The First Annual Clark and Bumbry Celebration Bowl Study Guide 2024

The first annual *Clark and Bumbry Celebration Bowl* is a competition designed to celebrate and promote the rich history of black Americans. This guide is intended to help participants study for this competition style quiz tournament.

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Lewis Latimer

Lewis Latimer (1848-1928) was an expert draftsman who joined Thomas Edison's lab in 1884. He was also a skilled inventor and designed several improvements for light bulbs.

Lewis Howard Latimer was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, on September 4, 1848, six years after his parents, George and Rebecca Latimer, had run away from slavery in Virginia.

Latimer joined the U.S. Electric Lighting Company in 1880 under Hiram Maxim. This year saw Thomas Edison patent his light bulb which used a carbonized bamboo filament that burnt out rather quickly.

Around this time, Latimer created a way to make the carbon filament more durable by encasing it in cardboard and went on to patent the process for efficiently manufacturing the carbon filament in 1882. His invention made incandescent lighting practical and affordable and was also longer lasting than earlier filaments.

Latimer wrote, "Incandescent Electric Lighting: A Practical Description of the Edison System", a book on electric lighting in 1890 and supervised the installation of public electric lights throughout New York, Philadelphia, Montreal, and London.

Other Inventions include the first water closet (i.e., toilet) for railroad cars (1874) and a forerunner of the air conditioner (1886). Although today's light bulbs use filaments of tungsten, which lasts even longer than carbon, Latimer will always be remembered for making the widespread use of electric light practical and affordable for public use and at home.

https://invention.si.edu/innovative-lives-lewis-latimer-1848-1928-renaissance-man
https://lemelson.mit.edu/resources/lewis-latimer

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Moses Roper

Moses Roper was an enslaved abolitionist criticized for his descriptive retelling of enslaved peoples experiences. Roper was born around 1815 to an enslaved woman who was raped by her white enslaver. Roper was severely punished for his many attempts to escape slavery (roughly 16 accounts) before successfully escaping after being sold to another enslaver in Florida and made his way to New York Eventually he traveled to Britain and was educated at the University of London from 1836-37. Roper is known for exhibiting whips and chains used on enslaved people, sometimes exhibiting their use on enslaved people. He was accused of exaggerating the treatment of enslaved people and replied, "These facts I am ready to attest in the most solemn manner, if required; and, though I have been a slave, I trust my evidence will be received on matters of fact which have come within the range of my own observation."

In London in 1837, Roper published the first edition of his autobiography, *Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper from American Slavery*. In it, he disclosed details of his birth family: his father was the slaveholder who owned his mother, and young Roper's embarrassing resemblance to his father meant he was sold away while still a child. He would then be passed from master to master across the South. He saw his family only once afterwards, when he escaped from a cruel owner in South Carolina and walked hundreds of miles home, only to be captured and returned to his master for more tortures. In Britain, though, he found people who could be the father figure he never had. Dissenting ministers Dr John Morison and Dr Francis A Cox, of London, and Henry Christopherson, one of Morison's congregants who took Roper into his London home had, as Roper wrote, "been towards me a parent."

Yet this newly made anti-slavery family was also taken from him. In November 1840, after three years of successful lecturing and the sale of thousands of copies of his autobiography, Roper faced catastrophe. Reverend Dr Thomas Price, a prominent Baptist minister and publisher, had written the preface for Roper's book in order to help him earn money to "obtain a sound English education." Price believed that what Roper really should be doing was working as a missionary in Africa or the West Indies, not campaigning in Britain to persuade people to oppose slavery. Denouncing his lecturing as little more than "a system of genteel begging," Price wrecked

Roper's livelihood, cutting him off from the institutions and many of the people who had supported him.

The previous December, Roper had married a British woman, Ann Price. Price gave birth to a baby, Maria. The family moved to Wales, but still had financial troubles. By spring 1844, Roper sought assistance to emigrate to South Africa, but ended up emigrating to Canada West instead. Roper continued to lecture and campaign against slavery in Canada, and back in Britain and Ireland through the rest of the 1840s, despite the tragedy of his eldest daughter's death in 1847, and into the early 1860s.

Little is known about Roper's fate after that. He slips out of records in the spring of 1861, just as the American Civil War began.

https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/moses-roper-who-life-fugitive-slavery-britain/

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1619

In 1619, Jamestown, the British Colony of Virginia, received 20 black people from Africa, sold by a Dutch captain to English colonists in exchange for water and supplies.

In 2019, as the 400th anniversary of this event was approaching, New York Times investigative journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones developed the 1619 Project. The editorial process lasted for over six months, and this special issue of the New York Times magazine was published, as well as a special section of the newspaper and a multi-episode podcast series.

This project has also turned into a book, titled *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*, the central thesis of the book being that the moment in August 1619 when the first enslaved Africans arrived in the English colonies that would become the United States could be considered the country's origin.

Earle Johathan, The Routledge Atlas of African American History, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2022

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html

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HBCUs

The earliest Black colleges—as well as day, night, religious, and industrial schools—were supervised by the Freedmen's Bureau, a federal agency commissioned by Congress in 1865 for the betterment of the ex-enslaved. Cooperating closely with Northern religious and philanthropic organizations, the Freedmen's Bureau helped found more than 4,000 schools in the South. The teachers at the first Black colleges were mostly white Northerners, although the numbers of Black schoolteachers grew rapidly and steadily. By the time the Freedmen's Bureau halted its educational labors, it had spent more than $5 million educating almost 250,000 African Americans.

Between 1865 and 1877, nearly 50 Black colleges were founded across the South with the help of the Freedman's Bureau, including:

- Howard University (named for the Freedman Bureau's leader, the Union General O. O. Howard),
- Fisk University
- Atlanta University
- Hampton Institute
- St. Augustine's College

Before the Supreme Court declared segregated education illegal in 1954, Black colleges provided African Americans and other people of color with their only realistic hope for post-secondary education. The schools suffered from chronic shortages of funds, but provided

the backbone for several generations of the African American middle class, educating and training a lion's share of the nation's Black doctors, lawyers, businessmen, academics, and other professionals. The schools had a large impact on the Black struggle for equality as well: many of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement were educated in all-Black, Southern colleges, including Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, and Jesse Jackson.

Kamala Harris, Howard University alum, was the first Vice President from an HBCU.

Earle Johathan, The Routledge Atlas of African American History, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2022

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Plessy v. Ferguson/Jim Crow Laws

At the end of the 19th century, racial discrimination took the form of legal restrictions. Several state constitutions passed in the South between 1890 and 1900 disenfranchised virtually all Black voters by using literacy tests, property qualifications, and poll taxes. Whites who were unable to meet the new requirements were often still allowed to vote by means of "grandfather clauses" (qualifying those voters whose "grandfathers" could vote in the past).

In the case *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Supreme Court upheld another kind of legal discrimination sweeping the South: so-called "Jim Crow" laws. Named for a stock character in popular racist minstrel shows, these laws regulated racial segregation in public facilities of all kinds, from water fountains to seats on turn-of-the-century streetcars. Homer A. Plessy, a Creole resident of New Orleans, was arrested after he refused to ride in a "Colored only" street car. After a conviction in a Louisiana courtroom, Plessy's case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that as long as accommodations for Black people were equal to those of white people, the races could be legally separated. Of course, in the harsh racial realities of the South at the time, facilities were rarely, if ever, equal. Once Black people were disenfranchised and public facilities legally segregated, white supremacy became a pervasive reality across the South.

Booker T. Washington was the most powerful African American leader of the Jim Crow era. In a famous speech (known as the "Atlanta Compromise") in 1895, Washington in effect accepted segregation as a temporary accommodation, in exchange for white support to improve Black economic progress, education, and social uplift. To Washington's African American critics, such sentiments played right into the hands of white supremacists; to his supporters, Washington was playing the best cards in his hand, hoping to gain acceptance through self-reliance and uplift.

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Harlem Renaissance

Due to the Great Migration, Harlem, a neighborhood in upper Manhattan, became a magnet for African Americans in the 20th century. Black writers, entertainers, and artists created a movement there that forever changed American culture.

Black historian and writer James Weldon Johnson called Harlem the "Negro capital" of the United States, "the Mecca for the sightseer, the pleasure-seeker, the curious, the adventurous, the enterprising, the ambitious, and the talented of the entire Negro world." Harlem was the home of the Cotton Club, a jazz club on Lenox Avenue where African Americans performed the blues, improvisation, and ragtime music. Authors and poets who helped center the concept of race within American literature also gathered there, like Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes.

The Harlem Renaissance displayed significant longevity, stretching into the darkest days of the Great Depression. Zora Neale Hurston, a brilliant intellectual and anthropologist, began collecting American and Caribbean folklore in the late 1920s. She wrote short stories, scholarly articles, and novels including *Moses, Man of the Mountain, Their Eyes were Watching God, and Dust Tracks on the Road* between 1931 and 1943. The confidence and creativity of the Harlem

Renaissance helped to rejuvenate the entire ranges of American art in the 20th century. It also provided inspiration for generations of Black and white artists, writers, and activists to come.

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Claudette Colvin/Rosa Parks/Montgomery Bus Boycott

When Claudette Colvin was 15, she refused to move to the back of the bus and give up her seat to a white person — nine months before Rosa Parks did the very same thing.
The bus driver ordered her to get up and she refused, saying she'd paid her fare and it was her constitutional right. Two police officers put her in handcuffs and arrested her. Her school books went flying off her lap.

"All I remember is that I was not going to walk off the bus voluntarily," Colvin says.
It was Negro history month, and at her segregated school they had been studying black leaders like Harriet Tubman, the runaway slave who led more than 70 slaves to freedom through the network of safe houses known as the Underground Railroad. They were also studying about Sojourner Truth, a former slave who became an abolitionist and women's rights activist. The class had also been talking about the injustices they were experiencing daily under the Jim Crow segregation laws, like not being able to eat at a lunch counter.

"We couldn't try on clothes," Colvin says. "You had to take a brown paper bag and draw a diagram of your foot ... and take it to the store. Can you imagine all of that in my mind? My head was just too full of black history, you know, the oppression that we went through. It felt like Sojourner Truth was on one side pushing me down, and Harriet Tubman was on the other side of me pushing me down. I couldn't get up."

Colvin also remembers the moment the jail door closed. It was just like a Western movie, she says.

There are many reasons why Claudette Colvin has been pretty much forgotten. She hardly ever told her story when she moved to New York City. In her new community, hardly anyone was talking about integration; instead, most people were talking about black enterprises, black power and Malcolm X.

When asked why she is little known and why everyone thinks only of Rosa Parks, Colvin says the NAACP and all the other black organizations felt Parks would be a good icon because "she was an adult. They didn't think teenagers would be reliable."

She also says Parks had the right hair and the right look. "Her skin texture was the kind that people associate with the middle class," says Colvin. "She fit that profile."

David Garrow, a historian and the author of *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, says people may think that Parks' action was spontaneous, but black civic leaders had been thinking about what to do about the Montgomery buses for years.

After Colvin's arrest, she found herself shunned by parts of her community. She experienced various difficulties and became pregnant. Civil rights leaders felt she was an inappropriate symbol for a test case.

Parks was the secretary of the NAACP. She was well-known and respected and, says Garrow, Parks had a "natural gravitas" and was an "inherently impressive person."

At the same time, Garrow believes attention to Colvin is a healthy corrective, because "the real reality of the movement was often young people and often more than 50 percent women." The images you most often see are men in suits.

Hoose says he believes Colvin understands the pragmatism that pushed Parks to the fore, but "on the other hand, she did it."

Hoose says the stories of Parks and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. are wonderful, but those are the stories of people in their 30s and 40s. Colvin was 15. Hoose feels his book will bring a fresh teen's perspective to the struggle to end segregation.

Rosa Parks' arrest on December 1, 1955 became the basis for a legal challenge to Montgomery's segregation laws, and later a rallying cry for a revitalized Civil Rights Movement. Within days, the Women's Political Council of Montgomery mimeographed 52,000 leaflets proposing a one-day boycott of the city's buses. The city's bus company lost between 30,000 and 40,000 fares. That day, most African Americans walked to work and school, or used a make-shift pool of cars and Black-owned taxis.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was instrumental in extending the Montgomery Bus Boycott indefinitely. King issued other demands as well: that bus drivers extend courtesy to Black passengers; first-come, first-served seating to eliminate the practice of Black people having to give up seats for white people; and the hiring of African American bus drivers. The boycott was wildly successful, but the brunt of it was borne by Montgomery's Black women, many of whom worked as domestics and had to walk long distances to work.

On December 21, 1956, after the Supreme Court declared Alabama's bus segregation laws unconstitutional, the boycott finally ended.

Earle Johathan, The Routledge Atlas of African American History, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2022

https://www.npr.org/2009/03/15/101719889/before-rosa-parks-there-was-claudette-colvin

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Hip Hop as a Social and Political Movement

African American musical tradition stretches back to songs and laments brought from Africa on the Middle Passage. Work songs, "shouts," and spirituals were always part of the lives of African Americans. In the 20th century, Black Americans fashioned entirely new and significant musical traditions onto the older genres, including jazz, blues, hip hop, and rock. With the advent of new technologies including radio and sound recording, African American music exploded from segregated enclaves to cover the globe.

In the late 1970s, young African American disc jockeys from poor urban neighborhoods combined elements of funk, disco, and rock with older Black oral traditions to create hip hop. The new music's anti-establishment lyrics (often directed against white police officers) angered many politicians but became wildly popular with young people of all races.

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Sit-in Movement

On February 1, 1960, four students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro launched a pivotal new phase of the Civil Rights Movement. That day they entered a local Woolworth's five-and-dime store, made purchases, then sat down at the lunch counter and ordered coffee. When they were refused service because they were Black (all seats at the counter were reserved for "whites only"), they remained seated until the store closed for the day.
The next day they returned with still more young people. It was the beginning of the "sit-in" movement, a series of nonviolent and peaceful protests against segregation and racial discrimination that spread like wildfire. Young people sat-in at white swimming pools, bus stations, hotel lobbies, and restaurants, forcing witnesses to confront the inequalities present in everyday life. The calm yet courageous demeanor of the demonstrators' infused new energy into

the Civil Rights Movement. Soon after the sit-ins began, scores of businesses in the South (including the Woolworth chain's lunch counters) were desegregated.

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Barack Obama

Several African Americans have run for President, including Shirley Chisholm in 1972, Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988, and more.

In the 2008 Presidential election, Barack Obama surprised many political observers by scoring an impressive win in the caucuses in Iowa, an overwhelmingly white state. Obama's youth, his oratorical skills, his early opposition to the unpopular Iraq war, and his ability to represent a possible future free of the racial burdens of the past only led to his political strength in the Democratic race.

Obama won 89 percent of Democrats, 95 percent of the African American vote, 62 percent of Asian Americans, and 67 percent of Hispanics. He lost the vote among white people 55-43, but his overwhelming totals among other minority groups put his totals well ahead of his opponent, John McCain.

Obama governed for the most part as a centrist Democrat despite a reputation for being more progressive, and attempted to steer clear of the racial pitfalls that plague American politics. During the times that he did comment on racial politics (such as in the matters of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Trayvon Martin), he was resoundingly attacked by his opponents. White conservatives labeled Obama "divisive."

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National Museum of African American History and Culture

On September, 24, 2016 in the morning, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture officially opened on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The opening drew 7,000 seated guests on the museum grounds, in addition to the tens of thousands of people gathered around the Washington Monument.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture is the only national museum devoted exclusively to the documentation of African American life, history, and culture. It was established by an Act of Congress in 2003, following decades of efforts to promote and highlight the contributions of African Americans. To date, the Museum has collected more than 40,000 artifacts and nearly 100,000 individuals have become members.

There are four pillars upon which the NMAAHC stands:

1. It provides an opportunity for those who are interested in African American culture to explore and revel in this history through interactive exhibitions.
2. It helps all Americans see how their stories, their histories, and their cultures are shaped and informed by global influences.
3. It explores what it means to be an American and share how American values like resiliency, optimism, and spirituality are reflected in African American history and culture.
4. It serves as a place of collaboration that reaches beyond Washington, D.C. to engage new audiences and to work with the myriad of museums and educational institutions that have explored and preserved this important history well before this museum was created.

https://insider.si.edu/2016/09/national-museum-african-history-culture-opens/
https://nmaahc.si.edu/about/about-museum

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Police Brutality/Black Lives Matter

In July 2013, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter went viral on social media after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of African American teenager Trayvon Martin. The next year, the movement gained additional traction with large street protests after two additional deaths of unarmed Black men (Michael Brown and Eric Garner).

What makes Black Lives Matter unique is that it remains a decentralized political and social movement focused on protesting the persistent incidents of police brutality and racially motivated violence against African Americans. "Black Lives Matter" remains untrademarked by any group, and the larger movement remains only loosely organized with no formal hierarchy.

While its popularity was mixed at best in 2014, BLM gained truly international attention and garnered substantial support among both minority groups and white people after the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin in May 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the *New York Times*, between 15 and 26 million people participated in the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests in the United States, which would make it one of the largest movements in American history.

The official Black Lives Matter website provides four clear and simple statements:

"**We are expansive.** We are a collective of liberators who believe in an inclusive and spacious movement. We also believe that in order to win and bring as many people with us along the way, we must move beyond the narrow nationalism that is all too prevalent in Black communities. We must ensure we are building a movement that brings all of us to the front.

We affirm the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, undocumented folks, folks with records, women, and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. Our network centers those who have been marginalized within Black liberation movements.

We are working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise.

We affirm our humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression."

Earle Johathan, The Routledge Atlas of African American History, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2022

https://blacklivesmatter.com/

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Shirley Prendergast

Shirley Prendergast made history by being admitted to the United Scenic Artists' (USA)lighting division as the first African-American woman in 1969, and the first black female lighting designer on Broadway in 1973, with Joseph Walker's The River Niger.

A recipient of numerous awards, Prendergast received a 1997 Obie Award for Sustained Excellence in Lighting Design, the 2009 National Black Theatre Festival Award for Outstanding Achievement in Lighting Design, the 2014 United States Institute for Theatre Technology Distinguished Achievement Award in Lighting Design, as well as numerous New York City Audelco awards.

https://womeninlighting.com/extras/entry/r.a.w-shirley-prendergast#:~:text=Shirley%20Prendergast%20made%20history%20by,Joseph%20Walker%27s%20The%20River%20Niger.&text=Unti

l%201967%2C%20Shirley%20did%20lighting%20for%20small%20productions%20on%20her%20own

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The Negro Ensemble Company, Inc.

Prior to the 1960s, there were virtually no outlets for the wealth of black theatrical talent in America. Playwrights writing realistically about the black experience could not get their work produced, and even the most successful performers, such as Hattie McDaniel and Butterfly McQueen, were confined to playing roles as servants. It was disenfranchised artists such as these who set out to create a theater concentrating primarily on themes of black life. In 1965, Playwright Douglas Turner Ward, producer/actor Robert Hooks, and theater manager Gerald Krone came together to make these dreams a reality with the Negro Ensemble Company (NEC). The main catalyst for this project was the 1959 production of "A Raisin in the Sun."Written by Lorraine Hansberry, of "A Raisin in the Sun" was a gritty, realistic view of black family life. The long-running play gave many black theater people the opportunity to meet and work together. Robert Hooks and Douglas Turner Ward were castmates in the road company. Together they dreamed of starting a theater company run by and for black people.

While acting in Leroi Jones' play "The Dutchman", Hooks began spending nights teaching to local black youth. In a public performance primarily for parents and neighbors, the kids put on a one-act play by Ward. A newspaper critic who had attended the performance recommended that Ward's plays be produced commercially. While Hooks raised money, Ward wrote plays. The pair recruited a theater manager, Gerald Krone, and the three men produced an evening of black-oriented, satiric one act plays. One of these short plays, "Day of Absence", was a reverse minstrel show, with black actors in whiteface performing the roles of whites in a small Southern town on a day when all the blacks have mysteriously disappeared. The plays, performed at the St. Marks Play House in Greenwich Village, were a major success. They ran for 504 performances and won Ward an Obie Award for acting and a Drama Desk Award for writing. Impressed with his work, the *New York Times* invited Ward to write an article on the condition of

black artists in American theater. Ward's piece in the Times became a manifesto for the establishment of a resident black theater company.

With money from the Ford Foundation and a home at the St. Marks Playhouse, the Negro Ensemble Company formed officially in 1967. Though the new company succeeded in attracting audiences from all walks of life, they ran into a number of political and economic difficulties. In London a performance of the NEC's first production, "Song of the Lucitanian Bogey" (1967) was heckled by-right wing protesters who resented its anti-colonial message. Back home in America, the group had to deal with criticism from members of the black community over their continued association with white administrators, playwrights, and funders. Among the many plays produced by the Negro Ensemble Company (NEC) were such greats as Peter Weiss' "Song of the Lucitanian Bogey", Lonnie Elder's Ceremonies in Dark Old Men" (1969) and Charles Fuller's "Zooman and the Sign" (1980). These plays dealt with complex and often ignored aspects of the black experience. Creating emotionally resonant characters with depth and variety, the NEC paved the way for black Americans to present a voice that had been aggressively stifled for three hundred years. This revolution in production and writing also meant an equally important advance for black actors. With the NEC, many black actors found their first opportunity to play characters with depth and meaning. Though critically acclaimed and presenting some of the most important theatrical work of its time, the NEC ran into a number of economic troubles. With production costs rising and an original grant from the Ford Foundation gone, the group no longer had enough money for many of its projects. Even sellout audiences in the St. Marks Theater could not generate enough revenue to meet the budget. In the 1972-73 season the resident company was disbanded, staff was cut back, training programs canceled, and salaries deferred.

The decision was made to produce only one new play a year. Fortunately, the first play chosen was "The River Niger", by Joe Walker. "The River Niger" was a moving play about the struggles of a black family from Harlem in the '70s. It was the first NEC production to move to Broadway, where it stayed for nine months. It won the Tony Award for Best Play, and embarked on an extensive national tour. The success of "The River Niger" helped to insure the continued work of the NEC and of its many members over the next ten years. In 1981, the NEC had what was

probably its most successful production with “A Soldier’s Play”, by Charles Fuller. “A Soldier’s Play” is a gripping story of the murder of a black soldier on a Southern Army base, and the subsequent investigation by a black army captain. It was a tremendously popular play and won both the Critics Circle Best Play Award and the Pulitzer Prize. It was later made into a movie, “A Soldier’s Story”, which was nominated for three Academy Awards. Since its founding in 1967, the NEC has produced more than two hundred new plays and provided a theatrical home for more than four thousand cast and crew members. Among its ranks have been some of the best black actors in television and film, including Louis Gossett Jr., Sherman Hemsley, and Phylicia Rashad. The NEC is respected worldwide for its commitment to excellence, and has won dozens of honors and awards. While these accolades point to the larger success of the NEC, it has created something far greater. It has been a constant source and sustenance for black actors, directors, and writers as they have worked to break down walls of racial prejudice.

https://necinc.org/the-history-of-nec/
https://www.americantheatre.org/2021/01/13/modest-beginnings-towering-legacy-the-negro-ensemble-company/

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Georgia Douglas Johnson

A member of the Harlem Renaissance, Georgia Douglas Johnson wrote plays, a syndicated newspaper column, and four collections of poetry: *The Heart of a Woman* (1918), *Bronze* (1922), *An Autumn Love Cycle* (1928), and *Share My World* (1962).

Johnson was born in Atlanta, Georgia, to parents of African American, Native American, and English descent. She graduated from Atlanta University Normal College and studied music at the Oberlin Conservatory and the Cleveland College of Music. After graduation, she taught and worked as an assistant principal. In 1910 she moved with her husband to Washington, D.C. When her husband died in 1925, Johnson supported her two sons by working temporary jobs until she was hired by the Department of Labor.

Johnson's house at 1461 S Street NW, which came to be known as site of the S Street Salon, was an important meeting place for writers of the Harlem Renaissance in Washington, D.C. Johnson published her first poems in 1916 in the NAACP's magazine *Crisis*. Her weekly column, "Homely Philosophy," was published from 1926 to 1932. She wrote numerous plays, including *Blue Blood* (performed 1926) and *Plumes* (performed 1927). Johnson traveled widely in the 1920s to give poetry readings. In 1934 she lost her job in the Department of Labor and returned to supporting herself with temporary clerical work.

Johnson received an honorary doctorate in literature from Atlanta University in 1965.

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/georgia-douglas-johnson

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Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison is the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature (for *Beloved* in 1988). She received a bachelor's degree from Howard with a major in English and a minor in classics in 1953, followed by a master's in English from Cornell in 1955. She taught English for two years at Texas Southern University, a historically black institution in Houston, before returning to Howard as a faculty member.

