine have paved the way for future generations of African American physicians. In recognition of his contributions to medicine and civil rights, Drew has received numerous posthumous honors. In 1981, the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science was established in Los Angeles, California, to train healthcare professionals to work in underserved communities. In 1985, the United States Postal Service issued a postage stamp in his honor. He has also been inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame and the American Medical Association Hall of Fame. Charles R. Drew's work has had a profound impact on the field of medicine. His research on blood preservation and transfusion has revolutionized medical practice, making it possible to store blood for extended periods and to provide lifesaving transfusions to patients in need. His efforts to combat racial discrimination in medicine have also had a lasting impact, opening doors for countless African American physicians and improving the quality of care for all patients. Despite the racial prejudice he faced, Drew remained committed to his work and his principles, leaving a legacy of courage, innovation, and excellence.