In 1958, she married Harold Morrison, an architect form Jamaica; they were divorced in 1964. In interviews, Morrison rarely spoke of the marriage, though she intimated that her husband had wanted a traditional 1950s wife, something she could never be.

Morrison wrote her first novel (*The Bluest Eye*, published in 1970) in stolen moments between her day job as a book editor and her life as the single mother of two young sons.

Morrison was one of the rare American authors whose books were both critical and commercial successes. Her novels regularly appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller list, were featured multiple times on Oprah Winfrey's book club, and were the subject of myriad critical studies. A longtime faculty member at Princeton, Morrison lectured widely and was seen often on television.

Morrison wrote in prose that rings with the cadences of black oral tradition. Her plots are dreamlike and nonlinear, spooling backward and forward in time as though characters bring the entire weight of history to bear on their every act. Myth, magic, and superstition are inextricably intertwined with everyday verities, a technique that caused Morrison's novels to be likened often to those of Latin American magic realist writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/06/books/toni-morrison-dead.html

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Lynn Nottage

Lynn Nottage is a playwright and a screenwriter. She is the first, and remains the only, woman to have won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama twice. Her plays have been produced widely in the United States and throughout the world.

Most recently, Nottage premiered *MJ the Musical*, directed by Christopher Wheeldon and featuring the music of Michael Jackson, at the Neil Simon Theater on Broadway, *Clyde's* directed by Kate Whoriskey at Second Stage Theater on Broadway and an opera adaptation of her play *Intimate Apparel* composed by Ricky Ian Gordon and directed by Bart Sher, commissioned by The Met/Lincoln Center Theater.

Her other work includes, *Floyd's* (retitled- *Clyde's*) (Guthrie Theater), the musical adaptation of Sue Monk Kidd's novel *The Secret Life of Bees*, with music by Duncan Sheik and lyrics by Susan Birkenhead (The Almeida Theatre/The Atlantic Theater), *Mlima's Tale* (Public Theater), *By The*

Way, Meet Vera Stark (Lilly Award, Drama Desk Nomination- Second Stage/Signature Theater), *Ruined* (Pulitzer Prize, OBIE, Lucille Lortel, New York Drama Critics' Circle, Audelco, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Award- MTC/Goodman Theater); *Intimate Apparel* (American Theatre Critics and New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards for Best Play Center Stage/SCR/ Roundabout Theater); *Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine* (OBIE Award - Playwrights Horizons/Signature Theater); *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*; *Las Meninas*; *Mud, River, Stone*; *Por'knockers*; and *POOF!*

Her play *Sweat* (Pulitzer Prize, Evening Standard Award, Obie Award, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Tony Nomination, Drama Desk Nomination) moved to Broadway after a sold-out run at The Public Theater. It premiered and was commissioned by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival American Revolutions History Cycle/Arena Stage. Inspired by her research on *Sweat*, Nottage developed *This is Reading*, a performance installation based on two years of interviews, at the Franklin Street, Reading Railroad Station in Reading, PA in July 2017.

She is the co-founder of the production company, Market Road Films, whose most recent projects include the. award winning documentary *Takeover* (NY times, Op-doc) by Emma Francis Francis-Snyder, the Peabody nominated podcast *Unfinished: Deep South* (Stitcher) by Taylor Hom and Neil Shea, *The Notorious Mr. Bout* directed by Tony Gerber and Maxim Pozdorovkin (Premiere/Sundance 2014), *First to Fall* directed by Rachel Beth Anderson (Premiere/ IDFA, 2013) and *Remote Control* (Premiere/Busan 2013- New Currents Award). Market Road Films currently has a first look deal with SISTER. Over the years, she has developed original projects for Amazon, HBO, Sidney Kimmel Entertainment, Showtime, This is That and Harpo. She was a writer and producer on the Netflix series *She's Gotta Have It*, directed by Spike Lee and a consulting producer on the third season of *Dickinson* (Apple +).

Nottage is the recipient of a MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, Steinberg "Mimi" Distinguished Playwright Award, PEN/Laura Pels Master Playwright Award, William Inge Festival Distinguished Playwright, TIME 100 (2019), Signature One Playwright, Merit and Literature Award from The Academy of Arts and Letters, Columbia University Provost Grant, Doris Duke Artist Award, The Joyce Foundation Commission Project & Grant, Madge

Evans-Sidney Kingsley Award, Nelson A. Rockefeller Award for Creativity, The Dramatists Guild Hull-Warriner Award, the inaugural Horton Foote Prize, Helen Hayes Award, the Lee Reynolds Award, and the Jewish World Watch iWitness Award. Her other honors include the National Black Theatre Fest's August Wilson Playwriting Award, a Guggenheim Grant, Lucille Lortel Fellowship and Visiting Research Fellowship at Princeton University. She is a graduate of Brown University and the Yale School of Drama. She is also a Professor of Theatre Arts in the Theatre Department at Columbia School of the Arts.

Nottage is a Doris Duke Artist, a board member for BRIC Arts Media Bklyn, Donor Direct Action, Dramatist Play Service, Second Stage and the Dramatists Guild. She recently completed a three-year term as an Artist Trustee on the Board of the Sundance Institute. She is member of the The Dramatists Guild, WGAE, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is currently an artist-in-residence at the Park Avenue Armory.

http://www.lynnnottage.com/about.html

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Marsha P. Johnson

Marsha P. Johnson grew up in Elizabeth, New Jersey, with her mother. She's said that the town had zero tolerance for LGBTQ people — and as a woman assigned male at birth, she left as soon as she could. She graduated high school at 17, then fled to New York City, where she could finally start dressing how she wanted. She worked both as a waitress and a sex worker. Choosing a name is a rite of passage for many transgender people, and she tried on a few before settling on Marsha P. Johnson. "Johnson" was inspired by a Howard Johnson restaurant she liked, and the "P" stood for "Pay it No Mind," which is how she responded when questioned about her gender.

Johnson is often credited with throwing the first brick at Stonewall. In reality, she didn't arrive at Stonewall until about 2 a.m., long after the uprising began. That night, she had invited a bunch of

her friends, including Rivera, to a party. She waited and waited, but no one showed up. Finally, she decided she'd make her own fun and started checking out the local scene. When she got to Stonewall, she encountered shouting, fire and chaos. She was seen dropping a very heavy object on top of a police car, among other actions. Johnson said she wasn't afraid of being arrested because she'd spent the last 10 years going to jail simply for wearing makeup on 42nd street. She had nothing to lose. While she may not have started the riots, she was a major player in the LGBTQ rights movement and community during the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

Johnson would go on to create a trans rights group with Sylvia Rivera called Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR). They also maintained the STAR House, a place of refuge for LGBTQ homeless youth. Johnson was known for her immense generosity. She'd spend her meager earnings on meals for others and couldn't walk downtown without multiple people calling her name, wishing her well. She was joyous and creative and enjoyed performing. She made intricate outfits out of garbage, modeled for Andy Warhol and wrote poetry. She was a Catholic with a strong sense of faith.[1] Her work continues today through the Marsha P. Johnson Institute, which fights for the rights of Black transgender people.

Earlier this year, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo dedicated a seven-acre waterfront park in Brooklyn to Marsha P. Johnson, the first state park dedicated to an LGBTQ historic figure and a transgender woman of color.

Marsha's body was recovered from the Hudson River. Initially ruled a suicide, her death has since been ruled a possible homicide.

https://nps.gov/people/marsha-p-johnson.htm

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Maya Angelou

An acclaimed American poet, storyteller, activist, and autobiographer, Maya Angelou was born Marguerite Johnson in St. Louis, Missouri. Angelou had a broad career as a singer, dancer, actress, composer, and Hollywood's first female black director, but became most famous as a writer, editor, essayist, playwright, and poet. As a civil rights activist, Angelou worked for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. She was also an educator and served as the Reynolds professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University. She served on two presidential committees, for Gerald Ford in 1975 and for Jimmy Carter in 1977. In 2000, Angelou was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Bill Clinton. In 2010, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the U.S., by President Barack Obama. Angelou was awarded over 50 honorary degrees before her death.

When Angelou, just seventeen, graduated from high school and gave birth to a son, Guy, she began to work as the first African American and first female street car conductor in San Francisco. As she explained in *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry like Christmas* (1976), the third of her autobiographies, she also "worked as a shake dancer in night clubs, fry cook in hamburger joints, dinner cook in a Creole restaurant and once had a job in a mechanic's shop, taking the paint off cars with my hands." Angelou married a white ex-sailor, Tosh Angelos, in 1950. After they separated, Angelou continued her study of dance in New York City, returning to San Francisco to sing in the Purple Onion cabaret and garnering the attention of talent scouts. From 1954 to 1955, she was a member of the cast of a touring production of *Porgy and Bess*. During the late 1950s, Angelou sang in West Coast and Hawaiian nightclubs, before returning to New York to continue her stage career.

Angelou joined the Harlem Writers Guild in the late 1950s and met James Baldwin and other important writers. It was during this time that Angelou had the opportunity to hear Dr. Martin Luther King speak. Inspired by his message, she decided to become a part of the struggle for civil rights. She was offered a position as the northern coordinator for Dr. King's SCLC. Following her work for Dr. King, Angelou moved to Cairo with her son, and, in 1962, to Ghana in West Africa. She worked as a freelance writer and was a feature editor at the *African Review*.

When Angelou returned to the United States in the mid-1960s, she was encouraged by author James Baldwin and Robert Loomis, an editor at Random House, to write an autobiography. Initially, Angelou declined the offers, but eventually changed her mind and wrote *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The book chronicles Angelou's childhood and ends with the birth of her son. It won immediate success and was nominated for a National Book Award.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is the first of Angelou's six autobiographies. It is widely taught in schools, though it has faced controversy over its portrayal of race, sexual abuse and violence. Angelou's use of fiction-writing techniques like dialogue and plot in her autobiographies was innovative for its time and helped, in part, to complicate the genre's relationship with truth and memory. Though her books are episodic and tightly-crafted, the events seldom follow a strict chronology and are arranged to emphasize themes. Other volumes include *Gather Together in My Name* (1974), which begins when Angelou is seventeen and a new mother; *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry like Christmas*, an account of her tour in Europe and Africa with *Porgy and Bess; The Heart of a Woman* (1981), a description of Angelou's acting and writing career in New York and her work for the civil rights movement; and *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986), which recounts Angelou's travels in West Africa and her decision to return, without her son, to America.

It took Angelou fifteen years to write the final volume of her autobiography, *A Song Flung up to Heaven* (2002). The book covers four years, from the time Angelou returned from Ghana in 1964 through the moment when she sat down at her mother's table and began to write *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* in 1968.

Angelou was also a prolific and widely-read poet, and her poetry has often been lauded more for its depictions of Black beauty, the strength of women, and the human spirit; criticizing the Vietnam War; demanding social justice for all—than for its poetic virtue. Yet *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'fore I Diiie*, which was published in 1971, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1972.

As Angelou wrote her autobiographies and poems, she continued her career in film and television. She was the first Black woman to have a screenplay (*Georgia, Georgia*) produced in 1972. She was honored with a nomination for an Emmy award for her performance in *Roots* in 1977. In 1979, Angelou helped adapt her book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, for a television movie of the same name. Angelou wrote the poetry for the 1993 film *Poetic Justice* and played the role of Aunt June. She also played Lelia Mae in the 1993 television film *There Are No Children Here* and appeared as Anna in the feature film *How to Make an American Quilt* in 1995.

One source of Angelou's fame in the early 1990s was President Bill Clinton's invitation to write and read an inaugural poem. Americans all across the country watched as she read "On the Pulse of Morning," which begins "A Rock, a River, a Tree" and calls for peace, racial and religious harmony, and social justice for people of different origins, incomes, genders, and sexual orientations.

Angelou's poetry often benefited from her performance of it, and during her lifetime Angelou recited her poems before spellbound crowds. Indeed, Angelou's poetry can also be traced to African American oral traditions like slave and work songs, especially in her use of personal narrative and emphasis on individual responses to hardship, oppression and loss. In addition to examining individual experience, Angelou's poems often respond to matters like race and sex on a larger social and psychological scale.

In 2013 she was the recipient of the Literarian Award, an honorary National Book Award for contributions to the literary community. She died in 2014 at the age of 86.

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/maya-angelou

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Trayvon Martin

17-year-old Trayvon Martin was followed, shot and killed by neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman in Sanford, Fla., on the night of Feb. 26, 2012.

More than six weeks later, Zimmerman was arrested and, eventually, tried for second-degree murder.

In the beginning, there was a lot of sympathy for Trayvon's death. Even people like Donald Trump and (then) Fox News host Bill O'Reilly thought the loss of the 17 year-old was, in Trump's words, "terrible."

Until Barack Obama, who often was famously reluctant to speak to the country on issues of race, decided to weigh in. "Obviously, this is a tragedy. I can only imagine what these parents are going through," Obama said in his trademark measured cadence. "And when I think about this boy, I think about my own kids." Then, after speaking about the importance of letting the investigation run its course he said this: "You know, if I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon ... "

Those few words turned George Zimmerman from a stalker-y adult into a victim, a person who was being (metaphorically speaking), beaten up by the most powerful man in the world.

"Zimmerman is not being treated fairly," O'Reilly said on Fox.
Stories began to leak out: Trayvon had been skipping school. He'd been suspended for writing "WTF" on a hallway locker. Trace amounts of THC, the chemical that usually indicates marijuana, had been found in his system, according to a forensic report. Suddenly he wasn't the sweet-faced 17-year-old with the impish sense of humor, he was a Bad Guy.
"Trayvon was the victim in this case," his father, Tracy Martin, told NPR. "They tried to make him the villain in this case."

And not just Trayvon. During the initial jury questioning, Tracy Martin and his ex-wife, Sybrina Fulton were criticized, too.

"Being a single parent with two boys of my own," one potential juror said during questioning, "I don't want to judge, but I just want to say this could have been prevented had he not been up here."

As the trial went on, the atmosphere in Sanford became even more charged and polarized. White nationalists and the alt-right adopted Zimmerman's cause, seeing in him a martyr being sacrificed on the altar of political correctness. Protestors for racial justice marched, and clashed with them.

In the end, Zimmerman was acquitted. The six female jurors found the state had not made a strong enough case to prove that Zimmerman had committed second-degree murder.

Tracy Martin and Sybrina Fulton were determined that some good would come from their son's death. Shortly after the trial, they established the Trayvon Martin Foundation, which is dedicated to helping parents and families that have lost children to gun violence. They speak out frequently against Stand Your Ground laws.

https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2018/07/31/631897758/a-look-back-at-trayvon-martins-death-and-the-movement-it-inspired

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The Civil Rights Act of 1964

In 1964, Congress passed Public Law 88-352 (78 Stat. 241). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Provisions of this civil rights act forbade discrimination on the basis of sex, as well as, race in hiring, promoting, and firing. The Act prohibited discrimination in public accommodations and federally funded programs. It also strengthened the enforcement of voting rights and the desegregation of schools.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is the nation's benchmark civil rights legislation, and it continues to resonate in America. Passage of the Act ended the application of "Jim Crow" laws, which had been upheld by the Supreme Court in the 1896 case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, in which the Court held that racial segregation purported to be "separate but equal" was constitutional. The Civil Rights Act was eventually expanded by Congress to strengthen enforcement of these fundamental civil rights.

https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/civil-rights-center/statutes/civil-rights-act-of-1964#:~:text=In%201964%2C%20Congress%20passed%20Public,hiring%2C%20promoting%2C%20and%20firing

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Freedom Bell

On January 1, 2023, a historic bell from the Civil War era rang in the New Year at the steps of D.C.'s Lincoln Memorial and plans were announced for a new 65-bell tower and community amphitheater in Southeast.

The annual tribute was led by the National Bell Festival, which organizes the New Year's Day bell ringing and celebration at sites in D.C. and across the nation.

"Today, freedom rang. Across the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, through the hearts of those in attendance, and dissolving into the Reflecting Pool, each toll of this historic bell spoke of the march toward dignity and equality for all," Paul Ashe, director of the National Bell Festival, said. "The Emancipation Proclamation was an inflection point in our shared American story – a moment in time that was our privilege and honor to commemorate with the resonant strike of a bell."

The historic bell, built in 1863, was sounded 160 times to commemorate the 160th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

At the event, NBF also announced plans for The Emancipation Bells, a 65-bell tower and community amphitheater to be built in D.C.'s new Bridge District in Southeast. That project is designed to pay "homage to centuries of abolitionist history leading up to the Emancipation Proclamation."

The arrangement of the 65 cast bronze Emancipation Bells will have a special meaning:

- *A carillon of 52 bells will occupy the east belfry and will be inscribed with the names of prominent Black abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and more. Learn about a carillon.*
- *The largest bell in the carillon is tuned to F for 'freedom' and will be dedicated to all freedom seekers — those men and women who took control of their own destiny by leaving their enslaver.*
- *A ring of 12 peal bells will occupy the west belfry. Each of these bells will be inscribed with the name of a prominent abolitionist, antislavery activist, or ally. Learn about peal bells and change ringing.*
- *The largest bell in the entire structure, called The Great Emancipator, will be suspended between the two belfries. It will be tolled during special programming 4x annually: the date the Proclamation was announced, the date the Proclamation took effect, D.C. Emancipation Day, and Juneteenth.*
- *The largest bell in the carillon array will be tuned to F for 'freedom.'*

Organizers for The Emancipation Bells say the new community amphitheater will host regular community events and that residents of Wards 7 and 8 are invited to submit artwork in a competition to design the new bells.

They also say scholarships will be made available for those interested in learning how to play the carillon, and grants will be made available for new music written for the vast array of bells.

https://wtop.com/dc/2023/01/the-emancipation-bells-a-65-bell-tower-and-community-center-planned-for-se-dc/#

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African American Spirituals

A spiritual is a type of religious folk song that is most closely associated with the enslavement of African people in the American South. The songs proliferated in the last few decades of the eighteenth century leading up to the abolishment of legalized slavery in the 1860s. The African American spiritual (also called the Negro Spiritual) constitutes one of the largest and most significant forms of American folksong.

Famous spirituals include "Swing low, sweet chariot," composed by Wallis Willis, and "Deep down in my heart." The term "spiritual" is derived from the King James Bible translation of Ephesians 5:19: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." The form has its roots in the informal gatherings of African slaves in "praise houses" and outdoor meetings called "brush arbor meetings," "bush meetings," or "camp meetings" in the eighteenth century. At the meetings, participants would sing, chant, dance and sometimes enter ecstatic trances. Spirituals also stem from the "ring shout," a shuffling circular dance to chanting and handclapping that was common among early plantation slaves.

In Africa, music had been central to people's lives: Music making permeated important life events and daily activities. However, the white colonists of North America were alarmed by and frowned upon the slaves' African-infused way of worship because they considered it to be idolatrous and wild. As a result, the gatherings were often banned and had to be conducted in a clandestine manner.

Spirituals are typically sung in a call and response form, with a leader improvising a line of text and a chorus of singers providing a solid refrain in unison. The vocal style abounded in freeform slides, turns and rhythms that were challenging for early publishers of spirituals to document accurately. Many spirituals, known as "sorrow songs," are intense, slow and melancholic. Songs like "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child," and "Nobody knows de trouble I've seen,"

describe the slaves' struggles and identification with the suffering of Jesus Christ. Other spirituals are more joyful. Known as "jubilees," or "camp meeting songs," they are fast, rhythmic and often syncopated. Examples include "Rocky my soul" and "Fare Ye Well."

Spirituals are also sometimes regarded as codified protest songs, with songs such as "Steal away to Jesus," composed by Wallis Willis, being seen by some commentators as incitements to escape slavery. Because the Underground Railroad of the mid- nineteenth century used terminology from railroads as a secret language for assisting slaves to freedom, it is often speculated that songs like "I got my ticket" may have been a code for escape. Hard evidence is difficult to come by because assisting slaves to freedom was illegal. A spiritual that was certainly used as a code for escape to freedom was "Go down, Moses," used by Harriet Tubman to identify herself to slaves who might want to flee north.

Spirituals have played a significant role as vehicles for protest at intermittent points during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, spirituals as well as Gospel songs supported the efforts of civil rights activists. Many of the "freedom songs" of the period, such as "Oh, Freedom!" and "Eyes on the Prize," were adapted from old spirituals. Both of these songs are performed by the group Reverb in a video of their concert at the Library of Congress in 2007. The movement's torch song, "We Shall Overcome," merged the gospel hymn "I'll Overcome Someday" with the spiritual "I'll Be all right."

Freedom songs based on spirituals have also helped to define struggles for democracy in many other countries around the world including Russia, Eastern Europe, China and South Africa. Some of today's well-known pop artists continue to draw on the spirituals tradition in the creation of new protest songs. Examples include Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" and Billy Bragg's "Sing their souls back home."

https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197495/#:~:text=Many%20of%20the%20%22freedom%20songs,Library%20of%20Congress%20in%202007

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Ida B. Wells-Barnett

Ida B. Wells-Barnett was a prominent journalist, activist, and researcher, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In her lifetime, she battled sexism, racism, and violence. As a skilled writer, Wells-Barnett also used her skills as a journalist to shed light on the conditions of African Americans throughout the South.

Wells-Barnett traveled internationally, shedding light on lynching to foreign audiences. Abroad, she openly confronted white women in the suffrage movement who ignored lynching. Because of her stance, she was often ridiculed and ostracized by women's suffrage organizations in the United States. Nevertheless, Wells-Barnett remained active the women's rights movement. She was a founder of the National Association of Colored Women's Club which was created to address issues dealing with civil rights and women's suffrage. Although she was in Niagara Falls for the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), her name is not mentioned as an official founder. Late in her career Wells-Barnett focused on urban reform in the growing city of Chicago. She died on March 25th, 1931.

https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/ida-b-wells-barnett

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Angie Thomas

Angie Thomas was born and raised in Mississippi, but now calls Atlanta her home. She is a former teen rapper whose greatest accomplishment was an article about her in Right-On Magazine. She holds a BFA in Creative Writing from Belhaven University.

Angie is an inaugural winner of the Walter Dean Myers Grant 2015, awarded by We Need Diverse Books. Her debut novel, *The Hate U Give*, started as a senior project in college. It was

later acquired by the Balzer+Bray imprint of HarperCollins Publishers in a 13-publisher auction and debuted at #1 on the New York Times bestseller list, winning the ALA's William C. Morris Debut Award and the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award (USA), the Waterstones Children's Book Prize (UK), and the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis(Germany). *The Hate U Give* was adapted into a critically acclaimed film from Fox 2000, starring Amandla Stenberg and directed by George Tillman, Jr.

Angie's second novel, *On the Come Up*, is a #1 New York Times bestseller as well, and a film is in development with Paramount Pictures with Angie acting as a producer. In 2020, Angie released *FIND YOUR VOICE: A Guided Journal to Writing Your Truth* as a tool to help aspiring writers tell their stories. In 2021, Angie returned to the world of Garden Heights with *Concrete Rose*, a prequel to *The Hate U Give* focused on seventeen-year-old Maverick Carter that debuted at #1 on the New York Times bestseller list.

"I look at books as being a form of activism. Sometimes they'll show us a side of the world that we might not have known about." - Angie Thomas

https://angiethomas.com/about/

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Ella Fitzgerald

Dubbed "The First Lady of Song," Ella Fitzgerald was the most popular female jazz singer in the United States for more than half a century. In her lifetime, she won 13 Grammy awards and sold over 40 million albums.

Her voice was flexible, wide-ranging, accurate and ageless. She could sing sultry ballads, sweet jazz and imitate every instrument in an orchestra. She worked with all the jazz greats, from Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Nat King Cole, to Frank Sinatra, Dizzy Gillespie and Benny Goodman. (Or rather, some might say all the jazz greats had the pleasure of working with Ella.)

She performed at top venues all over the world, and packed them to the hilt. Her audiences were as diverse as her vocal range. They were rich and poor, made up of all races, all religions and all nationalities. In fact, many of them had just one binding factor in common – they all loved her. Fitzgerald began singing and performing on the streets of Harlem in order to make ends meet. In November 1934, seventeen-year-old Fitzgerald debuted in her first Amateur Night at the Apollo Theater. Although her intention was to dance, she decided to sing instead after seeing the dance competitors. She drew inspiration from Connee Boswell of The Boswell Sisters, one of her mother's favorite groups, and sang the song "Judy" by Hoagy Carmichael. Fitzgerald felt at home on the stage and less self-conscious. She won first place in the competition, but the theater did not award her the full prize. The winner was supposed to have the chance to perform at the Apollo Theater for a week, but because they judged her appearance as untidy, she was not given this opportunity. This did not stop Fitzgerald from continuing to enter singing competitions across the city. One in particular opened doors for her.

In January 1935, Fitzgerald won the chance to perform with the Tiny Bradshaw Band at the Harlem Opera House where she met Chick Webb, the drummer and band leader. Webb had hired a lead male singer for the band but he was still searching for a female singer. He offered Fitzgerald the chance to test with the band during their performance at Yale University. The show was so successful that Webb offered to pay Fitzgerald to sing with the band at Harlem's Savoy Ballroom. At 21 years old, she recorded hits that made her famous such as "Love and Kisses", and "A-Tisket, A-Tasket" (1938), which remained on the pop charts for seventeen weeks. After Webb died in 1939, the band was renamed Ella and Her Famous Orchestra. Fitzgerald took on the role of bandleader and recorded over 150 songs between 1935 and 1942.

After financial struggles for Fitzgerald and her band, she began working as lead singer for The Three Keys at Decca Records. During this time, she married Benny Kornegay, a local dockworker, but annulled the marriage two years later. She performed with influential singers like Bill Kenny & the Ink Spots and Louis Jordan. The 1940's ushered in the bebop style of jazz; Fitzgerald adopted it and excelled. Drawing influence from touring with Dizzy Gillespie, Fitzgerald gained major acclaim in the world of jazz with her scat singing and unique style that

inspired singers like Louis Armstrong. While on tour, Fitzgerald fell in love with bassist, Ray Brown; the two eventually married, adopted a son, and named him Ray Jr. In the mid-1940's, she began singing for Jazz at the Philharmonic, a concert series started by her manager, Norman Granz.

Her 1945 recording of "Flying Home" was described as one of the most influential jazz recordings of the decade. After gaining much fame from singing her own renditions of famous jazz songs, Fitzgerald began appearing on television shows like "The Bing Crosby Show," "The Frank Sinatra Show," and "The Ed Sullivan Show." Fitzgerald and Brown's busy schedules took a toll on their relationship with their son and their marriage. They divorced in 1952. However, they stayed friends for the rest of their lives.

Fitzgerald also faced racial discrimination while on tour. Her manager, Norman Granz, was adamant about protecting his colleagues from discrimination, but it did not stop it from happening. When the band was touring in Dallas, Texas, the police barged into Fitzgerald's dressing room and arrested her, Dizzy Gillespie, and Illinois Jacquet because of Granz's civil rights advocacy. Fitzgerald also had celebrity supporters, such a Marilyn Monroe, who personally called venues to make sure they booked her for performances. In 1955, Granz created Verve Records for Fitzgerald to expand her repertoire from bebop to other genres of music. Fitzgerald then published her first of eight song books, *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Cole Porter Song Book* (1956). She credited the book for helping her to break through with non-jazz audiences.

Fitzgerald became an international star. Despite her declining health, she continued performing, sometimes two shows a day in different cities. Fitzgerald spent two weeks performing in New York with Frank Sinatra and Count Basie in 1974 and was inducted into the *Downbeat Magazine* Hall of Fame in 1979. Aside from music, Fitzgerald was a child welfare advocate and regularly made donations to help disadvantaged youth. She was awarded the National Medal of Arts by Ronald Reagan in 1987. She received many other awards, including honorary doctorates from Yale, Dartmouth, and several other universities.

After her heart surgery and a diabetes diagnosis in 1986, Fitzgerald exceeded expectations by continuing to perform. Her last performance was at Carnegie Hall in New York in 1991. When her diabetes forced her to have both of her legs amputated, she traded the stage for sitting in her backyard with her son and granddaughter, Alice. By the end of her career, she had recorded 2,000 songs, earned fourteen Grammy awards and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1992). On June 15, 1996, Fitzgerald passed away at her home. The world responded with memorials and gratitude for the revolutionary gifts she gave to the world.

https://www.ellafitzgerald.com/biography/#/
https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/ella-fitzgerald

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Gwendolyn Brooks

Gwendolyn Brooks is one of the most influential and widely read 20th-century American poets. The author of more than 20 books, she was highly regarded even during her lifetime and had the distinction of being the first Black poet to win the Pulitzer Prize. She was also the first Black woman to hold the role of Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress, a position now referred to as the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry, and served as the Illinois poet laureate for 32 years. Her body of work gave her, according to critic George E. Kent, “a unique position in American letters. Not only has she combined a strong commitment to racial identity and equality with a mastery of poetic techniques, but she has also managed to bridge the gap between the academic poets of her generation in the 1940s and the young Black militant writers of the 1960s.”

Several schools were named for her, and she was similarly honored in 1970 by the founding of Western Illinois University’s Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center. In 2017, the centenary of Brooks’s birth was celebrated at the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where her papers are held. “Brooks Day” is celebrated annually in her hometown of Chicago.

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/gwendolyn-brooks

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Sojourner Truth

A former slave, Sojourner Truth became an outspoken advocate for abolition, temperance, and civil and women's rights in the nineteenth century. Her Civil War work earned her an invitation to meet President Abraham Lincoln in 1864.

Truth was born Isabella Bomfree, a slave in Dutch-speaking Ulster County, New York in 1797. She was bought and sold four times, and subjected to harsh physical labor and violent punishments. In her teens, she was united with another slave with whom she had five children, beginning in 1815. In 1827—a year before New York's law freeing slaves was to take effect—Truth ran away with her infant Sophia to a nearby abolitionist family, the Van Wageners. The family bought her freedom for twenty dollars and helped Truth successfully sue for the return of her five-year-old-son Peter, who was illegally sold into slavery in Alabama.
Truth moved to New York City in 1828, where she worked for a local minister. By the early 1830s, she participated in the religious revivals that were sweeping the state and became a charismatic speaker. In 1843, she declared that the Spirit called on her to preach the truth, renaming herself Sojourner Truth.

As an itinerant preacher, Truth met abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass. Garrison's anti-slavery organization encouraged Truth to give speeches about the evils of slavery. She never learned to read or write. In 1850, she dictated what would become her autobiography—*The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*—to Olive Gilbert, who assisted in its publication. Truth survived on sales of the book, which also brought her national recognition. She met women's rights activists, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, as well as temperance advocates—both causes she quickly championed.

In 1851, Truth began a lecture tour that included a women's rights conference in Akron, Ohio, where she delivered her famous "Ain't I a Woman?" speech. In it, she challenged prevailing notions of racial and gender inferiority and inequality by reminding listeners of her combined strength (Truth was nearly six feet tall) and female status. Truth ultimately split with Douglass, who believed suffrage for formerly enslaved men should come before women's suffrage; she thought both should occur simultaneously.

During the 1850's, Truth settled in Battle Creek, Michigan, where three of her daughters lived. She continued speaking nationally and helped slaves escape to freedom. When the Civil War started, Truth urged young men to join the Union cause and organized supplies for black troops. After the war, she was honored with an invitation to the White House and became involved with the Freedmen's Bureau, helping freed slaves find jobs and build new lives. While in Washington, DC, she lobbied against segregation, and in the mid 1860s, when a streetcar conductor tried to violently block her from riding, she ensured his arrest and won her subsequent case. In the late 1860s, she collected thousands of signatures on a petition to provide former slaves with land, though Congress never took action. Nearly blind and deaf towards the end of her life, Truth spent her final years in Michigan.

https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/sojourner-truth

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Kamala Harris

Vice President Harris was born in Oakland, California to parents who emigrated from India and Jamaica. She graduated from Howard University and the University of California, Hastings College of Law.

Vice President Harris and her sister, Maya Harris, were inspired by their mother, Shyamala Gopalan. Gopalan, a breast cancer scientist and pioneer in her own right, received her doctorate the same year Vice President Harris was born.

Her parents were activists, instilling Vice President Harris with a strong sense of justice. They brought her to civil rights demonstrations and introduced role models—ranging from Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall to civil rights leader Constance Baker Motley—whose work motivated her to become a prosecutor.

Growing up, Vice President Harris was surrounded by a diverse community and extended family. In 2014, she married Douglas Emhoff. They have a large blended family that includes their children, Ella and Cole.

In 1990, Vice President Harris joined the Alameda County District Attorney's Office where she specialized in prosecuting child sexual assault cases. She then served as a managing attorney in the San Francisco District Attorney's Office and later was chief of the Division on Children and Families for the San Francisco City Attorney's Office.

She was elected District Attorney of San Francisco in 2003. In that role, Vice President Harris created a ground-breaking program to provide first-time drug offenders with the opportunity to earn a high school degree and find employment. The program was designated as a national model of innovation for law enforcement by the United States Department of Justice.

In 2010, Vice President Harris was elected California's Attorney General and oversaw the largest state justice department in the United States. She established the state's first Bureau of Children's Justice and instituted several first-of-their-kind reforms that ensured greater transparency and accountability in the criminal justice system.

In 2017, Vice President Harris was sworn into the United States Senate. As a member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, she fought for better protections for DREAMers and called for better oversight of substandard conditions at immigrant detention facilities.

On August 11, 2020, Vice President Harris accepted President Joe Biden's invitation to become his running mate and help unite the nation. She is the first woman, the first Black American, and the first South Asian American to be elected Vice President.

https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/vice-president-harris/

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The Underground Railroad

I was the conductor of the Underground Railroad for eight years, and I can say what most conductors can't say — I never ran my train off the track and I never lost a passenger.

-Harriet Tubman, 1896

The Underground Railroad—the resistance to enslavement through escape and flight, through the end of the Civil War—refers to the efforts of enslaved African Americans to gain their freedom by escaping bondage. Wherever slavery existed, there were efforts to escape.

The Underground Railroad started at the place of enslavement. The routes followed natural and man-made modes of transportation - rivers, canals, bays, the Atlantic Coast, ferries and river crossings, road and trails. Locations close to ports, free territories and international boundaries prompted many escapes. As research continues, new routes are discovered and will be represented on the map.

Using ingenuity, freedom seekers drew on courage and intelligence to concoct disguises, forgeries and other strategies. Slave catchers and enslavers watched for runaways on the expected routes of escape and used the stimulus of advertised rewards to encourage public complicity in apprehension. Help came from diverse groups: enslaved and free blacks, American Indians, and people of different religious and ethnic groups.

Maritime industry was an important source for spreading information, in addition to offering employment and transportation. The Pacific West Coast and possibly Alaska became destinations because of ties to the whaling industry. Military service was an additional option; thousands of African Americans joined from the Colonial Era to the Civil War to gain their freedom. During the Civil War, many freedom seekers sought protection and liberty by escaping to the lines of the Union army.

According to some estimates, between 1810 and 1850, the Underground Railroad helped to guide one hundred thousand enslaved people to freedom. As the network grew, the railroad metaphor stuck. “Conductors” guided runaway enslaved people from place to place along the routes. The places that sheltered the runaways were referred to as “stations,” and the people who hid the enslaved people were called “station masters.” The fugitives traveling along the routes were called “passengers,” and those who had arrived at the safe houses were called “cargo.”

Contemporary scholarship has shown that most of those who participated in the Underground Railroad largely worked alone, rather than as part of an organized group. There were people from many occupations and income levels, including former enslaved persons. According to historical accounts of the Railroad, conductors often posed as enslaved people and snuck the runaways out of plantations. Due to the danger associated with capture, they conducted much of their activity at night. The conductors and passengers traveled from safe-house to safe-house, often with 16-19 kilometers (10–20 miles) between each stop. Lanterns in the windows welcomed them and promised safety. Patrols seeking to catch enslaved people were frequently hot on their heels.

https://www.nps.gov/subjects/undergroundrailroad/what-is-the-underground-railroad.htm
https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/underground-railroad/

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Frederick Douglass

Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey was born into slavery on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in February 1818. Enslavers often ripped apart or fractured family relationships. Young Frederick barely knew his mother, who died when he was a young child on a distant forced labor camp. He never knew his father. When he turned eight years old, his enslaver forced him to work for a family in Baltimore.

At an early age, Frederick realized there was a connection between literacy and freedom. Not allowed to attend school, he taught himself to read and write in the streets of Baltimore. At twelve, he bought a book called *The Columbian Orator*. It was a collection of revolutionary speeches, debates, and writings on natural rights.

When Frederick was fifteen, his enslaver sent him back to the Eastern Shore to labor as a fieldhand. Frederick rebelled intensely. He educated other enslaved individuals, physically fought back against a "slave-breaker," and attempted to seize his freedom through a bold, but ultimately unsuccessful plan.

Frustrated, his enslaver returned him to Baltimore. This time, Frederick met a young free Black woman named Anna Murray. Anna Murray used her money to buy him a train ticket, risking her own safety to help him seize his freedom. On September 3, 1838, with the ticket in hand, he boarded a northbound train dressed as a sailor. In less than 24 hours, Frederick arrived in New York City. His lifelong search for freedom was well underway.

After seeking freedom, Frederick and Anna were married. They decided that with the human traffickers in New York City, it was not a safe place for Frederick, so they settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts. There, they adopted the last name "Douglass" and started their family. The family grew to include five children: Rosetta, Lewis, Frederick, Jr., Charles, and Annie.

After finding employment as a laborer, Douglass began to attend abolitionist meetings and speak about his experiences. He soon gained a reputation as an orator, and was paid to speak about

slavery by the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. This took him on speaking tours across the North and Midwest.

Douglass's fame as an orator increased as he traveled. Still, some of his audiences suspected he had never been enslaved. In 1845, he published his first autobiography, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, to lay those doubts to rest. The narrative gave a clear record of names and places from his enslavement.

To avoid being captured and re-enslaved, Douglass traveled overseas. For almost two years, he gave speeches and sold copies of his narrative in England, Ireland, and Scotland. When abolitionists offered to purchase his freedom, Douglass accepted and returned home to the United States legally free. The Douglass family relocated to Rochester, New York.

In Rochester, Douglass took his work in new directions. He embraced the women's rights movement, helped people on the Underground Railroad, and supported anti-slavery political parties. Once an ally of William Lloyd Garrison and his followers, Douglass started to work more closely with Gerrit Smith and John Brown. He bought a printing press and ran his own newspaper, *The North Star*. In 1855, he published his second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, which expanded on his first autobiography and challenged racial segregation in the North.

Frustrated, his enslaver returned him to Baltimore. This time, Frederick met a young free Black woman named Anna Murray. Anna Murray used her money to buy him a train ticket, risking her own safety to help him seize his freedom. On September 3, 1838, with the ticket in hand, he boarded a northbound train dressed as a sailor. In less than 24 hours, Frederick arrived in New York City. His lifelong search for freedom was well underway.

In 1861, the nation erupted into civil war over the issue of slavery. Frederick Douglass worked tirelessly to make sure that emancipation would be one of the war's outcomes. He recruited Black men to fight in the U.S. Army, including two of his own sons, who served in the famous 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. When Black troops protested they were not receiving pay

and treatment equal to that of white troops, Douglass met with President Abraham Lincoln to advocate on their behalf.

As the Civil War progressed and emancipation seemed imminent, Douglass intensified the fight for equal citizenship. He argued that freedom would be empty if the formerly enslaved were not guaranteed the rights and protections of American citizens. A series of postwar amendments sought to make some of these tremendous changes. The 13th Amendment (ratified in 1865) abolished slavery, the 14th Amendment (ratified in 1868) granted national birthright citizenship, and the 15th Amendment (ratified in 1870) stated nobody could be denied voting rights on the basis of race, skin color, or previous servitude.

In 1872, the Douglasses moved to Washington, D.C. There were multiple reasons for their move. Douglass had been traveling frequently to the area ever since the Civil War. All three of their sons already lived in the federal district, and the old family home in Rochester had burned. A widely known public figure by the time of Reconstruction, Douglass started to hold prestigious offices, including assistant secretary of the Santo Domingo Commission, legislative council member of the D.C. Territorial Government, board member of Howard University, and president of the Freedman's Bank.

After the fall of Reconstruction, Frederick Douglass managed to retain high-ranking federal appointments. He served under five presidents as U.S. Marshal for D.C. (1877-1881), Recorder of Deeds for D.C. (1881-1886), and Minister Resident and Consul General to Haiti (1889-1891). Significantly, he held these positions at a time when violence and fraud severely restricted Black political activism.

On top of his federal work, Douglass kept a vigorous speaking tour schedule. His speeches continued to agitate for racial equality and women's rights. In 1881, Douglass published his third autobiography, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, which took a long view of his life's work, the nation's progress, and the work left to do. Although the nation had made great strides during Reconstruction, there was still injustice and a basic lack of freedom for many Americans.

Tragedy struck Douglass's life in 1882 when Anna Murray Douglass died from a stroke. He remarried in 1884 to Helen Pitts, an activist and the daughter of former abolitionists. The marriage stirred controversy, as Helen was white and twenty years younger than him. Part of their married life was spent abroad. They traveled to Europe and Africa in 1886-1887, and they took up temporary residence in Haiti during Douglass's service there in 1889-1891.

On February 20, 1895, Douglass attended a meeting for the National Council of Women. He returned home to Cedar Hill in the late afternoon and was preparing to give a speech at a local church when he suffered a heart attack and passed away. Douglass was 77. He had remained a central figure in the fight for equality and justice for his entire life.

https://www.nps.gov/frdo/learn/historyculture/frederickdouglass.htm

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Black Panther Party

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) was founded in October 1966 in Oakland, California by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, who met at Merritt College in Oakland. It was a revolutionary organization with an ideology of Black nationalism, socialism, and armed self-defense, particularly against police brutality. It was part of the Black Power movement, which broke from the integrationist goals and nonviolent protest tactics of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The BPP name was inspired by the use of the black panther as a symbol that had recently been used by the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, an independent Black political party in Alabama.

The BPP's philosophy was influenced by the speeches of Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam, the teachings of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung of the Communist Party of China, and the anti-colonialist book *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre*, 1961) by the Martiniquan psychiatrist Frantz Fanon. The BPP's practice of armed self-defense was influenced by African American activist Robert Williams, who advocated this practice against anti-black aggression by the Ku

Klux Klan in his book *Negroes with Guns* (1962). Newton and Seale canvassed their community asking residents about issues of concern. They compiled the responses and created the Ten Point Platform and Program that served as the foundation of the Black Panther Party. The ten points are:

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery by the Capitalists of our Black Community.
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present day society.
6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.
8. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.
9. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black Communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.

Because of its practice of armed self-defense against police, as well as its Communistic and revolutionary elements, the BPP was frequently targeted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's COINTELPRO program as well as by state and local law enforcement groups. However, despite its militant stance, the BPP also provided free breakfast for school children, sickle cell anemia screening, legal aid, and adult education.

While the most widely shared images of the Black Panthers are of men, women played an essential role in the party, making up at least two-thirds of the organization by the end of the 1960s. Elaine Brown edited the Party's newspaper and led the entire organization from 1974 to 1977. Other women were involved at all levels of organizing; they fought for more inclusive

understandings of Black Power, armed themselves and led many of the party's most successful community programs.

Black Lives Matter was founded by three women—Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi—and many of its leaders across the country are female. A chant written by former Panther Assata Shakur is routinely used to close out Black Lives Matter actions and meetings.

The Black Panthers' call for reparations has been re-energized by the writings of Ta-Nehisi Coates and congressional candidates who have recently made it a part of their campaigns. While the word socialism alone still rankles many Americans—just like it did when the Panthers championed it—polls have shown that support for some form of socialism has increased over the last decade. Hampton's Rainbow Coalition, in which he united disenfranchised Black, Hispanic and white organizing groups, has inspired activists to form alliances across demographic lines in class solidarity. And long before Andrew Yang was espousing universal basic income, the Black Panthers wrote in their Ten-Point Program: "We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income."

https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/black-power/black-panthers
https://time.com/5938058/black-panthers-activism/

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Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

During the less than 13 years of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership of the modern American Civil Rights Movement, from December 1955 until April 4, 1968, African Americans achieved more genuine progress toward racial equality in America than the previous 350 years had produced. Dr. King is widely regarded as America's pre-eminent advocate of nonviolence and one of the greatest nonviolent leaders in world history.

Drawing inspiration from both his Christian faith and the peaceful teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. King led a nonviolent movement in the late 1950s and ‘60s to achieve legal equality for African-Americans in the United States. While others were advocating for freedom by “any means necessary,” including violence, Martin Luther King, Jr. used the power of words and acts of nonviolent resistance, such as protests, grassroots organizing, and civil disobedience to achieve seemingly-impossible goals. He went on to lead similar campaigns against poverty and international conflict, always maintaining fidelity to his principles that men and women everywhere, regardless of color or creed, are equal members of the human family.

Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, Nobel Peace Prize lecture and “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” are among the most revered orations and writings in the English language. His accomplishments are now taught to American children of all races, and his teachings are studied by scholars and students worldwide. He is the only non-president to have a national holiday dedicated in his honor and is the only non-president memorialized on the Great Mall in the nation’s capital. He is memorialized in hundreds of statues, parks, streets, squares, churches and other public facilities around the world as a leader whose teachings are increasingly-relevant to the progress of humankind.

In 1955, he was recruited to serve as spokesman for the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which was a campaign by the African-American population of Montgomery, Alabama to force integration of the city’s bus lines. After 381 days of nearly universal participation by citizens of the black community, many of whom had to walk miles to work each day as a result, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in transportation was unconstitutional.

In 1957, Dr. King was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization designed to provide new leadership for the now burgeoning civil rights movement. He would serve as head of the SCLC until his assassination in 1968, a period during which he would emerge as the most important social leader of the modern American civil rights movement.

In 1963, he led a coalition of numerous civil rights groups in a nonviolent campaign aimed at Birmingham, Alabama, which at the time was described as the “most segregated city in America.” The subsequent brutality of the city’s police, illustrated most vividly by television images of young blacks being assaulted by dogs and water hoses, led to a national outrage resulting in a push for unprecedented civil rights legislation. It was during this campaign that Dr. King drafted the “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” the manifesto of Dr. King’s philosophy and tactics, which is today required-reading in universities worldwide.

Later in 1963, Dr. King was one of the driving forces behind the March for Jobs and Freedom, more commonly known as the “March on Washington,” which drew over a quarter-million people to the national mall. It was at this march that Dr. King delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, which cemented his status as a social change leader and helped inspire the nation to act on civil rights. Dr. King was later named Time magazine’s “Man of the Year.”

In 1964, at 35 years old, Martin Luther King, Jr. became the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize. His acceptance speech in Oslo is thought by many to be among the most powerful remarks ever delivered at the event, climaxing at one point with the oft-quoted phrase “I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.”

Also in 1964, partly due to the March on Washington, Congress passed the landmark Civil Rights Act, essentially eliminating legalized racial segregation in the United States. The legislation made it illegal to discriminate against blacks or other minorities in hiring, public accommodations, education or transportation, areas which at the time were still very segregated in many places.

The next year, 1965, Congress went on to pass the Voting Rights Act, which was an equally-important set of laws that eliminated the remaining barriers to voting for African-Americans, who in some locales had been almost completely disenfranchised. This legislation resulted directly from the Selma to Montgomery, AL March for Voting Rights lead by Dr. King.

Between 1965 and 1968, Dr. King shifted his focus toward economic justice – which he highlighted by leading several campaigns in Chicago, Illinois – and international peace – which he championed by speaking out strongly against the Vietnam War. His work in these years culminated in the "Poor Peoples Campaign," which was a broad effort to assemble a multiracial coalition of impoverished Americans who would advocate for economic change. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s less than thirteen years of nonviolent leadership ended abruptly and tragically on April 4th, 1968, when he was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. King's body was returned to his hometown of Atlanta, Georgia, where his funeral ceremony was attended by high-level leaders of all races and political stripes.

https://thekingcenter.org/about-tkc/martin-luther-king-jr/

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Malcolm X

A foster child and street hustler who went on to become a world leader, Malcolm X electrified some audiences and terrified others with his aggressive brand of Islamic teachings and black nationalism.

Born Malcolm Little on May 19, 1925, in Omaha, Nebraska, to a Baptist preacher and a homemaker, Malcolm knew little domestic tranquility. His parents were followers of Marcus Garvey, and family activities caught the attention of local white supremacists. In 1929 the Little home in Lansing, Michigan, was burned down, and two years later Malcolm's father Earl was killed in an alleged streetcar "accident." The strain of trying to provide for seven children proved too much for Malcolm's mother, and in 1938 Louise Little was committed to the state mental hospital. Malcolm was placed in a juvenile home until 1941, when his half-sister Ella Collins brought the 15-year-old to Boston. Over the next few years Malcolm held odd jobs, wore flashy zoot suits, and increasingly turned to a life of crime.

Malcolm's criminal activities came to a halt when he was arrested in early 1946 and charged with grand larceny. Although Malcolm's white female gang members received at most seven months in prison, Malcolm was sentenced to eight-to-10 years. During his time behind bars, Malcolm began to study under the tutelage of fellow inmate "Bimbi," and he was subsequently exposed to the teachings of the Nation of Islam and its imprisoned leader, Elijah Muhammad, who struck up a correspondence with the young convict. Upon his release in 1952, Malcolm moved to Detroit and joined the Nation of Islam, adopting the name "Malcolm X" in recognition that his ancestors' original African name was no longer known.

In 1952 the Nation of Islam had four temples and only 400 members. This disappointed Malcolm, who told Elijah Muhammad every time he came to the Detroit Temple that "this place should be full." Blessed with considerable charisma and enormous energy (he typically slept only four hours a night), Malcolm set out to bring the Nation of Islam's teachings to black Americans. He traveled up and down the East Coast (putting 30,000 miles on a car in just six months), dramatically increasing membership and soon becoming leader of the Nation of Islam's chief temple in Harlem. By the end of the decade, the Nation of Islam supported 49 temples and its members numbered in the tens of thousands. Appointed national representative by Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm preached a doctrine of black self-reliance, combined with regular excoriations of those he termed "blue-eyed devils." His protests of police brutality in Harlem and Los Angeles gave Malcolm X a national profile, as did a 1959 documentary on the Nation of Islam by Mike Wallace entitled The Hate that Hate Produced.

In 1958 Malcolm married Betty X, and soon after they began a family. Several trips to the Middle East and Africa, including a pilgrimage to Mecca, broadened Malcolm's perspective; while he continued to denounce racism in America, Malcolm's eyes were opened to the possibility of unity with white Muslims he met overseas. At the same time, rifts had opened between him and Elijah Muhammad, whose repeated adulteries had disillusioned Malcolm. Then when, despite Elijah Muhammad's warning against it, he termed President Kennedy's 1963 assassination "a case of chickens coming home to roost," he was silenced by the Nation of Islam for 90 days. Shortly thereafter Malcolm formed his own religious organization, the Muslim Mosque Incorporated. Even as his international profile increased, Malcolm began receiving

death threats at home, and in February 1965 his house was firebombed. He was assassinated one week later in Harlem by members of the Nation of Islam.

https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/malcolmx-x/

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Black Feminism

"Contemporary Black feminism is the outgrowth of countless generations of personal sacrifice, militancy, and work by our mothers and sisters." – The Combahee River Collective

The tradition of black feminism stems from the condition of being both Black and a woman. It characterizes itself by a multi-dimensional approach to liberation but is resistant to claiming a specific definition. It focuses on the intersection of racism and sexism and how they create the social issues and inequalities Black women face. Within, it ranges from an intellectual, artistic, philosophical, and activist practice. The core principles that exist among black feminists include:

- "Black women's experience of racism, sexism, and classism are inseparable."
- "Their needs and worldviews are distinct from those of black men and white women."
- "There is no contradiction between the struggle against racism, sexism, and all other-isms. All must be addressed simultaneously."

The presence of the Black feminist movement evolved with the second wave of the American women's movement in the late 1960s, making the 1970s, a defining decade for contemporary Black feminism. Although, accounts of the start of the Black feminist movement can be traced back to the 1830s, and we must highlight the women who made strides for Black feminism before the movement was named, women such as Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, Patricia Hill Collins, Angela Davis, Akasha Gloria Hull, bell hooks, and Ida B. Wells.

The 60s and 70s lit a spark in the movement because of the arousal and growing tensions between the Women's Liberation Movement and the Civil Rights Movement. Second wave of feminism turned a blind eye towards the needs and struggles of Black queer women, as Audre Lorde said, white women fail feminism in their "refusal to recognize differences and to examine the distortions which result from misnaming them." With steps being made that further separated the two groups, Black women set out to build their own movement, separating from mainstream, white-dominated women's liberation movement and deploying black feminism centralized around intersectionality.

A founding figure of the separation and uplift of the Black feminist movement in the 1960s and 70s was Pauli Murray, a Black queer feminist, civil rights lawyer, priest, and co-founder of NOW. She played an important role in civil, social, and legal organizations during the rise of the Black feminist movement during the 1960s and 70s. Mainly, she theorized and wrote about the intersection of gender, race, and sexuality, sharing her experiences of black womanhood and asserting that her identifiers could not be separated, an ideal that fueled her legal work and activism.

Today, we continue Murray's beliefs of intersectionality. The term was formally introduced by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989, although the concept had been described by activists many times before. It refers to the complex way in which gender, race, and other social categories interact to influence an individual's life outcome. As she says in her paper "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," "When feminism does not explicitly oppose racism and when anti-racism does not incorporate opposition to the patriarchy, race and gender politics often end up being antagonistic to each other and both interests lose."

By the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, the black feminist shifted from being grounded in a black, heterosexual woman to a more radical black feminist focusing on queer and trans black women, girls, and gender nonconforming peoples, as Crenshaw states, Black women "are differently situated in the economic, social, and political worlds."

Within the Black feminist movement and even beforehand, there is the club movement: the creation of feminist groups, women's clubs, and Black sororities that continue on the ideals of the Black feminist movement today. By this time, middle-class black women organized social and political reform through women's organizations or clubs. But they affected the movement even beforehand. The well-known motto for Black women's activism in the late nineteenth century, "Lifting as we climb," stems from the slogan of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW).

In 1973, Black feminists identifying as queer were at the forefront of black feminist groups as well as creating their own organizations within the movement. These organizations include the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), Salsa Soul Sisters: one of the first out and explicitly multi-cultural lesbian organizations, and the influential Combahee River Collective. From the creation of Black women's clubs and mutual aid societies came the creation of Black sororities, resemblances of the first organizations that sought to combat racism and discrimination. These sororities stand strong today and carry on the tradition of creating change. In the seven women Kamala Harris saluted in her speech at the 2020 Democratic National Convention, all but two belonged to Black sororities. Harris herself mentioned her own, saying, "Family is my beloved Alpha Kappa Alpha." allowing for communities of resistance in which Black women can not only survive, but achieve, refute stereotypes, and fight gendered racism.

Today, the marks of Black women and the impact of the Black feminist movement are seen all around us, whether we see them or not. Black women have been central to the movements we see today: third-wave feminism, the #MeToo movement, and the Black Lives Matter Movement. Although #MeToo began gaining following in recent years, the phrase #MeToo itself was first introduced in 2006 by African American sexual assault survivor and activist Tarana Burke, raising awareness *specifically* for marginalized victims. Black women have been fighting this battle for decades, being at higher risks of sexual violence than white counterparts.

Even the Black Lives Matter Movement is rooted in the acknowledgment of intersectionality. The movement forces people to see the interlocking systems of oppression that operate in our lives. BLM's inclusive nature and coverage on a wide range of topics show its basis off of Black

feminism. They address the issues of heterosexual Black men and women, as well as the issues of Black LGBTQIA+ men and women. This can be accredited to the three women that co-founded the movement, Patrisse Cullars and Alicia Garza being Black queer women with an understanding of police brutality from all perspectives.

https://now.org/blog/the-original-activists-black-feminism-and-the-black-feminist-movement/

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bell hooks

Preferring to spell her name with no capital letters as a way of de-emphasizing her individual identity, bell hooks was born Gloria Jean Watkins as the fourth of seven children in Hopkinsville, Ky., on Sept. 25, 1952. Her pen name was a tribute to her maternal great-grandmother, Bell Blair Hooks.

She attended segregated schools in her native Christian County, Ky., before earning her undergraduate degree at Stanford University in California, a master's degree in English at the University of Wisconsin and a doctorate in literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She taught at Stanford University, Yale University, Oberlin College in Ohio and the City College of New York before returning to Kentucky to teach at Berea College, which now houses the bell hooks center.

The author of more than three dozen wide-ranging books, hooks published her first title, the poetry collection *And There We Wept*, in 1978. Her influential book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* followed in 1981. Three years later, her *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* explored and criticized the feminist movement's propensity to center and privilege white women's experiences.

Frequently, hooks' work addressed the deep intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality and geographic place. She wrote about her native Appalachia and growing up there as a Black girl in

the critical-essay collection *Belonging: A Culture of Place* and in the poetry collection *Appalachian Elegy: Poetry and Place*.

In a 2000 interview with *All Things Considered*, hooks spoke about the life-changing power of love — that is, the act of loving and how love is far broader than romantic sentiment. "I'm talking about a love that is transformative, that challenges us in both our private and our civic lives," she said. "I'm so moved often when I think of the civil rights movement, because I see it as a great movement for social justice that was rooted in love and that politicized the notion of love, that said: Real love will change you."

She went on: "Everywhere I go, people want to feel more connected. They want to feel more connected to their neighbors. They want to feel more connected to the world. And when we learn that through love we can have that connection, we can see the stranger as ourselves. And I think that it would be absolutely fantastic to have that sense of 'Let's return to kind of a utopian focus on love, not unlike the sort of hippie focus on love.' Because I always say to people, you know, the '60s' focus on love had its stupid sentimental dimensions, but then it had these life-transforming dimensions. When I think of the love of justice that led three young people, two Jews and one African American Christian, to go to the South and fight for justice and give their lives — Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner — I think that's a quality of love that's awesome. ... I tell this to young people, you know, that we can love in a deep and profound way that transforms the political world in which we live in."

https://www.npr.org/2021/12/15/1064509418/bell-hooks-feminist-author-critic-activist-died

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NAACP

African Americans and their white allies formed The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 to battle against forced segregation, provide equal education for Black people and white people, and completely enfranchise African Americans.

Black women were involved in the formation of the NAACP and performed much of the clerical and organizational work.

W.E.B. DuBois was the only African American officer on the original board, and was placed in charge of research and the NAACP's journal *Crisis*. In its pages DuBois clashed with Booker T. Washington's approach to race relations, urging a legal and popular assault on segregation.

Earle Johathan, The Routledge Atlas of African American History, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2022

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Brown v. Board of Education

In this milestone decision, the Supreme Court ruled that separating children in public schools on the basis of race was unconstitutional. It signaled the end of legalized racial segregation in the schools of the United States, overruling the "separate but equal" principle set forth in the 1896 *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* case.

On May 17, 1954, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren delivered the unanimous ruling in the landmark civil rights case *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. State-sanctioned segregation of public schools was a violation of the 14th amendment and was therefore unconstitutional. This historic decision marked the end of the "separate but equal" precedent set by the Supreme Court nearly 60 years earlier in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* and served as a catalyst for the expanding civil rights movement during the decade of the 1950s.

There was considerable resistance to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. In addition to the obvious disapproving segregationists were some constitutional scholars who felt that the decision went against legal tradition by relying heavily on data supplied by social scientists rather than precedent or established law. Supporters of judicial restraint believed the Court had overstepped its constitutional powers by essentially writing new law.

However, minority groups and members of the civil rights movement were buoyed by the *Brown* decision even without specific directions for implementation. Proponents of judicial activism believed the Supreme Court had appropriately used its position to adapt the basis of the Constitution to address new problems in new times. The Warren Court stayed this course for the next 15 years, deciding cases that significantly affected not only race relations, but also the administration of criminal justice, the operation of the political process, and the separation of church and state.

https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/brown-v-board-of-education

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Emmett Till

The murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till in 1955 brought nationwide attention to the racial violence and injustice prevalent in Mississippi. While visiting his relatives in Mississippi, Till went to the Bryant store with his cousins, and may have whistled at Carolyn Bryant. Her husband, Roy Bryant, and brother-in-law, J.W. Milam, kidnapped and brutally murdered Till, dumping his body in the Tallahatchie River. The newspaper coverage and murder trial galvanized a generation of young African Americans to join the Civil Rights Movement out of fear that such an incident could happen to friends, family, or even themselves. Many interviewees in the Civil Rights History Project remember how this case deeply affected their lives.

Two of Emmett Till's cousins, Wheeler Parker and Simeon Wright, witnessed Till's kidnapping on the night of August 28, 1955 at the home of Moses Wright. They both describe their family's background in Mississippi and Chicago, the incident at Bryant's store, and the terror they felt when Bryant and Milan entered their home and took Till. Parker describes the funeral in Chicago, which drew thousands of people: "The solemn atmosphere there, you know, it's just – it's just unbelievable, I guess you could say. The air was filled with just, I guess, unbelief and how could it happen to a kid? People just felt helpless."

Two journalists, Moses Newson and Simeon Booker, were assigned to cover the murder for the *Tri-State Defender* and *JET*, respectively. Booker attended the funeral with photographer David Jackson, who took the famous image of Till in the coffin. In this joint interview, Booker explains: "*JET's* circulation just took off when they ran the picture. They had to reprint, the first time they ever reprinted *JET* magazine. And there was a lot of interest in that case. And the entire black community was becoming aware of the need to do something about it." The two journalists also covered the trial and were instrumental in helping to find some key witnesses. Bryant and Milam were acquitted, however, which outraged the African American community nationwide.

African American children and teenagers, particularly those in the South, were shocked by the photographs in *JET* and the outcome of the trial. Sisters Joyce and Dorie Ladner, who grew up in Mississippi, remember keeping a scrapbook of every article about Till and their fear that their brothers could be killed too. Dorie Ladner was inspired to learn more about the law after Bryant and Milam were acquitted: "That's where the light bulb went off: Why aren't they being punished? And that's when I went on my quest to try to understand the whole legal system and equal rights and justice under the law." Joyce Ladner discusses how she coined the term, "Emmett Till Generation," which she uses to describe the African American baby boomers in the South who were inspired by Till's murder to join a burgeoning movement of mass meetings, sit-ins, and marches to demand their equal treatment under the law.

Cleveland Sellers was 11 years old when he learned about Emmett Till through *JET*. He remembers, "I was devastated by the fact that Emmett could have been me or any other black kid around that same age. And so, I related to that very quickly. And we had discussions in our class about Emmett Till. I had a cover of the *JET*, took it to school. Some other students had the same thing. And so, we had rational discussions about it. And, you know, the question comes up: How do you address that? And I think, for us, it was projected out, that that would be our destiny to try to find remedies to a society that would allow that to happen, would condone that, and would actually free those who were responsible for that murder. And I think that that was a way in which we actually got away from revenge and hatred and those kinds of things. We talked about

how we were going to use Emmett Till to build on, that we would rectify in our work and in our effort the dastardly tragedy that happened to Emmett Till."

Devastated by the brutal murder and badly disfigured corpse, Emmett's mother, Mamie Till Bradley, defiantly held an open-casket funeral in Chicago, where thousands gazed in horror at what was left of her son. To show the world the brutality Emmett had suffered, his mother also distributed a photograph of his corpse for publication in newspapers and magazines and later explained her motivation: "The whole nation had to bear witness to this."

https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-rights-history-project/articles-and-essays/murder-of-emmett-till/
https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/aug/28

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Loving v. Virginia

(1967) Mildred and Richard Loving, an interracial couple, married in D.C. but moved to Virginia where interracial marriage was banned. They sued for violation of the Equal Protection Clause. The Court held that the Virginia law violated the Fourteenth Amendment because of the law's clear purpose to create a race-based restriction. The Court reasoned that the law treated people differently based on race because it prohibited marriage based on the race of the other party to the marriage. Here, a white man who married a Black woman was committing a crime *because* the woman he chose to marry was Black. This holding marked an expansion of the Court's interpretation of the Equal Protection Clause and the characteristics it protects.

Bernard Cohen and Philip Hirschkop, two young ACLU lawyers at the time, took the case of the Lovings — a black and Native American woman named Mildred and Richard Loving, her white husband — all the way to the high court.

On June 12, 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court justices ruled in the Lovings' favor. The unanimous decision upheld that distinctions drawn based on race were not constitutional. The court's decision made it clear that Virginia's anti-miscegenation law violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment.

The landmark civil rights decision declared prohibitions on interracial marriage unconstitutional in the nation. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote the opinion for the court; he wrote that marriage is a basic civil right and to deny this right on a basis of color is "directly subversive of the principle of equality at the heart of the Fourteenth Amendment" and seizes all citizens "liberty without due process of law."

https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/supreme-court-case-library/loving-v-virginia
https://www.npr.org/2017/06/12/532123349/illicit-cohabitation-listen-to-6-stunning-moments-from-loving-v-virginia

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Juneteenth

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally/internationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States.

From its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, the observance of June 19th as the African American Emancipation Day has spread across the United States and beyond.

Today Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement. It is a day, a week, and in some areas, a month marked with celebrations, guest speakers, picnics and family gatherings. It is a time for reflection and rejoicing. It is a time for assessment, self-improvement and for planning the future. Its growing popularity signifies a level of maturity and dignity in America long overdue. In cities across the country, people of all races, nationalities and religions are joining hands to truthfully acknowledge a period in our history that

shaped and continues to influence our society today. Sensitized to the conditions and experiences of others, only then can we make significant and lasting improvements in our society.

One of General Granger's first orders of business was to read to the people of Texas, General Order Number 3 which began most significantly with:

"The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired laborer."

The reactions to this profound news ranged from pure shock to immediate jubilation. While many lingered to learn of this new employer to employee relationship, many left before these offers were completely off the lips of their former 'masters' – attesting to the varying conditions on the plantations and the realization of freedom. Even with nowhere to go, many felt that leaving the plantation would be their first grasp of freedom. North was a logical destination and for many it represented true freedom, while the desire to reach family members in neighboring states drove some into Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma. Settling into these new areas as free men and women brought on new realities and the challenges of establishing a heretofore non-existent status for black people in America. Recounting the memories of that great day in June of 1865 and its festivities would serve as motivation as well as a release from the growing pressures encountered in their new territories. The celebration of June 19th was coined "Juneteenth" and grew with more participation from descendants. The Juneteenth celebration was a time for reassuring each other, for praying and for gathering remaining family members. Juneteenth continued to be highly revered in Texas decades later, with many former slaves and descendants making an annual pilgrimage back to Galveston on this date.

A range of activities were provided to entertain the masses, many of which continue in tradition today. Rodeos, fishing, barbecuing and baseball are just a few of the typical Juneteenth activities you may witness today. Juneteenth almost always focused on education and self improvement.

Thus, often guest speakers are brought in and the elders are called upon to recount the events of the past. Prayer services were also a major part of these celebrations.

Certain foods became popular and subsequently synonymous with Juneteenth celebrations such as strawberry soda-pop. More traditional and just as popular was the barbecuing, through which Juneteenth participants could share in the spirit and aromas that their ancestors – the newly emancipated African Americans, would have experienced during their ceremonies. Hence, the barbecue pit is often established as the center of attention at Juneteenth celebrations.

Food was abundant because everyone prepared a special dish. Meats such as lamb, pork and beef which were not available everyday were brought on this special occasion. A true Juneteenth celebration left visitors well satisfied and with enough conversation to last until the next.

Dress was also an important element in early Juneteenth customs and is often still taken seriously, particularly by the direct descendants who can make the connection to this tradition's roots. During slavery there were laws on the books in many areas that prohibited or limited the dressing of the enslaved. During the initial days of the emancipation celebrations, there are accounts of former slaves tossing their ragged garments into the creeks and rivers and adorning themselves with clothing taken from the plantations belonging to their former 'masters'.

Today, Juneteenth is enjoying a phenomenal growth rate within communities and organizations throughout the country. Institutions such as the Smithsonian, the Henry Ford Museum and others have begun sponsoring Juneteenth-centered activities. In recent years, a number of local and national Juneteenth organizations have arisen to take their place alongside older organizations – all with the mission to promote and cultivate knowledge and appreciation of African American history and culture.

Juneteenth today, celebrates African American freedom and achievement, while encouraging continuous self-development and respect for all cultures. As it takes on a more national, symbolic and even global perspective, the events of 1865 in Texas are not forgotten, for all of the roots tie back to this fertile soil from which a national day of pride is growing.

The future of Juneteenth looks bright as the number of cities and states creating Juneteenth committees continues to increase. Respect and appreciation for all of our differences grow out of exposure and working together. Getting involved and supporting Juneteenth celebrations creates new bonds of friendship and understanding among us. This indeed brightens our future – and that is the Spirit of Juneteenth.

On June 17th, 2021, President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law establishing Juneteenth as a federal holiday.

https://www.juneteenth.com/

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Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes was a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance, the flowering of black intellectual, literary, and artistic life that took place in the 1920s in a number of American cities, particularly Harlem. A major poet, Hughes also wrote novels, short stories, essays, and plays. He sought to honestly portray the joys and hardships of working-class black lives, avoiding both sentimental idealization and negative stereotypes. As he wrote in his essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," "We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too."

This approach was not without its critics. Much of Hughes's early work was roundly criticized by many black intellectuals for portraying what they thought to be an unattractive view of black life.

Nevertheless, Hughes, more than any other black poet or writer, recorded faithfully the nuances of black life and its frustrations.

In Hughes's own words, his poetry is about "workers, roustabouts, and singers, and job hunters on Lenox Avenue in New York, or Seventh Street in Washington or South State in Chicago—people up today and down tomorrow, working this week and fired the next, beaten and baffled, but determined not to be wholly beaten, buying furniture on the installment plan, filling the house with roomers to help pay the rent, hoping to get a new suit for Easter—and pawning that suit before the Fourth of July."

Although Hughes had trouble with both black and white critics, he was the first black American to earn his living solely from his writing and public lectures.

It was Hughes's belief in humanity and his hope for a world in which people could sanely and with understanding live together that led to his decline in popularity in the racially turbulent latter years of his life. Unlike younger and more militant writers, Hughes never lost his conviction that "*most* people are generally good, in every race and in every country where I have been."

Hughes died on May 22, 1967, due to complications from prostate cancer.

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/langston-hughes

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Phillis Wheatley

Although she was an enslaved person, Phillis Wheatley Peters was one of the best-known poets in pre-19th century America. Educated and enslaved in the household of prominent Boston commercialist John Wheatley, lionized in New England and England, with presses in both places publishing her poems, and paraded before the new republic's political leadership and the old empire's aristocracy, Wheatley was the abolitionists' illustrative testimony that blacks could be both artistic and intellectual. Her name was a household word among literate colonists and her

achievements a catalyst for the fledgling antislavery movement.

Recent scholarship shows that Wheatley Peters wrote perhaps 145 poems (most of which would have been published if the encouragers she begged for had come forth to support the second volume), but this artistic heritage is now lost, probably abandoned during Peters's quest for subsistence after her death. Of the numerous letters she wrote to national and international political and religious leaders, some two dozen notes and letters are extant. As an exhibition of African intelligence, exploitable by members of the enlightenment movement, by evangelical Christians, and by other abolitionists, she was perhaps recognized even more in England and Europe than in America.

In the past decade, Wheatley scholars have uncovered poems, letters, and more facts about her life and her association with 18th-century Black abolitionists. They have also charted her notable use of classicism and have explicated the sociological intent of her biblical allusions. All this research and interpretation has proven Wheatley Peter's disdain for the institution of slavery and her use of art to undermine its practice. Before the end of this century the full aesthetic, political, and religious implications of her art and even more salient facts about her life and works will surely be known and celebrated by all who study the 18th century and by all who revere this woman, a most important poet in the American literary canon.

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/phillis-wheatley

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Carter G. Woodson

Carter G. Woodson was a scholar whose dedication to celebrating the historic contributions of Black people led to the establishment of Black History Month, marked every February since 1976. Woodson fervently believed that Black people should be proud of their heritage and all Americans should understand the largely overlooked achievements of Black Americans.

After being barred from attending American Historical Association conferences despite being a dues-paying member, Woodson believed that the white-dominated historical profession had little interest in Black history. He saw African-American contributions "overlooked, ignored, and even suppressed by the writers of history textbooks and the teachers who use them."

For Black scholars to study and preserve Black history, Woodson realized he would have to create a separate institutional structure. With funding from several philanthropic foundations, Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915 in Chicago, describing its mission as the scientific study of the "neglected aspects of Negro life and history." The next year, he started the scholarly *Journal of Negro History*, which is published to this day under the name *Journal of African American History*.

Woodson's devotion to showcasing the contributions of Black Americans bore fruit in 1926 when he launched Negro History Week in the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Woodson's concept was later expanded into Black History Month.

Woodson died from a heart attack at the age of 74 in 1950. His legacy lives on every February when schools across the nation study Black American history, empowering Black Americans and educating others on the achievements of Black Americans.

https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/civil-rights-leaders/carter-g-woodson

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Shirley Chisholm

Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm was born in Brooklyn, New York to immigrant parents who came to the United States from Barbados. Chisholm graduated from Brooklyn College and the Teachers College at Columbia University. In 1968, she became the first Black woman elected to

the United States Congress and represented New York's 12th congressional district for seven terms from 1969 to 1983. Early on in her Congressional term, Chisholm was first assigned to the House Agriculture Committee. She soon found more relevant committee assignments that would better serve her constituents, where she worked to expand the food stamp program and help to create the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Legislation she introduced also focused on gender and racial equality, and ending the Vietnam War. In 1971, she became a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC).
In the 1972 United States presidential election, she became the first Black candidate to seek a major party's nomination for President of the United States, and the first woman to run for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. After the unsuccessful bid for President, Chisholm continued serving in the House of Representatives. In 1977, she was elected as Secretary of the House Democratic Caucus. Chisholm retired from Congress in 1983, where she was succeeded by Major Owens. In 2015, Chisholm was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/individuals/shirley-chisholm

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Ruby Bridges

At the tender age of six, Ruby Bridges advanced the cause of civil rights in November 1960 when she became the first African American student to integrate an elementary school in the South.

Born on September 8, 1954, Bridges was the oldest of five children for Lucille and Abon Bridges, farmers in Tylertown, Mississippi. When Ruby was two years old, her parents moved their family to New Orleans, Louisiana in search of better work opportunities. Ruby's birth year coincided with the US Supreme Court's landmark ruling in *Brown v. the Board of Educatio*n of Topeka, Kansas, which ended racial segregation in public schools.

Nonetheless, southern states continued to resist integration, and in 1959, Ruby attended a segregated New Orleans kindergarten. A year later, however, a federal court ordered Louisiana to desegregate. The school district created entrance exams for African American students to see whether they could compete academically at the all-white school. Ruby and five other students passed the exam.

Her parents were torn about whether to let her attend the all-white William Frantz Elementary School, a few blocks from their home. Her father resisted, fearing for his daughter's safety; her mother, however, wanted Ruby to have the educational opportunities that her parents had been denied. Meanwhile, the school district dragged its feet, delaying her admittance until November 14. Two of the other students decided not to leave their school at all; the other three were sent to the all-white McDonough Elementary School.

Ruby and her mother were escorted by four federal marshals to the school every day that year. She walked past crowds screaming vicious slurs at her. Undeterred, she later said she only became frightened when she saw a woman holding a black baby doll in a coffin. She spent her first day in the principal's office due to the chaos created as angry white parents pulled their children from school. Ardent segregationists withdrew their children permanently. Barbara Henry, a white Boston native, was the only teacher willing to accept Ruby, and all year, she was a class of one. Ruby ate lunch alone and sometimes played with her teacher at recess, but she never missed a day of school that year.

While some families supported her bravery—and some northerners sent money to aid her family—others protested throughout the city. The Bridges family suffered for their courage: Abon lost his job, and grocery stores refused to sell to Lucille. Her share-cropping grandparents were evicted from the farm where they had lived for a quarter-century. Over time, other African American students enrolled; many years later, Ruby's four nieces would also attend. In 1964, artist Norman Rockwell celebrated her courage with a painting of that first day entitled, "The Problem We All Live With."

Ruby graduated from a desegregated high school, became a travel agent, married and had four sons. She was reunited with her first teacher, Henry, in the mid 1990s, and for a time the pair did speaking engagements together. Ruby later wrote about her early experiences in two books and received the Carter G. Woodson Book Award.

A lifelong activist for racial equality, in 1999, Ruby established The Ruby Bridges Foundation to promote tolerance and create change through education. In 2000, she was made an honorary deputy marshal in a ceremony in Washington, DC.

https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/ruby-bridges

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Marian Anderson

Anderson was born in 1897 in South Philadelphia. Hard-working and respectable, her mother was a former schoolteacher. Her father delivered ice and coal throughout the city. At the heart of their community stood the Union Baptist Church at the corner of Fitzwater and Martin Streets. It was within these walls that Marian first began to sing. Her two younger sisters also possessed musical talent, but it was Marian who garnered the most attention. When she was only 14, the choirmaster, Alexander Robinson, moved her from the youth to the adult choir. She stunned the other members not only with the strength and beauty of her voice, but also with her ability to sing any part of a hymn upon demand. Whether it was the soprano, alto, tenor, or bass part that Robinson needed, he could rely on Marian to provide it.

The congregation had such faith in her that they started a "Marian Anderson's Future Fund," which would pay for lessons with the city's leading voice instructors and support her performances. The fund would provide Marian with the support she needed after her father's death in 1911. She continued to give concerts while she attended the South Philadelphia High School for Girls, and her teacher, Dr. Lucy Langdon Wilson, arranged for the famed Italian voice master, Giuseppe Boghetti, to hear her. He remembers this first meeting as occurring "at the end

of a long hard day, when I was weary of singing and singers, and when a tall calm girl poured out ‘Deep River' in the twilight and made me cry." While Philadelphia conservatories turned Marian away with the refusal, "We don't take colored," she quickly acquired influential fans who would aid her career.

In 1925 Boghetti entered Marian in a contest with 300 other contestants. The winner would make a solo appearance with the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. Seventeen-year-old Marian auditioned and won. The achievement prompted Boghetti to take her to Europe. Training and performing, Marian made her European debut at the Paris Opera House in 1935.
The success she met with there made her the toast of Europe, entertaining in command performances before King Gustav in Stockholm and King Christian in Copenhagen. As a young black woman from South Philadelphia who could superbly deliver Russian folk songs, classic German and French arias as well as Negro Spirituals, she was a wonder and people flocked to hear her. Sibelius, the Finnish composer, was so inspired that he dedicated the song, "Solitude," to her. The success she encountered in Europe brought her back to America in 1935 for a public debut at Carnegie Hall in New York. The day before the performance, while still on the Ile de France, Marian fell and broke her ankle. Determined to make her appearance, she performed the entire program standing on one foot, balancing against the piano, with her floor-length gown covering the cast on her ankle. Again, she met with success. It won her so much exposure and popularity that in 1936 she became the first African American to be invited to perform at the White House and then sang there again when Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt were entertaining the King and Queen of Great Britain in 1939.

Despite the fact that she was the country's third highest concert box office draw, Marian was still subject to the racial bias of the time. When she traveled in the United States, she was often, like all African Americans of her time, restricted to "colored" waiting rooms, hotels, and train cars. In once instance, she was allowed to stay in an upscale Los Angeles hotel, but not to enter its formal dining room. She learned to avoid these affronts by staying with friends in the cities where she performed and driving her own car instead of taking the train. When she performed in the South, despite a general acceptance by the public, the newspapers could not bring themselves to refer to her as "Miss Anderson." The Southern press came up with other forms of address in

order to avoid paying her any type of deference; "Artist Anderson" and "Singer Anderson" frequently being used. This type of treatment was symptomatic of the pervasive racism of the time. It finally came to a head in 1939 when Marian's manager, Sol Hurok, and Howard University tried to secure a performance for her at Constitution Hall in Washington D.C. The Daughters of the American Revolution, who owned the Hall, refused to accommodate Anderson. The rebuff was widely publicized when Eleanor Roosevelt, herself a member of the D.A.R., publicly resigned from the organization in protest. In her letter to the D.A.R., she wrote, "I am in complete disagreement with the attitude taken in refusing Constitution Hall to a great artist . . . You had an opportunity to lead in an enlightened way and it seems to me that your organization has failed." Outraged, the "Marian Anderson Committee" formed to petition the D.A.R. and likened the organization's action to those of Hitler's racist regime.

In response, Eleanor and the Committee arranged for Marian to give her concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial with the Mall of Washington as her auditorium. Symbolically, the concert took place on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1939. The sun was shining as 75,000 people of all races crowded together; the largest gathering to assemble there since Lindbergh's reception in 1927. Feeling the meaning of the occasion, Marian had tears in her eyes when she delivered "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" and "America" with heart-breaking pathos. The event was so momentous and inspiring that the D.A.R. finally invited Marian to sing at the Hall in 1943 for a war relief concert. At that event, both black and white concert-goers attended. Marian's awards were many. In 1938 Eleanor Roosevelt presented her with the NAACP's Spingarn Award for "that American Negro who has made the highest achievement in any honorable field of endeavor." In 1941 she was granted the Edward Bok Award for distinguished service to the city of Philadelphia. A key moment in her career came in 1955 when she became the first African American to perform at the Metropolitan Opera. Three years after this immense achievement President Eisenhower named her a delegate to the 13th General Assembly of the United Nations. Over two dozen universities presented her with honorary doctorates and in 1963 President Lyndon Johnson awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

In 1965 Marian gave her final performance at Carnegie Hall in New York. Afterward, she settled with her husband, Orpheus Fisher, on a farm in Connecticut. She died of congestive heart failure

on April 8, 1993. The following June, a memorial service attended by 2,000 admirers paid tribute to the singer whose beautiful voice exposed the country's ugly racial divisions. The singer who had once been barred from performing in the nation's capital and who had been forced to use the back entrance at posh hotels had become an American musical icon.

https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/eleanor-anderson/

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Audre Lorde

“Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet.” That’s how Audre Lorde famously introduced herself. Her career as a teacher and a writer spanned decades and though she died almost 30 years ago, much of the work she left behind is still cherished and quoted today.

Born to immigrant parents from Grenada, Lorde was raised in Manhattan and published her first poem while still in high school. She served as a librarian in New York public schools before her first book of poetry was published in 1968.

In her work, she called out racism and homophobia and chronicled her own emotional and physical battle with breast cancer. Her writing also humanized Black women in a way that was rare for her time.

As a Black queer woman, Lorde sometimes questioned her place in academic circles dominated by White men. She also battled with feminists she saw as focusing primarily on the experiences of White middle-class women while overlooking women of color.

Although she faced criticism from conservatives such as Sen. Jesse Helms over her subject matter, her work was widely lauded for its power.

In her later years, she founded a small press to publish the work of Black feminists and served as the state poet laureate of New York.

In an anthology of Lorde's poetry and prose published last year, writer Roxane Gay put it like this: "Her work is something far more than something pretty to parrot … She made herself, and all black women, gloriously visible."

https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/02/us/little-known-black-history-figures/

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Jane Bolin

Born and raised in Poughkeepsie, but with a career in the five boroughs of New York City, Jane Matilda Bolin (1908–2007) is best known for a particular "first" of groundbreaking magnitude. She holds the honor of being the first African-American judge in the entire United States, joining the bench of New York City's Domestic Relations Court in 1939. Her appointment by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, which came as some surprise to Bolin herself — summoned with her husband to an audience with the mayor at the 1939 World's Fair, she was not informed of the mayor's intentions in advance — made "news around the world."

About that news: in announcing this historical judgeship, some outlets hedged the call, if ever so slightly. The *Chicago Defender*, which "chronicled and catalyzed [the African-American] community's greatest accomplishments for nearly a century," proudly announced that La Guardia had "smashed a precedent for the entire United States" because Bolin was "*thought* to be the first Race woman judge to be appointed in this country." About two months later, the *Defender* had eliminated the qualifier, describing Judge Bolin as the "first Race woman to serve as a judge in the history of America." And despite the shifting nature of historical inquiry, her title has held firm; on the sad occasion of her obituary, she was still, resolutely, "the first black woman in the United States to become a judge."

Judge Bolin served with distinction, reappointed to the bench by three different mayors — O'Dwyer in 1949 (although not without some politicking), Wagner in 1959, and Lindsay in 1969 — while weathering the reorganization of the Domestic Relations Court into the Family Court in 1962. She retired in 1979, but only reluctantly; in an interview conducted when Judge Bolin was in her early 80s, she made clear that, were it up to her, she would *still* be serving on the Family Court.

Judgeship was not Jane Bolin's only first, or even her *first* first of comparable magnitude. Among her tally, she was the first black woman to graduate from Yale Law School, to join the New York City Bar, and to work in the office of the City's Corporation Counsel. She followed in the footsteps of other notable trailblazers, such as Charlotte E. Ray, who became the first African-American woman lawyer in 1872; Edwin Archer Randolph, the first African American to graduate from Yale Law School (and also the first admitted to the Connecticut bar); and Florence Allen, the first woman named to a United States Court of Appeals. In turn, Judge Bolin paved the way for still other firsts.

https://history.nycourts.gov/judge-jane-bolin/

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Louis Armstrong

Louis Armstrong was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on August 4, 1901. He was raised by his mother Mayann in a neighborhood so dangerous it was called "The Battlefield." He only had a fifth-grade education, dropping out of school early to go to work. An early job working for the Jewish Karnofsky family allowed Armstrong to make enough money to purchase his first cornet. On New Year's Eve 1912, he was arrested and sent to the Colored Waif's Home for Boys. There, under the tutelage of Peter Davis, he learned how to properly play the cornet, eventually becoming the leader of the Waif's Home Brass Band. Released from the Waif's Home in 1914, Armstrong set his sights on becoming a professional musician. Mentored by the city's top

cornetist, Joe “King” Oliver, Armstrong soon became one of the most in-demand cornetists in town, eventually working steadily on Mississippi riverboats.

In 1922, King Oliver sent for Armstrong to join his band in Chicago. Armstrong and Oliver became the talk of the town with their intricate two-cornet breaks and started making records together in 1923. By that point, Armstrong began dating the pianist in the band, Lillian Hardin. In 1924, Armstrong married Hardin, who urged Armstrong to leave Oliver and try to make it on his own. A year in New York with Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra proved unsatisfying so Armstrong returned to Chicago in 1925 and began making records under his own name for the first time.

The records by Louis Armstrong and His Five–and later, Hot Seven–are the most influential in jazz. Armstrong’s improvised solos transformed jazz from an ensemble-based music into a soloist’s art, while his expressive vocals incorporated innovative bursts of scat singing and an underlying swing feel. By the end of the decade, the popularity of the Hot Fives and Sevens was enough to send Armstrong back to New York, where he appeared in the popular Broadway revue, “Hot Chocolates.” He soon began touring and never really stopped until his death in 1971. The 1930s also found Armstrong achieving great popularity on radio, in films, and with his recordings. He performed in Europe for the first time in 1932 and returned in 1933, staying for over a year because of a damaged lip. Back in America in 1935, Armstrong hired Joe Glaser as his manager and began fronting a big band, recording pop songs for Decca, and appearing regularly in movies. He began touring the country in the 1940s.

In 1947, the waning popularity of the big bands forced Armstrong to begin fronting a small group, Louis Armstrong and His All Stars. Personnel changed over the years but this remained Armstrong’s main performing vehicle for the rest of his career. He had a string of pop hits beginning in 1949 and started making regular overseas tours, where his popularity was so great, he was dubbed “Ambassador Satch.”

In America, Armstrong had been a great Civil Rights pioneer, breaking down numerous barriers as a young man. In the 1950s, he was sometimes criticized for his onstage persona and called an

“Uncle Tom” but he silenced critics by speaking out against the government’s handling of the “Little Rock Nine” high school integration crisis in 1957.

Armstrong continued touring the world and making records with songs like “Blueberry Hill” (1949), “Mack the Knife” (1955) and “Hello, Dolly! (1964),” the latter knocking the Beatles off the top of the pop charts at the height of Beatlemania.

The many years of constant touring eventually wore down Armstrong, who had his first heart attack in 1959 and returned to intensive care at Beth Israel Hospital for heart and kidney trouble in 1968. Doctors advised him not to play but Armstrong continued to practice every day in his Corona, Queens home, where he had lived with his fourth wife, Lucille, since 1943. He returned to performing in 1970 but it was too much, too soon and he passed away in his sleep on July 6, 1971, a few months after his final engagement at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City.

https://www.louisarmstronghouse.org/biography/

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Jackie Robinson

Jack Roosevelt Robinson was born in Cairo, Georgia in 1919 to a family of sharecroppers. His mother, Mallie Robinson, single-handedly raised Jackie and her four other children. They were the only black family on their block, and the prejudice they encountered only strengthened their bond. From this humble beginning would grow the first baseball player to break Major League Baseball’s color barrier that segregated the sport for more than 50 years.

Growing up in a large, single-parent family, Jackie excelled early at all sports and learned to make his own way in life. At UCLA, Jackie became the first athlete to win varsity letters in four sports: baseball, basketball, football and track. In 1941, he was named to the All-American football team. Due to financial difficulties, he was forced to leave college and eventually decided to enlist in the U.S. Army. After two years in the army, he had progressed to second lieutenant.

Jackie's army career was cut short when he was court-martialed in relation to his objections with incidents of racial discrimination. In the end, Jackie left the Army with an honorable discharge. In 1945, Jackie played one season in the Negro Baseball League, traveling all over the Midwest with the Kansas City Monarchs. But greater challenges and achievements were in store for him. In 1947, Brooklyn Dodgers president Branch Rickey approached Jackie about joining the Brooklyn Dodgers. The Major Leagues had not had an African-American player since 1889, when baseball became segregated. When Jackie first donned a Brooklyn Dodger uniform, he pioneered the integration of professional athletics in America. By breaking the color barrier in baseball, the nation's preeminent sport, he courageously challenged the deeply rooted custom of racial segregation in both the North and the South.

At the end of Robinson's rookie season with the Brooklyn Dodgers, he had become National League Rookie of the Year with 12 homers, a league-leading 29 steals, and a .297 average. In 1949, he was selected as the NL's Most Valuable player of the Year and also won the batting title with a .342 average that same year. As a result of his great success, Jackie was eventually inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962.

Jackie married Rachel Isum, a nursing student he met at UCLA, in 1946. As an African-American baseball player, Jackie was on display for the whole country to judge. Rachel and their three children, Jackie Jr., Sharon and David, provided Jackie with the emotional support and sense of purpose essential for bearing the pressure during the early years of baseball. Jackie Robinson's life and legacy will be remembered as one of the most important in American history. In 1997, the world celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Jackie's breaking Major League Baseball's color barrier. In doing so, we honored the man who stood defiantly against those who would work against racial equality and acknowledged the profound influence of one man's life on the American culture. On the date of Robinson's historic debut, all Major League teams across the nation celebrated this milestone. Also that year, The United States Post Office honored Robinson by making him the subject of a commemorative postage stamp. On Tuesday, April 15th, President Bill Clinton paid tribute to Jackie at Shea Stadium in New York in a special ceremony.

https://jackierobinson.com/biography/

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Bryan Stevenson

Bryan Stevenson is the founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative, a human rights organization in Montgomery, Alabama. Under his leadership, EJI has won major legal challenges eliminating excessive and unfair sentencing, exonerating innocent death row prisoners, confronting abuse of the incarcerated and the mentally ill, and aiding children prosecuted as adults.

Mr. Stevenson has argued and won multiple cases at the United States Supreme Court, including a 2019 ruling protecting condemned prisoners who suffer from dementia and a landmark 2012 ruling that banned mandatory life-imprisonment-without-parole sentences for all children 17 or younger. Mr. Stevenson and his staff have won reversals, relief, or release from prison for over 140 wrongly condemned prisoners on death row and won relief for hundreds of others wrongly convicted or unfairly sentenced.

Mr. Stevenson has initiated major new anti-poverty and anti-discrimination efforts that challenge inequality in America. He led the creation of two highly acclaimed cultural sites which opened in 2018: the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. These new national landmark institutions chronicle the legacy of slavery, lynching, and racial segregation, and the connection to mass incarceration and contemporary issues of racial bias.

Mr. Stevenson's work has won him numerous awards including the prestigious MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Prize; the ABA Medal, the American Bar Association's highest honor; the National Medal of Liberty from the American Civil Liberties Union after he was nominated by United States Supreme Court Justice John Stevens; the Public Interest Lawyer of the Year by the National Association of Public Interest Lawyers; and the Olaf Palme Prize in Stockholm, Sweden for international human rights. In 2002, he received the Alabama State Bar

Commissioners Award. In 2003, the SALT Human Rights Award was presented to Mr. Stevenson by the Society of American Law Teachers. In 2004, he received the Award for Courageous Advocacy from the American College of Trial Lawyers and also the Lawyer for the People Award from the National Lawyers Guild. In 2006 New York University presented Mr. Stevenson with its Distinguished Teaching Award. Mr. Stevenson won the Gruber Foundation International Justice Prize and was awarded the NAACP William Robert Ming Advocacy Award, the National Legal Aid & Defender Association Lifetime Achievement Award, the Ford Foundation Visionaries Award and the Roosevelt Institute Franklin D. Roosevelt Freedom from Fear Award.

In 2012, Mr. Stevenson received the American Psychiatric Association Human Rights Award, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute Fred L. Shuttlesworth Award, and the Smithsonian Magazine American Ingenuity Award in Social Progress. Mr. Stevenson was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Science in 2014 and won the Lannan Cultural Freedom Prize. In 2015, he was named to the Time 100 recognizing the world's most influential people. In 2016, he received the American Bar Association's Thurgood Marshall Award. He was named in Fortune's 2016 and 2017 World's Greatest Leaders list. He received the Martin Luther King Jr. Nonviolent Peace Prize, from the King Center in Atlanta in 2018. In 2020, he received the Right Livelihood Award from The Right Livelihood Foundation in Sweden. In 2023, he was awarded the National Humanities Medal by President Biden.

Mr. Stevenson has received over 50 honorary doctoral degrees, including degrees from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, and Oxford University. He is the author of the critically acclaimed New York Times bestseller, Just Mercy, which was named by Time Magazine as one of the 10 Best Books of Nonfiction for 2014 and has been awarded several honors, including the American Library Association's Carnegie Medal for best nonfiction book of 2015 and a 2015 NAACP Image Award. Just Mercy was adapted as a major motion picture and the film won the American Bar Association's 2020 Silver Gavel Award as well as four NAACP Image Awards. Mr. Stevenson is also the subject of the Emmy Award-winning HBO documentary True Justice. He is a graduate of the Harvard Law School and the Harvard School of Government.

https://eji.org/bryan-stevenson/

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NASA "Hidden Figures"

In 2016, the film Hidden Figures skyrocketed Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Dorothy Vaughan to household names. During the 1950s and 1960s, they joined dozens of other African American women who crunched numbers and processed data for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) and its successor, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Many of these women got their start as "human computers," performing complicated calculations that supported the work of male engineers. NACA began hiring white women as computers in 1935. The agency did not open these positions to African American women until 1943 to address labor shortages during World War II. At the time, opportunities for women to advance in their careers were limited. African American women faced additional barriers because of racial discrimination.

Nevertheless, African American women played a critical role in the Space Race and rose to new heights as mathematicians, computer programmers, team project leads, and engineers at NASA. When Katherine Johnson began her 33-year career in 1953, Langley Research Center was racially segregated. For her first two weeks, Johnson worked in the all-African American West Area Computing section. She was quickly reassigned to the Maneuver Loads Branch of the Flight Research Division. This assignment led to some of the achievements for which Johnson is best known. In 1961, she analyzed the flight trajectory for Alan Shepard's Freedom 7 mission, the first human spaceflight completed by the United States. The next year, Johnson also verified an electronic computer's calculations for the Friendship 7 mission. During this mission, John Glenn became the first American to orbit Earth. During the 1960s, her math also helped Project Apollo to send astronauts to the moon and make the moon landings a reality. Johnson considered her contributions to Project Apollo as her greatest achievement.

After starting at NACA in 1951, Mary W. Jackson worked as a West Area computer for two years. Because of her mathematical skill, engineer Kazimierz Czarnecki invited Jackson to join his team working on the Supersonic Pressure Tunnel. Jackson gained lots of hands-on experience in this role, but she had bigger dreams: to become an engineer herself. Czarnecki suggested that she enroll in a special training program to transition from a mathematician to an engineer. Although the University of Virginia ran the program, classes were held at Hampton High School. Because the school was segregated, the City of Hampton had to approve Jackson's participation in the program. When Jackson appeared before a judge at Hampton City Hall to make her case, she was approved for enrollment. After completing the necessary courses, Jackson became the first African American woman engineer at NASA in 1958. That year, she also published her first report, "Effects of Nose Angle and Mach Number on Transition Cones at Supersonic Speeds," with Czarnecki.

When she was 15 years old, Dorothy Vaughan received a full tuition scholarship to study at Wilberforce University, the first private historically Black college. Vaughan majored in mathematics and French. Her professors recommended that she pursue further graduate study at Howard University. Vaughan declined and took a job in the West Area Computing unit at Langley Research campus in 1943. For years, Vaughan was passed over for promotions despite her skills as a mathematician. Nevertheless, she continued to pursue a title worthy of her experience and skillset. She finally succeeded in 1949, becoming the first African American woman manager at NACA. During her career, she oversaw both Katherine Johnson and Mary Jackson. When NACA became NASA in 1958, the agency began to eliminate segregated facilities, including West Computing. Vaughan and many other computers took new jobs in the Analysis and Computation Division, which was not segregated by race or gender. In that role, Vaughan blazed a trail, mastering the newest electronic computer programming technologies. She worked at NASA until her retirement in 1971.

Christine Darden graduated from Hampton Institute with her bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1958. She briefly taught high school math before earning her master's degree in applied mathematics at Virginia State College. Darden began working as a computer at NASA Langley

Research Center in 1967. Although the agency began to desegregate its facilities in 1958, she still experienced discrimination. After working at NASA for 8 years without a promotion, Darden finally confronted a supervisor. She asked why the agency hired men who shared her educational background as engineers but did not offer her the same opportunities. The supervisor could not dispute Darden's point and transferred her to the engineering section. After Darden began her career as an engineer, she spent the next 25 years pioneering sonic boom minimization and researching aerodynamics and supersonic flight. In 1983, she earned her doctorate in mechanical engineering from The George Washington University.

When Annie Easley started working at NACA in 1955, she was one of four African Americans among 2,500 employees. She decided to apply after reading in the newspaper about two sisters who worked there as computers. Over the course of her 34-year career, Easley worked as computer scientist, mathematician, and rocket scientist at Lewis (Glenn) Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio. She became a leader on the team that developed software for the Centaur Upper Stage Rocket. The Centaur was a booster with a high-energy propellant, powerful enough to launch satellites and probes into orbit and beyond. Easley was committed to increasing diversity at NASA. She attended college career days and encouraged women and people of color to consider fields in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). She also became an Equal Employment Opportunity counselor and ensured NASA followed through on discrimination complaints.

After earning her bachelor's and master's degrees in mathematics from Howard University, Melba Roy Mouton spent several years working for the Army Map Service and the U.S. Census Bureau. In 1959, Mouton began working at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. At Goddard, Mouton led the group of human computers who tracked the Echo Satellites 1 and 2. The calculations that they performed enabled NASA to predict the flight paths and locations of spacecraft in Earth's orbit. Due to the gravitational pull of other planets, the moon, and Earth, this was a difficult task even for an electronic computer. During her 18 years at Goddard, Mouton served in several leadership roles in the computer programming, data systems, trajectory analysis, and research divisions.

Jeanette A. Scissum received her bachelor's and master's degrees in mathematics from Alabama A & M University. In 1964, she began her career at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. At Marshall, Scissum produced a report about magnetic activity on the surface of the sun. This report helped to improve how NASA predicted cyclical changes in solar activity. Scissum later worked in Marshall's the Space Environment Branch and contributed to the Atmospheric, Magnetospheric, and Plasmas in Space project. She also volunteered as an Equal Opportunity officer.

https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/places-of-hidden-figures.htm

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Carol Lynne Clark and Deborah A.C. Bumbry

In 1973, the first two African-American women graduated from Ursinus College: Carol Lynne Clark, a History major, and Deborah A. C. Bumbry, an English major. They graduated eighty-nine years after the first women, Minerva Weinberger and Bertha Hendricks, graduated.

From an interview published in Ursinus Weekly on Thursday, February 25, 1971: "I'd like to take more courses than are offered. My friends at home don't think I've 'sold out'--because I go to a white school--my whole thing was to get an education and it doesn't matter where you go. Now there's about forty kids from my high school that would like to apply." - Carol Clark

"As far as being black, I don't think I should have to go around saying 'I'm black.' If you can't see that I'm black, then it's your problem, not mine. I don't have to go around putting on a show. I'm black and I'm proud of it, and I don't have to go around proving it, because I know I am. I went to a big-city high school (Overbrook W. Phila.) that was 60% black. When I first came [to Ursinus], I wasn't sure if there would be a lot of bigots, but I didn't find any. I just wanted to be a member of the campus and the fact that I'm black should help, because I have different ideas. There should definitely be more blacks here, 20 kids are not enough. Here you may have an

urban versus rural conflict. People from the city seem more on the go and the type of student they had here in the past more or less took it as it came." - Carol Clark

https://omeka.ursinus.edu/files/original/557221f213b492316aea776bdd67614f.pdf
https://omeka.ursinus.edu/exhibits/show/the-diversity-of-social-life-a/the-significance-of-1973-
https://omeka.ursinus.edu/exhibits/show/the-diversity-of-social-life-a/item/618

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George Crum

The potato chip was invented in Saratoga Lake, NY. Its inventor was George Speck—the son of an African American father and Native American mother. Later he professionally adopted the last name Crum. He was a gifted, although surly, cook working as the chef of the Moon Lake Lodge Resort in 1853. One dish on the menu was French-fried potatoes, which are prepared by cutting potatoes lengthwise and lightly frying them.

According to legend, one day a customer repeatedly sent his French-fried potatoes back to the kitchen complaining that they were too thick and soft. Crum's solution was to thinly slice the potatoes and fry them in grease till brown. The customer loved the crisps and soon other guests began asking for them as well. Soon Crum's "Saratoga Chips" became one of lodge's most popular treats.

Crum's success prompted him to open his own restaurant in 1860, called "Crumbs House," near Saratoga Lake, where he catered to an upscale clientele. The restaurant promoted a basket of potato chips on every table. Their popularity spread throughout the US under the name "Saratoga Chips" and were first sold in grocery stores in 1895 by William Tappendonby in Cleveland, OH.

https://invention.si.edu/lost-histories-african-american-inventors

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Charles R. Drew

Charles R. Drew (1904-1950) created the life-saving concept of large-scale blood banks, starting with research into the storage, processing, and shipment of blood plasma during World War II. He was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2015 for US Patent 2,389,355 for a “surgical needle."

Drew’s interest in transfusion medicine began during his internship and surgical residency at Montreal Hospital (1933-1935) working with bacteriology professor John Beattie on ways to treat shock with fluid replacement. Drew aspired to continue training in transfusion therapy at the Mayo Clinic, but racial prejudices at major American medical centers barred black scholars from their practices. He would instead join the faculty at Howard University College of Medicine, starting as a pathology instructor, and then progressing to surgical instructor and chief surgical resident at Freedmen's Hospital.

In 1938, while earning a doctorate at Columbia University, Drew won a fellowship to train at Presbyterian Hospital in New York with eminent surgeon Allen Whipple. Instead of following the traditional path of residents to gain experience in surgical pathology and bacteriology, surgical laboratory research, outpatient clinic, operating rooms and surgical wards, Whipple assigned Drew to work under John Scudder, who was granted funding to set up an experimental blood bank. This would prevent him from privileges afforded to his white peers, especially direct access to patients.

Scudder considered his protÉgÉ “naturally great” and a “brilliant pupil” and Whipple would later be won over by Drew’s talent, supporting both his surgical training and doctoral research. Drew and Scudder focused their research on diagnosing and controlling shock, fluid balance, blood chemistry, preservation, and transfusion — the work on which he based his seminal dissertation, "Banked Blood: A Study in Blood Preservation." The thesis also made him the first African American to earn a medical doctorate from Columbia. Scudder remarked that the thesis was “a masterpiece” and “one of the most distinguished essays ever written, both in form and content.”

Drew's doctoral research assessed previous blood and transfusion research, blood chemistry and fluid replacement, and evaluated variables affecting shelf-life of stored blood — from types and amounts of anticoagulants (substances that prevent blood from clotting) and preservatives, to shapes of storage containers and temperature.

His key findings, complex procedures, and standards for collecting, processing and storing blood proved his expertise and led to an appointment to head the Blood for Britain Project (BFB), an effort to transport desperately needed blood and plasma to Great Britain, which was under attack by Germany.

Drew worked with Scudder and E. H. L. Corwin to plan the organizational process of safely collecting, processing and storing large amounts of contamination-free plasma along with procedures for extracting plasma and ensuring safe arrival in Britain.

In the midst of the Blood for Britain project, Drew passed the American Board of Surgery exams. "In surgical circles, Drew's performance on the oral part of the exam, in which he confidently lectured his examiners about fluid balance and management of shock, became as legendary as his athletic feats had been at Amherst."

Drew later returned to Howard briefly but was called back to continue supervising the BFB program. When the program ended in January 1941, Blood for Britain collected 14,556 blood donations, and shipped (via the Red Cross) over 5,000 liters of plasma saline solution to England. The program became a model for the Red Cross pilot program to mass-produce dried plasma in New York in February 1941, with Drew as assistant director, and later for the National Blood Donor Service. Among his innovations were "bloodmobiles" — mobile blood donation trucks with refrigerators. The work sealed his reputation as a pioneer and earned him the title, "father of the blood bank."

Ironically, the Red Cross excluded African Americans from donating blood, making Drew himself ineligible to participate in the very program he established. That policy was later modified to accept donations from blacks, however the institution upheld racial segregation of blood, which

throughout the war Drew openly criticized as “unscientific and insulting to African Americans.”

In October 1941, Drew returned to Howard University, where he remained for the next nine years serving as Head of the Department of Surgery and Chief of Surgery at Freedmen's Hospital. His mission was to “train young African American surgeons who would meet the most rigorous standards in any surgical specialty” and “place them in strategic positions throughout the country where they could, in turn, nurture the tradition of excellence.” This he believed would be his “greatest and most lasting contribution to medicine.” He also campaigned against the exclusion of black physicians from local medical societies, medical specialty organizations, and the American Medical Association.

Charles Drew died tragically in North Carolina on April 1, 1950, after falling asleep while driving to a conference. He was given a blood transfusion at an all-white hospital but succumbed to the injuries.

https://invention.si.edu/lost-histories-african-american-inventors
https://www.acs.org/education/whatischemistry/african-americans-in-sciences/charles-richard-drew.html

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Percy Lavon Julian

Percy Lavon Julian (1899-1975) developed a method of synthesizing cortisone—a drug used to reduce swelling and pain—from the soy plant, which made it much cheaper and widely available. He was inducted in the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 1990 for US Patent 2,752,339 for “preparation of cortisone."

https://invention.si.edu/lost-histories-african-american-inventors

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William Robert 'Bob' Crigler

In 1952, William Robert “Bob” Crigler (1934-2018)—a star catcher who also played basketball and football at Orrville High School in Ohio—was recruited by Ursinus. During his years as a Bear, Crigler was a standout not only on the baseball and football fields, but also in the boxing ring and on the wrestling mat. Known for his “swivel hips” (at least according to his 1956 yearbook bio), the psychology major sang with the Meistersingers, performed on stage with the Curtain Club, and joined Delta Mu Sigma (a.k.a. Demas).

Upon his graduation in 1956, he set a milestone for the college as well as his hometown, becoming the first Black graduate of Ursinus, as well as the first Black resident of Orrville to earn a college degree.

Crigler earned a master’s degree in public administration at Pepperdine University and then a Ph.D. in government at Claremont Graduate University. For most of his professional career, he was the executive director of a residential care center for children who required emotional support. He also held a variety of positions with the Los Angeles County Probation Department and spent 15 years in the classroom at various colleges and universities.

He received an alumni award in 1998 and an honorary doctorate in 2006. Then in 2011, the Bridge Program—which started in 1988 as a three-week summer experience for students from historically underrepresented populations—was named for Crigler at Patton’s urging. What started as a summer program has greatly expanded and is now known as the W.R. Crigler Program for Student Success. The Crigler Program continues to support and mentor first-generation college students as they begin their journeys at Ursinus.

https://www.ursinus.edu/live/news/5762-a-bridge-from-past-to-present
https://www.ursinus.edu/offices/college-events-and-signature-programs/dr-w-robert-crigler-56/

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1985 MOVE Bombing in Philadelphia

In 1982, MOVE members of all ages settled into a row house at 6221 Osage Avenue on the western fringe of West Philadelphia, just a block from Cobbs Creek Park. The house was owned by former MOVE member Louise James, sister to MOVE founder John Africa (aka Vincent Leaphart). In late 1983—as city officials turned deaf ears to the organization's continued demands for the release of their incarcerated brethren—MOVE members began to broadcast these demands day and night through a loudspeaker at the Osage Avenue site. This activity outraged their largely middle-class African American neighbors, whose complaints were heard but tabled by high-level city officials, including Mayor W. Wilson Goode, Philadelphia's first African American mayor, who took office in 1984. The Goode administration was terrified by the prospect of another violent confrontation with MOVE. Yet the stage was already being set for the terrible violence that erupted at 6221 Osage on May 13, 1985.

MOVE styled itself as a "self-defense" organization even as it mounted an aggressive campaign on the 6200 block of Osage to demand the release of the incarcerated MOVE 9. Ironically, members' actions—incessant profanity-laced diatribes shouted day and night over the loudspeaker system and threatening behaviors on the street —had a direct impact only on MOVE's neighbors on or around the 6200 block. These residents vigorously voiced their complaints on multiple occasions to City Hall and the police—to no avail.

The last straw for MOVE's neighbors was the erection of a fortified "heavy timber" bunker on the roof of 6221 Osage, with "holes that were gun ports." On April 30, 1985, the neighbors, at wit's end, appealed to Governor Richard Thornburgh in a high-profile news conference.

> *We are here to let the governor know about the disquietude and general state of terror we are forced to live under by the MOVE organization. We want the governor to know that regardless of whatever may have happened in the past, today MOVE is a clear and present danger to the health and safety of our entire block. We also want the governor to know that we have been to our elected representatives in city and*

> *state government, but to date nothing of any consequence has been done. We are now asking Governor Thornburgh to step in and deal with this situation.*

Finally spurred by the appeal to the governor, Mayor Goode requested a tactical plan for removing the occupants of 6221 Osage. The city's district attorney, Ed Rendell (a future Philadelphia mayor and Pennsylvania governor) activated outstanding arrest warrants for four adults in the house, and the police had a court order to remove the children (ages 7–13), who were illegally kept from attending school—this part of the plan called for taking the children into custody during their daily outing in Cobbs Creek Park. What the plan didn't call for was the intercession of local mediators who knew MOVE, the neighborhood, and the situation on the 6200 block.

Late on the night of May 12, Mother's Day, police evacuated the block and the houses on surrounding streets. Most of the 500 police officers on the scene took vantage points in nearby houses that afforded views of the front of 6221 Osage; a tactical team guarded the rear alleyway, which MOVE had barricaded at its property lines, and two teams were positioned to lay siege to 6221 through the walls of adjacent row houses.

At 6 a.m. the following morning, Police Commissioner Gregore Sambor yelled through a bullhorn, "Attention, MOVE! This is America! You have to abide by the laws of the United States!" After reading the arrest warrants, he announced, "We do not wish to harm anyone. All occupants have fifteen minutes to peacefully evacuate the premises and surrender. This is your only notice. The fifteen minutes starts now."

MOVE did not stand down. That morning a sustained gun battle broke out, and the police were outfitted with M16 semi-automatic rifles, Uzis, shotguns, 30.06 and .22-250 sharpshooter rifles, a Browning automatic rifle, and a Thompson submachine gun. In the words of the Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission, which investigated the events of May 13, the police fired "over 10,000 rounds of ammunition in under 90 minutes at a row house containing children." High-pressure water hoses and tear gas canisters were also employed.

MOVE's resistance lasted into the late afternoon. As nothing else was working, Mayor Goode, who was not present at the scene at any time during the day or evening, authorized the release of a two-pound satchel bomb, composed of Tovex and C-4 explosives, from a state police helicopter onto the fortified bunker on top of 6221. According to the MOVE Commission, "The fire which destroyed the Osage neighborhood was caused by a bomb which exploded on the roof of the MOVE house. The fire began milliseconds after the bomb blast when friction-heated metal fragments penetrated a gas can on the roof and ignited gasoline vapors."

One disastrous decision begat another. Firefighters were on scene throughout the day but took no immediate action. Police Commissioner Sambor and Fire Commissioner William C. Richmond had decided to let the fire burn as a tactical weapon to force the occupants from the house. Unfortunately, their communications were badly garbled, and the fire burned for more than an hour before the firefighters turned on their hoses. By this time, 6:32 p.m., the fire was out of control. Conventional fire-fighting failed, and by dawn the next morning, the 6200 block of Osage was obliterated. Sixty-one houses lay in smoldering ruins and 11 MOVE members (six adults and five children) lay dead in the rubble. Among the dead was John Africa, MOVE's founder, who had not been present at the 1978 shootout in Powelton Village and who had lived at other MOVE sites outside Philadelphia in the intervening years. In the gutted house, the police found only two pistols, two shotguns, and a 22-caliber rifle—hardly a match for the military-style assault mounted by the police.

Two MOVE members managed to escape the inferno—Ramona Africa (née Ramona Johnson), an adult, and Birdie Africa, age 13, both of whom were badly burned. Whether the MOVE members who remained in the house were pinned down by gunfire and unable to get out remains an open question—and an open wound—in the still-lingering controversy about the events of May 13, 1985.

https://collaborativehistory.gse.upenn.edu/stories/move-osage-avenue

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Althea Gibson

Althea Gibson's life and achievements transcended sports and are part of the annals of African American history. From her roots as a sharecropper's daughter in the cotton fields of South Carolina, to her emergence as the unlikely queen of the highly segregated tennis world in the 1950s, her story is a complex tale of race, class and gender.

People often cite Arthur Ashe as the first African American to win Wimbledon (1975). He was indeed the first African American male to win the men's singles title, but it was, in fact, Althea Gibson, who was the first African American to cross the color line playing and winning at Wimbledon (1957 and 1958) and at the U.S. Nationals (1957 and 1958 – precursor of the U.S. Open).

Gibson was born in Silver, South Carolina on August 25, 1927. At the age of three, her father moved the family north migrating to Harlem in 1930. Gibson was a tomboy who grew up loving sports, but disliked school so much that she started skipping classes at the age of 12 and, by 18, had dropped out of high school. She played basketball, but "…paddle tennis started it all," says Gibson, in a clip from a 1984 interview.

She learned to play that sport on the streets, but it was bandleader Buddy Walker, who was also the neighborhood play street director, who introduced her to tennis and The Cosmopolitan Club, a private black tennis club. At the club, she met Fred Johnson, the one-armed coach, who taught her how to play. Under the auspices of the American Tennis Association (ATA), an organization of African American players, she began to develop as a tennis player. It was during this time that she met boxer Sugar Ray Robinson, who would become a friend and mentor.

Though a talented tennis player, Gibson was a street kid who lacked the genteel manner associated with the sport. It was under the tutelage of Dr. Hubert Eaton of Wilmington, NC and Dr. Robert W. Johnson of Lynchburg, VA, two African American physicians who loved tennis and helped young African Americans who wanted to play, that she flourished. She honed her skill, while receiving lessons in etiquette and the social graces, traveled and played in the

segregated south, and even earned her high school degree. Her success in tennis earned her an athletic scholarship (basketball and tennis) to Florida A&M, where she received a BA in 1955 at the age of 27. Yet, with all she achieved, she never felt comfortable with the black middle class. Gibson's first appearance at the U.S. Nationals in 1950 is an extraordinary and dramatic story. Her triumphant return seven years later to win the U.S. Nationals in 1957 and then again in 1958 has been attributed to her coach at the time, Sydney Llewellyn (her second husband). In 1957 and 1958, Gibson was at the top of her game, winning major tournaments including at prestigious Wimbledon. Though now a world champion, Gibson was unable to make a living playing amateur tennis. In 1959, she turned professional, touring with the Harlem Globetrotters and played paid exhibition matches. Branching out to other areas, she recorded a jazz album for Dot Records, appearing on The Ed Sullivan Show, and even landed a role in a John Wayne/John Ford movie, The Horse Soldiers (1959), In the 1960s, she took up golf and in 1964 she became the first African American woman to become a member of the LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association).

In 1965, she married the love of her life, William Darben. Angela Buxton, Althea's doubles partner and friend, and Sandra Terry, Darben's niece, speak lovingly about their relationship, though Gibson and Darben's marriage ended in 1975. Gibson would remarry in 1983 to former coach Llewellyn. Art Carrington, ex-professional player, tennis historian and Athea's friend, recalls she married Llewellyn because she was invited to bring a spouse on a trip for former champions. Buxton shares that they were just very good friends and that Gibson felt Llewellyn had done a lot for her. Five years later, this marriage also ended in divorce. Gibson and Darben remained close, reuniting towards the end of her life.

By 1968, Gibson had stopped competing and for a while worked as a tennis teaching pro. In the years that followed, Gibson found it difficult to make ends meet. Was her failure to achieve financial success partially her own doing? As portrayed in the film, Gibson is crushed when she is turned away — unrecognized and unwelcome — at the on-site restaurant on U.S. Open Championship Day.

Depressed and impoverished, in 1996, Gibson called Buxton to say goodbye. In a generous outpouring of financial support, orchestrated by Buxton, the tennis community showed Gibson she was not forgotten. Gibson died September 28, 2003. She was 76.

Though Gibson's accomplishments put her in the forefront of the struggle to eliminate segregation in tennis and to gain equal rights for players, she was a reluctant figure of the civil rights movement. "As far as Althea was concerned, it was not about representing the race," says Arvelia Myers, Althea's friend and tennis professional. Says Billie Jean King, "Arthur and I used our tennis as a platform, that's not what she wanted. She just wanted to play."

"Gibson's athletic prowess was unmatched on the tennis court, making her a formidable competitor," says Michael Kantor, executive producer of American Masters and tennis enthusiast. "Her story remains an important part not only of sports history and African American history, but of American cultural history.

https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/althea-gibson-preview-althea/3927/

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Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander

In the United States, Alexander was the first African-American to earn a Ph.D. in economics and the second Black woman to earn a doctoral degree.

After completing graduate school, she found that many employers dismissed her credentials, despite her stellar record. This led her to pursue law school, making her the first African-American to be awarded a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania. Throughout the rest of her life, she worked with her husband in their co-owned law firm addressing issues pertaining to the civil rights of African-Americans.

Her exceptional journey is honored today by the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, of which she was the first national president and is dedicated to stellar college educated Black women. Other entities honoring her legacy include the Black Law Student Association at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander Elementary School. We hope to continue her incredible legacy by holding a conference for Black women in economics in her honor.
In recalling her academic journey, Dr. Alexander has said that "[She] knew well that the only way [she] could get that door open was to knock it down; because [she] knocked all of them down." In the same fashion, we aim to break barriers and pursue excellence as aspiring economists and policy practitioners.

https://www.sadiecollective.org/stma

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Albert Murray

He was never a household name, but Albert Murray was one of the most important Black thinkers of the 20th century.

The essayist and social critic changed the way people talked about race by challenging Black separatism and insisting that the Black experience was central to American culture. He once remarked that American society is "incontestably mulatto" because Black and White people are inextricably bound to one another.

"The United States is not a nation of black and white people," Mr. Murray wrote. "Any fool can see that white people are not really white, and that black people are not black."

Murray was what one friend called a "militant integrationist." He didn't use the terms "Black" or "African-American." He called himself an American.

Born in Alabama, Murray attended Tuskegee Institute, where he befriended Ralph Ellison, author of the classic novel “Invisible Man.” Murray also eventually became close friends with Romare Bearden, the influential painter, and a mentor to jazz musician Wynton Marsalis.

Murray was a novelist, but it is through his pugnacious essays that he is best known. They are informed by his love of music — he wrote passionately about blues and jazz — his knowledge of Black culture and his astonishing command of literature.

One of his best books, 1970’s “The Omni-Americans,” was a collection of essays and a punishing critique of Black separatism. Filled with Murray’s trademark blunt wit, it insisted that America was a nation of multicolored people who share a common destiny.

https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/02/us/little-known-black-history-figures/

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Bayard Rustin

Bayard Rustin overcame prejudice on multiple levels to become a key ally of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and one of the most important civil rights leaders of the 20th century.

An openly gay Black man during the Jim Crow era, Rustin was arrested for having sex with men at a time when homosexuality was widely considered a form of mental illness. He served more than two years in federal prison for refusing to fight in World War II because of his pacifist Quaker beliefs.

But it was Rustin’s connection with King that became perhaps the high-water mark of his life.

After King became nationally known for leading the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Rustin — inspired by the teachings of Gandhi — traveled to King’s home in 1956 to convince him to adopt

nonviolence as a protest tactic and a way of life. Rustin's words were a revelation to King, who had armed bodyguards in his home.

The following year, Rustin helped King found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

King was pressured to drop Rustin from his inner circle of advisors because of his sexual orientation, but he refused to abandon him. King said no one could replace Rustin. Although Rustin sometimes had to keep a low public profile during the civil rights movement, he became more outspoken about his sexuality later in life and and has been hailed a hero by LGBQT activists.

Rustin's crowning achievement was organizing the March on Washington, which brought more than 200,000 peaceful protesters of different races and religions to the nation's capital in August 1963. The event, culminating in King's "I Have a Dream" speech, was a rousing success. Organizing the gathering was a staggering logistical feat, but Rustin pulled it off in less than two months.

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Howard Thurman

He was a shy man who didn't lead marches or give dramatic speeches. But Howard Thurman was a spiritual genius who transformed history.

Thurman was a pastor and professor and mystic whose groundbreaking book, "Jesus and the Disinherited," was a condemnation of a form of Christianity which Thurman said was far too often "on the side of the strong and the powerful against the weak and oppressed."

The book revolutionized the traditional portrait of Jesus and had a profound influence on the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s faith and activism.

Born in Florida during the "nadir" of race relations in post-Civil War America, Thurman graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta, where he was a classmate of "Daddy King," the father of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

His impact on the younger King would be profound.

Thurman was the first African American pastor to travel to India and meet Mohandas Gandhi. And he was one of the first pastors to inspire King to merge Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent resistance with the civil rights movement. Thurman's concepts about nonviolence and Jesus are peppered through King's writings.

Thurman, though, didn't fit the image of a fiery, silver-tongued Black preacher. He punctuated his sermons with long silences and enigmatic phrases such as "the sound of the genuine." Before "interfaith dialogue" became common, Thurman also worshiped with people of other faiths and warned about the dangers of religious fundamentalism.

Thurman's life was proof that all sorts of people could become influential leaders in the civil rights movement.

https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/02/us/little-known-black-history-figures/

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Ella Baker

She played a major role in three of the biggest groups of the civil rights movement, but Ella Baker somehow still remains largely unknown outside activist circles.

Baker grew up in North Carolina, where her grandmother's stories about life under slavery inspired her passion for social justice.

As an adult, she became an organizer within the NAACP and helped co-found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the organization that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. led. She also helped found the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

For her efforts, Baker has been called the "mother of the civil rights movement."

Baker was best known not as a frontline leader but a mentor to some of the biggest leaders in the movement. She taught volunteers that the movement couldn't depend solely on charismatic leaders and empowered them to become activists in their own community.

This is the approach that guided SNCC when it embarked on its Freedom Summer voter registration drive in Mississippi in 1964. Baker often risked her life going into small Southern towns to organize.

"The major job," she once said, "was getting people to understand that they had something within their power that they could use."

Baker had reason to distrust charismatic leaders. Many of the biggest leaders of the civil rights movement came from a Black church tradition where women were expected to be submissive.

Nobody ever accused the strong-willed Baker of taking a back seat to anyone.

Her relationship with King is still a matter of debate. King had trouble with assertive women like Baker, historians say, and she eventually left the SCLC.

She still made her mark. Many of the biggest civil rights leaders credit Baker, not King, as their inspiration. SNCC activists called her "Fundi," a Swahili word for a person who teaches a skill to the next generation.

https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/02/us/little-known-black-history-figures/

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Gordon Parks

For much of the mid-1900s, it seemed like the world learned about Black America through the eyes of Gordon Parks.

His creative endeavors were astoundingly versatile. Parks performed as a jazz pianist, composed musical scores, wrote 15 books and co-founded Essence magazine.

He adapted his novel "The Learning Tree" into a 1969 film, becoming the first African American to direct a movie for a major studio, and later directed "Shaft," a hit film that spawned the Blaxploitation genre.

But he reached his artistic peak as a photographer, and his intimate photos of African American life are his most enduring legacy.

After buying a camera from a pawn shop at 25, Parks began snapping away. His images of life on Chicago's South Side in the early 1940s won him a job documenting rural poverty for the federal government.

Parks' photos evoked the humanity of his subjects, inspiring empathy and activism. A 1948 photo essay about a Harlem gang leader landed him a gig as Life magazine's first Black staff photographer.

In the decades that followed, Parks traveled the country capturing iconic images of the segregated South, the civil rights movement and such figures as Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X. His images now grace the permanent collections of major art museums.

Parks famously called the camera his "weapon of choice," a tool to fight poverty, racism and other societal ills. As he once put it to an interviewer, "I pointed my camera at people mostly who needed someone to say something for them."

Examples of Gordon Parks' photos:
https://www.cnn.com/style/article/gordon-parks-civil-rights-photography/index.html

https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/02/us/little-known-black-history-figures/

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Daisy Gatson Bates

When the Little Rock Nine walked into Central High School in 1957, the entire country was watching.

Many saw a mob of jeering White students surrounding a lone Black girl whose eyes were shielded by sunglasses. A photo of that moment became one of the most iconic images of the civil rights movement.

What Americans didn't see, though, was the woman who organized those Black students: Daisy Gatson Bates.

Then president of the Arkansas NAACP, Bates planned the strategy for desegregation in the state. She selected the nine students, driving them to the school and protecting them from crowds.

After President Eisenhower intervened, the students were allowed to enroll – a major victory for desegregation efforts across the South. And that's only part of Bates' legacy.

She was born in a tiny town in southern Arkansas. Her childhood was marred by tragedy when her mother was sexually assaulted and killed by three White men. Her father later abandoned her, leaving young Daisy to be raised by family friends.

As an adult, Bates moved with her husband to Little Rock, where they founded their own newspaper, The Arkansas State Press, which covered the civil rights movement. She eventually helped plan the NAACP's strategy for desegregating schools, leading to her involvement with the Little Rock Nine.

In the 1960s, Bates moved to Washington D.C., where she worked for the Democratic National Committee and for anti-poverty projects in President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration. Her memory lives on with Daisy Gatson Bates Day, a state holiday celebrated in Arkansas each February.

https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/02/us/little-known-black-history-figures/

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Fritz Pollard

The son of a boxer, Fritz Pollard had grit in his veins.

At 5 feet, 9 inches and 165 pounds, he was small for football. But that didn't stop him from bulldozing barriers on and off the field.

Pollard attended Brown University, where he majored in chemistry and played halfback on the football team. He was the school's first Black player and led Brown to the 1916 Rose Bowl, although porters refused to serve him on the team's train trip to California.

After serving in the Army during World War I, he joined the Akron Pros of the American Professional Football Association, which later became the NFL. He was one of only two Black players in the new league.

Fans taunted him with racial slurs, and opposing players tried to maim him. But Pollard, a swift and elusive runner, often had the last laugh.

“I didn’t get mad at them and want to fight them,” he once said. “I would just look at them and grin, and in the next minute run for an 80-yard touchdown.”

In 1921, while he was still a player, the team also named him its coach – the first African American head coach in league history.

Over the next seven years, Pollard coached four different teams and founded a Chicago football team of all-African American players. Later, he launched a newspaper and ran a successful investment firm. Pollard was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2005.

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Gil Scott-Heron

Gil Scott-Heron was a New York City poet, activist, musician, social critic and spoken-word performer whose songs in the ‘70s helped lay the foundation for rap music.

Whether you realize it or not, you’ve probably come across one of his poetic turns of phrase.

Some have called Scott-Heron the “godfather of rap,” though he was always reluctant to embrace that title. Still, the imprint he left on the genre – and music, more broadly – is unmistakable.

His work has been sampled, referenced or reinterpreted by Common, Drake, Kanye West, Kendrick Lamar, Jamie xx, LCD Soundsystem and Public Enemy, just to name a few.

A darling of the cultural left wing, Scott-Heron never achieved mainstream popularity. But years after his death, his social and political commentary still figures in pop culture and protest movements around the world.

His 1970 spoken-word piece "Whitey on the Moon," in which he criticized US government for making massive investments in the space race while neglecting its African American citizens, was featured in the 2018 film "First Man" and in HBO's recent series "Lovecraft Country."

But he's perhaps best known for "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," a poem about the disconnect between TV consumerism and demonstrations in the streets. The slogan continues to inspire social justice activists today.

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Frederick McKinley Jones

Frederick McKinley Jones was orphaned by age 8 and raised by a Catholic priest before he dropped out of high school.

That didn't stop him from pursuing his calling as an inventor whose work changed the world.

A curious youth with a passion for tinkering with machines and mechanical devices, he worked as an auto mechanic and taught himself electronics. After serving in World War I, he returned to his Minnesota town and built a transmitter for its new radio station.

This caught the attention of a businessman, Joseph Numero, who offered Jones a job developing sound equipment for the fledgling movie industry.

On a hot summer night in 1937, Jones was driving when an idea struck him: What if he could invent a portable cooling system that would allow trucks to better transport perishable food?

In 1940, he patented a refrigeration system for vehicles, a concept that suddenly opened a global market for fresh produce and changed the definition of seasonal foods. He and Numero parlayed his invention into a successful company, Thermo King, which is still thriving today.

It also helped open new frontiers in medicine because hospitals could get shipments of blood and vaccines.

Before his death, Jones earned more than 60 patents, including one for a portable X-ray machine. In 1991, long after his death, he became the first African American to receive the National Medal of Technology.

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Max Robinson

A trailblazer in broadcasting and journalism, Max Robinson in 1978 became the first Black person to anchor the nightly network news.

But his road to the anchor's chair wasn't easy.

Robinson got his start in 1959 when he was hired to read the news at a station in Portsmouth, Virginia. His face was hidden behind a graphic that read, "NEWS." One day he told the cameraman to remove the slide.

“I thought it would be good for all my folks and friends to see me rather than this dumb news sign up there,” Robinson once told an interviewer. He was fired the next day.

Robinson’s profile began to rise after he moved to Washington, where he worked as a TV reporter and later co-anchored the evening news at the city’s most popular station – the first Black anchor in a major US city.

He drew raves for his smooth delivery and rapport with the camera. ABC News noticed, moved him to Chicago and named him one of three co-anchors on “World News Tonight,” which also featured Frank Reynolds in Washington and Peter Jennings in London.

Later in his career, Robinson became increasingly outspoken about racism and the portrayal of African Americans in the media. He also sought to mentor young Black broadcasters and was one of the 44 founders of the National Association of Black Journalists.

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Bessie Coleman

Born to sharecroppers in a small Texas town, Elizabeth “Bessie” Coleman became interested in flying while living in Chicago, where stories about the exploits of World War I pilots piqued her interest.

But flight schools in the US wouldn’t let her in because of her race and gender.

Undeterred, Coleman learned French, moved to Paris and enrolled in a prestigious aviation school, where in 1921 she became the first Black woman to earn a pilot’s license.

Back in the US, Coleman began performing on the barnstorming circuit, earning cheers for her daring loops, acrobatic figure-eights and other aerial stunts. Fans called her “Queen Bess” and “Brave Bessie.”

Coleman dreamed of opening a flight school for African Americans, but her vision never got a chance to take off.

On April 30, 1926, she was practicing for a May Day celebration in Jacksonville, Florida, when her plane, piloted by her mechanic, flipped during a dive. Coleman wasn’t wearing a seatbelt and plunged to her death. She was only 34.

But her brief career inspired other Black pilots to earn their wings, and in 1995 the Postal Service issued a stamp in her honor.

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Fannie Lou Hamer

Most of the civil rights movement’s leaders were Black male preachers with impressive degrees and big churches. Fannie Lou Hamer was a poor, uneducated Black woman who showed that a person didn’t need fancy credentials to inspire others.

She was so charismatic that even the President of the United States took notice.

Hamer was the youngest of 20 children born to a sharecropping family in Mississippi. She had a powerful speaking and gospel singing voice, and when activists launched voter registration drives in the mid-1960s, they recruited her to help out.

She paid a price for her activism. Hamer was fired from her job for attempting to register to vote. She was beaten, arrested and subjected to constant death threats.

Yet seasoned civil rights workers were impressed with her courage. Hamer even co-founded a new political party in Mississippi as part of her work to desegregate the state's Democratic Party.

Hamer spoke at the 1964 Democratic Convention about the brutal conditions Blacks faced while trying to vote in Mississippi. Her televised testimony was so riveting that President Lyndon B. Johnson forced the networks to break away by calling a last-minute press conference. Johnson was afraid Hamer's eloquence would alienate Southern Democrats who supported segregation.

"I guess if I'd had any sense, I'da been a little scared," Hamer said later about that night.

"But what was the point of being scared?" she added. "The only thing the whites could do was kill me, and it seemed like they'd been trying to do that a little bit at a time since I could remember."

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Paul Robeson

Paul Robeson was a true Renaissance man – an athlete, actor, author, lawyer, singer and activist whose talent was undeniable and whose outspokenness almost killed his career.

An All-American football star at Rutgers University, where he was class valedictorian, Robeson earned a law degree at Columbia and worked for a New York City law firm until he quit in protest over its racism.

In the 1920s, he turned to the theater, where his commanding presence landed him lead roles in Eugene O'Neill's "All God's Chillun Got Wings" and "The Emperor Jones." He later sang "Ol' Man River," which became his signature tune, in stage and film productions of "Show Boat."

Robeson performed songs in at least 25 different languages and became one of the most famous concert singers of his time, developing a large following in Europe.

He was perhaps best known for performing the title role in Shakespeare's "Othello," which he reprised several times. One production in 1943-44, co-starring Uta Hagen and Jose Ferrer, became the longest-running Shakespeare play in Broadway history.

Robeson also became a controversial figure for using his celebrity to advance human rights causes around the world. His push for social justice clashed with the repressive climate of the 1950s, and he was blacklisted. He stopped performing, his passport was revoked and his songs disappeared from the radio for years.

"The artist must elect to fight for freedom or slavery," Robeson once said. "I have made my choice. I had no alternative."

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Constance Baker Motley

Constance Baker Motley graduated from her Connecticut high school with honors, but her parents, immigrants from the Caribbean, couldn't afford to pay for college. So Motley, a youth activist who spoke at community events, made her own good fortune.

A philanthropist heard one of her speeches and was so impressed he paid for her to attend NYU and Columbia Law School. And a brilliant legal career was born.

Motley became the lead trial attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and began arguing desegregation and fair housing cases across the country. The person at the NAACP who hired her? Future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

Motley wrote the legal brief for the landmark Brown vs. Board of Education case, which struck down racial segregation in American public schools. Soon she herself was arguing before the Supreme Court – the first Black woman to do so.

Over the years she successfully represented Martin Luther King Jr., Freedom Riders, lunch-counter protesters and the Birmingham Children Marchers. She won nine of the 10 cases that she argued before the high court.

Motley maintained her composure even as some judges turned their backs when she spoke.

“I rejected any notion that my race or sex would bar my success in life,” Motley wrote in her memoir, “Equal Justice Under Law.”

After leaving the NAACP, Motley continued her trailblazing path, becoming the first Black woman to serve in the New York state Senate and later the first Black woman federal judge. Vice President Kamala Harris, a former prosecutor, has cited her as an inspiration.

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Eunice Hunton Carter

Eunice Hunton Carter was a social worker and prosecutor whose investigative work in New York City in the 1930s led to what was then the largest prosecution of organized crime in US history.

When notorious mob boss Charles “Lucky” Luciano met his downfall, the credit went to the young prosecutor Thomas Dewey, who eventually ran for president.

But it was Carter, an assistant district attorney on his team, who laid the foundation for the case.

Carter was born in Atlanta, the granddaughter of enslaved people. In 1932, she became the first Black woman to graduate from Fordham Law School – at a time when few lawyers were Black or women, let alone Black women.

By then Carter was already married to a dentist and had a son, but she had no interest in being a society mom.

She soon became the first African American woman in New York state to serve as assistant district attorney. As the only woman on Dewey’s team, which had been assembled to fight organized crime, she was relegated to mostly prosecuting crimes against women, such as prostitution.

But while doing so, she discovered that brothels in New York were controlled by Luciano’s mob, which received a share of their earnings in exchange for legal representation. Her painstaking investigative skills built the case against Luciano and led to his conviction in 1936.

Later Carter went into private practice and on to a litany of other accomplishments, including a committee chair at the United Nations.

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Josh Gibson

Although racism and fate kept him from the major leagues, Josh Gibson was one of the most dominant sluggers in baseball history.

The former Negro Leagues star is credited with hitting almost 800 home runs over his 17-year career and was such a fearsome hitter that many fans called him the "black Babe Ruth." Some who saw both play even called Ruth the "white Josh Gibson."

Because of incomplete statistics, many of Gibson's legendary feats – like hitting a ball 580 feet at Yankee Stadium – are just that, the stuff of legends.

Even his origin story is larger than life. He was reportedly a spectator at a Homestead Grays game in Pittsburgh in 1930 when the catcher hurt his hand. Gibson, already a semi-pro player, was invited to come down from the stands and replace him.

He never looked back. Gibson ultimately became the second-highest-paid player in the Negro Leagues behind another legend, Satchel Paige.

"You look for his weakness and while you're lookin' for it, he's liable to hit 45 home runs," Paige once famously said of Gibson. Renowned player and coach Buck O'Neil called him "the best hitter that I've ever seen."

Unfortunately, Gibson never got a chance to play in the majors. He died of a stroke at 35 in 1947, less than three months before Jackie Robinson made his debut for the Brooklyn Dodgers and broke baseball's color barrier.

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Gerald Wilson

Elegant, swinging, exuberant – it's hard to find one word to describe the lush music of Gerald Wilson, one of the most important bandleaders in the history of jazz. Wilson never got the attention of big band arrangers like Duke Ellington, but he was also a major innovator in jazz music.

A slim, enthusiastic man known for his personal kindness, Wilson practically danced when he directed his orchestra. A lover of many musical styles, he incorporated everything from blues, Basie and Bartok in his arrangements.

While many big-band recordings sound dated today, Wilson's music still sounds cutting-edge. One critic noted that Wilson's influence was so wide that "even if you had never heard of him, you were often hearing him."

Born in Shelby, Mississippi, Wilson learned piano from his mother. He started as a trumpet player, moved to Los Angeles and eventually became a composer-arranger, working with everyone from Ellington and Count Basie to Ray Charles and Ella Fitzgerald.

At one point, when his career was thriving, Wilson stepped away from commercial success to study classical masters such as Stravinsky and Bartok.

Wilson is best known for his recordings on the Pacific Jazz label, which redefined big band music. One critic said Wilson's Pacific Jazz music was full of "gorgeous nuances, and an elegance that hasn't been equaled since that time."

His arrangements were archived by the Library of Congress and in 1990, the National Endowment for the Arts honored him with a Jazz Masters Award. When he died at 96, one musician said Wilson's energy always made him seem like he was the youngest person in the room.

https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/02/us/little-known-black-history-figures/

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James Armistead

James Armistead's life would make a great movie.

Under Lafayette, the French general who helped the American colonists fight for their freedom, he infiltrated the British army as a spy near the end of the Revolutionary War.

He once reported to Benedict Arnold, the traitorous colonist who betrayed his troops to fight for the British. And he provided crucial intelligence that helped defeat the British and end the war.

Armistead was a slave in Virginia in 1781 when he got permission from his owner, who helped supply the Continental Army, to join the war effort. Lafayette dispatched him as a spy, posing as a runaway slave, and he joined British forces in Virginia who valued his knowledge of the local terrain.

Once he'd gained their trust, Armistead moved back and forth between the two armies' camps, feeding false information to the British while secretly documenting their strategies and relaying them to Lafayette.

His most crucial intel detailed British general Charles Cornwallis' plans to move thousands of troops from Portsmouth to Yorktown. Armed with this knowledge, Lafayette alerted George Washington, and they set up a blockade around Yorktown which led to Cornwallis' surrender.

Virginia lawmakers, after lobbying by Lafayette, granted Armistead his freedom in 1787. His owner, William Armistead, was paid £250.

Armistead married, raised a family and spent the rest of his life as a free man on his own Virginia farm. He added Lafayette to his name as a token of gratitude to the French general.

**Some sources list his birth year as 1760 and his death year as 1832.*

https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/02/us/little-known-black-history-figures/

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Marshall Walter "Major" Taylor

Cycling is viewed mostly as a White sport. But one of the fastest men ever to race on two wheels was Marshall Walter "Major" Taylor, an American who dominated sprint cycling in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

A hugely gifted rider, Taylor won the first amateur race he entered, at 14. He turned professional four years later and continued winning races, most of them sprints around oval tracks at Madison Square Garden and other arenas in the eastern US.

Soon Taylor was competing in races across Europe and Australia, becoming the second Black athlete to win a world championship in any sport.

He did all this while battling bitter racial prejudice – often from White cyclists who refused to compete against him or tried to harm him during races. One rival, after losing to Taylor in Boston, attacked him and choked him unconscious.

"In most of my races I not only struggled for victory but also for my very life and limb," Taylor wrote in his autobiography.

But this didn't stop him from setting world records, drawing huge crowds and becoming perhaps the first Black celebrity athlete.

https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/02/us/little-known-black-history-figures/

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Dorothy Height

Dorothy Height was often the only woman in the room. She made it her life's work to change that, fighting battles against both sexism and racism to become, as President Obama called her, the "godmother" of the civil rights movement.

Height felt the sting of racism at an early age. She was accepted to New York's Barnard College in 1929 but learned there wasn't a spot for her because the school had already filled its quota of two Black students per year.

Instead she enrolled at NYU and earned a master's in educational psychology. This led to a career as a social worker in New York and Washington, where she helped lead the YWCA and the United Christian Youth Movement.

In 1958, Height became president of the National Council of Negro Women, a position she held for more than 40 years. In that role she fought tirelessly for desegregation, affordable housing, criminal justice reform and other causes.

By the 1960s, Height had become one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s key advisers. Historians say that as an organizer of the March on Washington, she was the only woman activist on the speakers' platform during King's "I Have a Dream'' speech.

Historians say her contributions to the civil rights movement were overlooked at the time because of her sex. But by the time of her death in 2010, Height had taken her place among the movement's towering figures.

“She was truly a pioneer, and she must be remembered as one of those brave and courageous souls that never gave up,” Rep. John Lewis once said. “She was a feminist and a major spokesperson for the rights of women long before there was a women’s movement.”

https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/02/us/little-known-black-history-figures/

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Garrett Morgan

The son of two former slaves, Garrett Morgan had little more than a grade-school education.

But that didn’t stop the Ohio man from becoming an inventor with a rare gift for designing machines that saved people’s lives – including an early version of the traffic light.

As a teenager Morgan got a job repairing sewing machines, which led him to his first invention – a revamped sewing machine – and his first entrepreneurial venture: his own repair business.

Soon he was inventing other products, including a hair-straightener for African Americans. In 1916, he patented a “safety hood,” a personal breathing device that protected miners and firefighters from smoke and harmful gasses. It became the precursor of the gas masks used by soldiers during WWI.

To avoid racist resistance to his product, Morgan hired a white actor to pose as the inventor while he wore the hood during presentations to potential buyers.

Later, after witnessing a car and buggy crash, Morgan was inspired to create a traffic light that had three signals: “stop,” “go,” and “stop in all directions,” to allow pedestrians to safely cross the street.

It also had a warning light – now today's yellow light – to warn drivers they would soon have to stop. His traffic light was patented in 1923 and Morgan eventually sold its design for $40,000 to General Electric.

His legacy can be seen today at intersections across the country and the world.

https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/02/us/little-known-black-history-figures/

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Suzan-Lori Parks

Named among *Time* magazine's "100 Innovators for the Next Wave," Suzan-Lori Parks is one of the most acclaimed playwrights in American drama today. She is the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, is a MacArthur "Genius" Award recipient, and in 2015 was awarded the prestigious Gish Prize for Excellence in the Arts. Other grants and awards include those from the National Endowment for the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts and New York Foundation for the Arts. She is also a recipient of a Lila-Wallace Reader's Digest Award, a CalArts/Alpert Award in the Arts, and a Guggenheim Foundation Grant. She is an alum of New Dramatists and of Mount Holyoke College.

Parks' project *365 Days/365 Plays* (where she wrote a play a day for an entire year) was produced in over 700 theaters worldwide, creating one of the largest grassroots collaborations in theater history.

Her other plays include: *Topdog/Underdog* (2002 Pulitzer Prize winner); *The Book of Grace*; *Unchain My Heart: The Ray Charles Musical; In the Blood* (2000 Pulitzer Prize finalist); *Venus* (1996 OBIE Award); *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*; *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom* (1990 OBIE Award, Best New American Play) ; *The America Play* and Fucking A. Her adaptation of *The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess* won the 2012 Tony

Award for Best Revival of a Musical. Her newest plays, *Father Comes Home From The Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)*—set during the Civil War—was awarded the Horton Foote Prize, the Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama as well as being a 2015 Pulitzer Prize Finalist.

https://suzanloriparks.com/bio/

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The Detroit Walk to Freedom

The Detroit Walk to Freedom was a mass march during the Civil Rights Movement that took place on June 23, 1963, in Detroit, Michigan. It drew an estimated 125,000 participants and spectators, which made it the single largest civil rights demonstration in the nation's history prior to the March on Washington in Washington D.C. in August 1963.

The march was organized by Rev. Clarence LaVaughn Franklin, the father of singer Aretha Franklin, and Rev Albert B. Cleage. Franklin and Cleage and other organizers for the Detroit Council for Human Rights (DCHR), planned the march. Cleage originally wanted the march to be all-Black and led by Black people only. The Detroit branch of the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP) threatened to boycott the march if the DCHR did not include local white leaders in the march.

The Detroit Walk to Freedom had three goals. The first purpose was to speak out against segregation and the brutality that civil rights activists regularly experienced in the South. It also addressed concerns in the urban North, including employment and housing discrimination and de facto school segregation. The march was intended to raise funds and awareness for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The date of June 23, 1963, was chosen as it was the 20th anniversary of the Detroit Race Riot of 1943.

The majority of the marchers were Black, but there were prominent white participants including former Michigan governor John Swainson, Detroit mayor Jerome Cavanagh, Walter Reuther,

president of the United Auto Workers (UAW), and Billie S. Farnum, the State Auditor General. The governor of Michigan at the time, George Romney, said that he was unable to attend the march because it took place on a Sunday and conflicted with his Church of Latter-Day Saints religious practices.

The march started around 3:00 p.m. on Woodward Avenue and Adelaide and continued along Jefferson and concluded at Cobo Arena and Hall. Songs like "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" were sung during the march, and people carried banners and signs. The march lasted about 90 minutes and was highlighted by a speech from Dr. Martin Luther King, which many would recall later as similar to his "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington. Other speakers included Congressman Charles Diggs, Cleage, Reuther, and Swainson. Detroit-based Motown Records president Berry Gordy received permission from King to record his speech with the royalties going to SCLC.

Approximately 20,000 people participated in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Detroit Walk to Freedom on June 15, 2013, including Martin Luther King III, Detroit mayor Dave Bing, Jesse Jackson, and Al Sharpton.

https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/events-african-american-history/detroit-walk-to-freedom-1963/

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James Meredith's March Against Fear

The "March Against Fear" began on June 5, 1966, and was initiated by civil rights activist James Meredith. Four years earlier he had become the first African American student to integrate the University of Mississippi by enrolling there in 1962.

Meredith decided to protest the racial violence in his home state by engaging in a 21-day solitary march down U.S. Highway 51 from the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee, to the

Mississippi State Capitol in Jackson, a total of 270 miles. He hoped the march would spur political education and subsequent voter registration among Mississippi's African Americans.

Despite the history of violence against African Americans generally and specifically civil rights activists in Mississippi, Meredith decided to walk without the support of other civil rights activists or protection from local police or the U.S. Justice Department. Soon after crossing the state line between Tennessee and Mississippi, on the second day of his march, June 6, Meredith was shot and wounded by James Aubrey Norvell, a white sniper. Unable to continue the march, he was taken to a Memphis hospital to recover from his injuries.

Meanwhile, major civil rights leaders including the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., (SCLC), Floyd McKissick (CORE), and Stokely Carmichael (SNCC) decided to continue the march with the Deacons for Defense and Justice providing armed security. Other organizational participants included the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) and the Medical Committee for Human Rights (MCHR) as well as white leaders such as UAW President Walter Reuther who brought 10 buses of union supporters. Roy Wilkins of the NAACP was originally scheduled to participate, but withdrew when he learned the Deacons for Defense would protect the marchers.

The march continued as individuals from across the nation joined. Marchers were fed by Black community supporters and occasionally by sympathetic whites such as the Holy Child Jesus Catholic Church in Canton, Mississippi. They stopped at Tougaloo College, a historically Black institution just north of Jackson, where they were entertained by James Brown, Dick Gregory, Sammy Davis Jr., Burt Lancaster, and Marlon Brando. James Meredith rejoined the march on June 25, the day before the marchers entered Jackson. By that point they had grown to more than 15,000 participants, making this the largest civil rights protest in Mississippi history. The marchers arrived at the state capitol on June 26. By then they had registered more than 4,000 new voters, particularly in the overwhelmingly Black Mississippi Delta counties.

Despite the apparent success of the March Against Fear, it is primarily remembered today as the event that ushered in the Black Power Movement. On Thursday, June 16, when the marchers reached Greenwood, Mississippi, the simmering tension between nonviolence advocates such as

Martin Luther King and those who challenged that philosophy such as Stokely Carmichael, finally became public when Carmichael, after being arrested by local police, rejoined the marchers. Taking the speaker's platform at a local park, Carmichael argued that Blacks must reject racial integration and develop their own political and economic resources without white assistance. He then called for "Black Power." The speech, televised to a national audience, marked the beginning of a dramatically new phase in the struggle for racial justice.

https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/events-african-american-history/james-meredithss-march-against-fear-1966/

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African Americans in the California Gold Rush

The California Gold Rush, from 1848 to 1860, began after gold was discovered by carpenter and sawmill operator James W. Marshall on January 24, 1848. After Marshall's discovery, thousands of people came to the goldfields in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains in Northern California. At least 4,000 African Americans were among those who would arrive in California by 1860 in search of gold and more generally, prosperity and freedom.

In 1850, 952 African Americans resided in California, with the male population comprising 91 percent of that number. The population doubled to 2,000, still mostly men by 1852. A few African American gold-seekers founded wealth during the gold rush. In 1848, one African American man named Hector deserted his naval squadron ship Southampton at Monterey, California, and went to the mother lode. He returned a few weeks later with $4,000 in gold. Peter Brown, formerly of St. Genevieve, Missouri, was more typical. Working 25 miles from Sacramento in December 1851, he cleared $400 after two months of work.

African American miners usually worked in integrated settings in Chinese, Latin American, and European companies. In 1852, a small African American community called Little Negro Hill grew up around the lucrative claims of two Massachusetts-born African American miners

working along the American River. Little Negro Hill was known to attract Chinese and Portuguese miners and American-born whites.

Other integrated mining settlements emerged including a second Negro Hill near the Mokelumne River, Union Bar along the Yuba River, and Downieville, which was founded in 1849 by William Downie, a Scotsman who led nine miners, including seven African Americans, to the location where the town was formed.

Far more African Americans were successful providing services to the gold-driven economy. Most of these newcomers settled in Sacramento and San Francisco. Mifflin Gibbs and Peter Lester, formerly of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, started the Pioneer Boot and Shoe Emporium whose customers stretched from Portland, Oregon Territory, to Baja California. James P. Dyer, formerly of New Bedford, Massachusetts, became the West's first antebellum Black manufacturer when he started the New England Soap Factory in San Francisco in 1851.

Although nominally a free state, slavery also existed in California. In 1852 a fugitive slave law was passed that made it illegal for slaves to flee their masters around California borders. Advertisements for runaway slaves also appeared in local newspapers. An estimated one third of the African Americans in California were illegally enslaved. They often resided in the cities or goldfields and mining camps living and working alongside free Blacks. Their presence led to an abolition movement especially in San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, and other cities.

The goldfields in California provided a temporary home for African American miners. Most African Americans became permanent urban residents, creating Black communities in San Francisco, Sacramento, Marysville, and other cities and towns. Between 1849 and 1855, most African American residents in San Francisco settled near the waterfront and expanded their community to Telegraph Hill. Blacks in both Sacramento and San Francisco created churches that anchored these communities. In 1850, for example, Sacramento African Americans founded St. Andrews AME Church, the first Black church west of Texas. The gold rush established a number of African American communities in California including many which continue to this day.

https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/events-african-american-history/african-americans-in-the-california-gold-rush-1848-1860/

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The Florida Poll Tax

By the end of the Civil War, African Americans made up nearly half of the population of Florida. As in other Southern states, most Blacks in Florida before the Civil War were enslaved people and none had the right to vote. The passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870 theoretically extended the right to vote to all citizens regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. A closer evaluation of the 15th Amendment indicates that it states the right to vote cannot be denied because of race. As a result, other methods of voter suppression, such as poll taxes and literacy tests, were used to get around the wording of the amendment and effectively disenfranchise African Americans in the election process. Florida was the first ex-Confederate state to use the Poll Tax as an effective barrier to prevent Blacks from voting.

White lawmakers in Florida had a strategic reason to fear newly empowered African American voters at the end of the Civil War. Blacks made up about 45% of Florida's population and thousands of white residents had lost their right to vote because of their Confederate ties. By 1867, there were 15,434 Black voters registered in Florida and just 11,148 who were white.

Soon after the Civil War, there was an explosion in the number of Black voters (male only) and Black elected officials. Nineteen Blacks were elected to the 76-member Florida Legislature in 1870. During this election, Josiah Walls, a former slave, and Union soldier from Alachua County, became Florida's first Black member of Congress. Walls would be the only Black member of Congress from Florida for the next 116 years.

In 1889, Florida's Legislature adopted a $2 annual poll tax as a requirement for voting. On the surface, there was nothing discriminatory about the tax. Both whites and Blacks had to pay it. In

reality, the legislators knew that the $2 tax (nearly $43 in 2022 dollars) would affect Blacks more because they were overwhelmingly poor. Although some poor whites were also disenfranchised, they could often find ways to circumvent the tax. Political candidates, for example, often paid the cost to entice white voters to support them. Election officials frequently "overlooked" the tax for whites without legally coming into conflict with the 15th Amendment.

Florida officially abolished the poll tax on June 14, 1941. This was due to so many candidates trying to buy votes by paying the tax. U.S. Sen. Spessard Holland of Florida would be one of the leaders pushing to abolish the tax in federal elections. In 1964, the 24th Amendment was adopted abolishing the poll tax in all federal elections. It would take the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, however, before the majority of African Americans in Florida could register to vote.

https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/the-florida-poll-tax-1889-1941/

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Bacon's Rebellion

Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 was the last major uprising of enslaved blacks and white indentured servants in Colonial Virginia. One consequence of the failed rebellion was the intensification of African slavery and the social separation of blacks and whites in Virginia.

The origins of Bacon's Rebellion rested with the conquest of the Powhatan Indian Confederation (1644-1646) and the Confederation's lands being distributed to the English planter class. Despite their defeat, Indians formally associated with the Confederation continued squatting on these lands which caused the Virginia colonists to engage in warfare against them.

The military and political situation was made more complication by the presence of African slaves who along with indentured servants produced the colony's main crop, tobacco. Planters looked down upon the slaves, indentured servants, and landless freemen both White and Black whom they called the "giddy multitude."

The two main antagonists during the rebellion, Virginia Colonial Governor William Berkeley and landowner Nathaniel Bacon who was related by marriage, were both purchasers of former Powhatan land near Jamestown. During the decades of the 1650s and 1660s a sizable number of indentured servants, Black and white, who had completed their required indentured labor service, clamored for old Powhatan land as well which was under the control of Berkeley and his planter class associates.

Despite his elite status, Bacon joined and led these former servants in attacking peaceful Indians to acquire their lands. Berkeley, however, fearing an outbreak war between whites and Indians on the frontier, jailed Bacon for a few months, because of these attacks.

Once released, Bacon declared himself the leader of the colony's former indentured servants, freemen, black and white, newly arrived landless immigrants from England, Scotland, or Ireland, and enslaved blacks, all of whom bonded together because of their common exploitation on the large tobacco estates. Understanding that the promotion of their grievances served his own interests for power and additional land, Bacon marched on Jamestown, the colonial capital, with 500 men and confronted Governor Berkeley who escaped. Bacon then issued his "Declaration of the People" on July 30, 1676. In this document, he accused Governor Berkeley of corruption and of being pro-Native American.

The rebellion then meandered through the late summer months. On September 19, Bacon and his followers returned to Jamestown and battled forces loyal to Governor Berkeley. He forced Berkeley and his followers to retreat and then burned the town. Despite his victory, Nathaniel Bacon, died of dysentery in the Virginia bush in October 1676.

John Ingram took over leadership of the rebellion but by that point many of Bacon's followers had deserted the cause.

British Royal Navy Captain Thomas Grantham, commander of the thirty-three-gun war ship, the *Concord* confronted the remaining 400 rebels: indentured servants, freemen, and slaves, at their

makeshift fortification called West Point. Grantham persuaded most of the men to disarm and surrender but 80 enslaved men and 20 Englishmen resisted. Grantham promised them pardons once they left the fortification and returned with him to the Concord. Once on the vessel, his soldiers and sailors forced their capitulation. Although pockets of rebels throughout Virginia continued to resist colonial authorities into 1677, the confrontation at West Point effectively ended the Rebellion.

https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/events-african-american-history/bacons-rebellion-1676/

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The 1972 Southern University Shooting

Southern University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is the largest historically Black college in the state of Louisiana. In 1970, over 10,000 Black students attended the university. Although the school president and most of the administration were Black, the university itself was under the control of the Louisiana State Legislature. The state spent only half as much money on the Black students and their facilities as they did on the white students in predominantly white colleges and universities.

The students of Southern University had endured low-quality food, inadequate funding, and overcrowded and improper housing. That included worn out and torn mattresses in such bad shape that many opted to sleep on the floor instead of the beds in their dormitories. Students also wanted more courses on African American history and culture and a separate, Black-controlled board of trustees. By November 1972, in an attempt to present their grievances about campus conditions to the university administration, the students formed an organization, Students United, led by Rickey Hill and Fred J. Prejean. For over a month, the students boycotted classes and held demonstrations on campus. Southern University had a very large football following, and during one game, student protesters took over the field and stopped a game.

Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards ordered the campus closed, citing safety reasons, and sent in members of the National Guard, and local police officers. Initially, they followed students across campus and used intimidation tactics to stop the protests. Four students were arrested in the early hours of November 15, and the officers left the campus. On the morning of November 16, the student organization met with the university president, Dr. G. Leon Netterville, and asked him to go to the police and ask for the release of the arrested students. Dr. Netterville agreed and told the students that they could wait for his return in his office. Meanwhile, other students set fire to the registration office and other university buildings. Although Dr. Netterville left the campus, an unknown caller alerted the police that the university president was being held hostage by the students in his administration building.

Over 300 police and National Guard officers arrived on the campus in full riot gear and with a tank. They surrounded the administration building and ordered the students to come outside. As the students began to emerge from the building, the officers launched tear gas canisters at them. One student threw the canister back in the direction of the officers, and shots were fired from the tank and from the surrounding officers. When the smoke cleared, two students, Leonard Brown and Denver Smith, were dead. The coroner, Hypolyte Landry, reported that the students were the victims of either buckshot or shrapnel. No officer was ever charged with the crime.

Netterville resigned after the shooting. In 1975, a separate board of trustees was created to govern the university. In 2017, Southern University awarded both Brown and Smith posthumous degrees. A PBS documentary, *Tell Them We Are Rising: The Story of Black Colleges and Universities*, was released in 2017, detailing the student movement at the southern colleges and the violence at Southern University.

https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/events-african-american-history/the-1972-southern-university-shooting/

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The Birmingham Children's Crusade

Early in 1963, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King, Reverend Ralph Abernathy, and local Birmingham leader of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights Fred Shuttlesworth came together to lead a campaign to desegregate Birmingham, Alabama, a city notorious for its discriminatory practices. A plan was put in place for a series of protests. Mass meetings were held at the 16th Street Baptist church with local adults and their children including many training for non-violent peaceful protests.

In April, the first wave of protests resulted in numerous arrests, including Dr. King, who wrote the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" during his incarceration. A local circuit court judge issued an injunction against additional protests and when they continued, there were mass arrests of adult protesters Adult demonstrators also suffered the threat of being fired from their jobs for participating in protests. These actions resulted in fewer adult volunteers to the movement. Consequently, SCLC member James Bevel argued it was time to involve the youth in the movement. Agents went out to local schools, recruiting high school quarterbacks and cheerleaders to influence their peers to attend meetings and get involved in the movement.

On the morning of May 2, 1963, thousands of African American students from Birmingham and surrounding communities skipped school. Ranging in age from 7 to 18, they gathered at the 16th Street Baptist Church. After receiving instructions, they were sent out in groups of 10-50 children at a time with picket signs. On the first day, hundreds of children were arrested and detained. On the second day, the children were met by Birmingham police who used the same tactics they had applied to adults; bombardment with water hoses, beatings with batons, and attacks by guard dogs. The children continued to protest despite the tactics used, and over two thousand youth were arrested over the following days. Images of the children and teenagers being attacked in these protests appeared in newspapers and on television and sparked outrage across the nation and around the world. On May 5, these young protesters marched to City Hall demanding justice for youth already incarcerated and an end to racial segregation in the city.

Local businesses and city officials began to feel the pressure of the movement. They agreed to meet with the civil rights leaders to discuss a plan to end the protests. On May 10, an agreement was reached and city officials released all who had been jailed and began desegregating local businesses. In the wake of the protests, the Birmingham Board of Education announced that all students involved would be expelled, but that decision was overturned by the U.S. Court of Appeals.

In June, President John F. Kennedy announced his intentions to establish new civil rights legislation that would end segregation in Birmingham. He was motivated by events in Birmingham including student protest marches which were now collectively called the Birmingham Children's Crusade. The children's protests led to a series of crucial events over the next year. Dr. King led the March on Washington in August 1963 and in September, the Ku Klux Klan bombed the 16th Street Baptist Church, killing four young girls. President Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963 and President Lyndon Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act on July 2, precisely 14 months after the first students marched in Birmingham.

https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/events-african-american-history/the-birmingham-childrens-crusade-may-1963/

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Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is an annual African American and pan-African celebration of family, community, and culture. It is observed between December 26 and January 1. It was created in 1966 by founder Dr. Maulana Karenga, in the wake of the 1965 Watts Rebellion, and is based on African harvest festival traditions, and the Swahili language. Dr. Karenga was a major figure in the Black Power and Civil Rights Movements, and his goal was to reaffirm African American roots in African culture; to serve as a communal celebration of African people to reaffirm and reinforce the bonds between them and to instill a sense of pride and identity, purpose, and direction.

Kwanzaa derives from the Swahili phrase “Matunda ya kwanza,” which means “first fruits.” Families who celebrate Kwanzaa decorate their homes with objects of African art, and colorful kente cloth, and display fresh fruits. During Kwanzaa celebrations, libations may be shared through a community cup and poured in remembrance of ancestors. The greeting for each day is “Habari Gani,” Swahili for “How are you?” and “Heri za Kwanzaa,” meaning “Happy Kwanzaa.” A communal feast called Karamu is held on the 6th day of the celebration.

Kwanzaa celebratory symbols include a mat, Mkeka, on which is placed a Kinara (candleholder) for Mishumaa Saba or seven candles; Mazao (fruits and vegetables); Muhindi (corn); Kikombe cha Umoja (unity cup); and Zawadi (gifts). Displays include books, a heritage symbol, and the red, black, and green bendera (flag). The seven principles of Kwanzaa, Nguzo Saba, are dedicated to the seven principles of African heritage. The candle (Mishumaa Saba) lighting ceremony called “Lifting Up the Light That Lasts,” is in conjunction with the seven principles, and are lit in a specific order each day of the celebration.

1. ***Umoja (Unity)*** – To strive for and to maintain unity in the family community, nation and race. *On the first day, the black candle, placed in the center, is lit, representing black people in unity.*
2. ***Kujichagulia (Self Determination)*** – To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves. *The red candle, on the left, nearest to the black is lit, which represents struggle.*
3. ***Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)*** – To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers and sisters problems our own and to solve them together. *The green candle on the right, nearest to the black is lit, representing a fruitful future.*
4. ***Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)*** – To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together. *The red candle on the left is lit.*
5. ***Nia (Purpose)*** – To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness. *The green candle on the right is lit.*

6. ***Kuumba (Creativity)*** – To always do as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. *The red candle on the left is lit.*
7. ***Imani (Faith)*** – To believe with all our hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle. *The green candle on the right is lit.*

Former President Bill Clinton gave the first presidential declaration marking the holiday in 1993, and the first Kwanzaa stamp, designed by Synthia Saint James, was issued by the United States Post Office in 1997.

https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/kwanzaa-1966/

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The Central Park Five

The Central Park Five was a group of five young men–four African Americans (Yusef Salaam, 16; Anthony McCray, 16; Kharey Wise, 18; and Kevin Richardson, 16) and one Hispanic (Raymond Santana, 15)–who were tried and convicted of attempted murder, rape, sodomy, and assault of a woman in Central Park in New York City. Their trial was known as the "Central Park Jogger Trial" in the press and, according to the New York Times, was "one of the most widely publicized crimes of the 1980s."

On the evening of April 19, 1989, police received reports about a gang of approximately 30 youths assaulting and robbing people in the northernmost section of Central Park. Multiple people were attacked and robbed by this group as they moved south through the park. Police were dispatched by 9:30 p.m., and one victim told police that he was attacked by a group of four or five black youths.

Despite the police presence in the park, Trisha Meili, a 28-year old investment banker out for her nightly jog, was attacked, beaten, raped and left for dead between 9:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., but police did not find her until 1:30 a.m on April 20. She was so badly beaten that doctors assumed she would die from her injuries. Suffering from hypothermia, brain damage, excessive blood loss, and shock, she fell into a coma. She was even given the last rites, yet she miraculously emerged from the coma after twelve days.

On April 19, police arrested Santana and Richardson, along with other teenagers, at approximately 10:15 p.m. McCray, Salaam, and Wise were arrested on April 20 after being identified by other youths as participating in the attack. Police questioned all five teenagers fours without the presence of parents or guardians, and each confessed to participating in a rape and assaulting people in Central Park.

Within weeks of their arrests, however, all five suspects retracted their confessions claiming they had been intimidated and coerced into making false statements by the police. On May 1, real estate magnate and future U.S. president Donald Trump inflamed public sentiment by taking out a full-page ad in four New York daily newspapers demanding the return of the death penalty. New York City Mayor Ed Koch also assumed the guilt of The Central Park Five and demanded justice. In 1990, all five young men were found guilty and sentenced to between 5 and 15 years in prison.

In 2002, convicted serial rapist Matias Reyes confessed to the rape and attempted murder of Trisha Meili. DNA evidence, along with specific details of the assault, supported his confession. After investigation, New York District Attorney Robert Morgenthau determined that The Central Park Five's convictions should be vacated. In December 2002, the New York Supreme Court rescinded the convictions although they had all completed their sentences.

In 2003, the five exonerated men sued New York City for malicious prosecution and received a settlement of $41 million in 2014. They also filed a $52 million lawsuit against the state of New York; the New York Court of Claims awarded the men $3.9 million in 2016. In May 2019,

Netflix aired a four-part miniseries, *When They See Us* directed by Ava DuVernay, focusing on The Central Park Five.

https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/central-park-five-1989/

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Biloxi Wade-Ins

The Biloxi Wade-In Civil Rights protests were conducted by local African Americans on the beaches of Biloxi, Mississippi between 1959 and 1963. Physician Gilbert R. Mason Sr. led the demonstrations to desegregate beaches on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The Biloxi Wade-Ins was the first major Civil Rights campaign in Mississippi.

The first wade-in occurred on May 14, 1959, after Mason attempted to swim at a local beach with friends and their children. A city policeman ordered them to leave because they were violating Mississippi segregation laws. Mason and one of his friends, Murry J. Saucier, Jr. then went to the police station to confirm if a law had been broken. When they received no answer, they returned the next day and met with Biloxi Mayor Laz Quave who told them they would be arrested if they returned to the beach.

In June 1959, another Mason friend, Dr. Felix H. Dunn, wrote to the Harrison County Board of Supervisors asking, “What laws, if any, prohibit the use of the beach facilities by Negro citizens?” The Board president responded that property owners along the beach owned both “the beach and water from the shoreline extending out 1,500 feet meaning that black swimmers were trespassing if they came onto the beach.”

In October 1959, Mason, Dunn, and two other black residents petitioned the board to allow African Americans to use the beach. A supervisor asked if they would be satisfied if they could use a segregated portion of the beach. Mason said no.

On April 17, 1960, Mason returned to the beach and was arrested. As word got out of his arrest, Black Biloxi residents pledged to join him in subsequent protests. On April 24, 1960, which became known as the Bloody Wade-In Day, Mason led a second, larger protest of 125 black men, women, and children who had gathered on the beach. Violence broke out as white segregationist counter-protestors pelted the demonstrators with rocks and fired shots over their heads. Fighting also occurred between individual Black protestors and white segregationists. Eight black men and two white men suffered gunshot wounds, and numerous people were injured from fights. The Biloxi police took no action to prevent the violence against the Black protestors, but Mason was arrested, tried, and convicted of disturbing the peace for his role in the demonstration.

On May 17, 1960, the U.S. Justice Department sued the city of Biloxi for denying African Americans access to the beaches. When city officials ignored the lawsuit, Biloxi Civil Rights leaders staged another protest which allowed them to file suit in the Harrison County courts and potentially gain an earlier resolution.

Sporadic wade-ins continued along Biloxi beaches until the final protest on June 23, 1963, two weeks after Medgar Evers's assassination in Jackson, Mississippi. Protestors placed black flags in the sand in memory of Evers. Dozens of African Americans were assaulted during the protest, and police arrested 71, mostly Black, protestors. More than 2,000 white counter protestors attacked the black demonstrators and vandalized and overturned cars until the police restrained them.

Although the 1964 Civil Rights Act officially desegregated Biloxi beaches, only in 1968 were the Biloxi beaches finally opened to all races. In 2009, on the 50th anniversary of the first wade-in, a section of U.S. Route 90 near Biloxi was renamed the Dr. Gilbert Mason Sr. Memorial Highway.

https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/events-african-american-history/biloxi-wade-ins-1959-1963/

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Dr. Ibram X. Kendi

Dr. Ibram X. Kendi is a National Book Award-winning author of fifteen books for adults and children, including nine *New York Times* bestsellers—five of which were #1 *New York Times* bestsellers. Dr. Kendi is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University, and the director of the BU Center for Antiracist Research. He is a contributing writer at *The Atlantic* and a CBS News racial justice contributor.

Dr. Kendi is the author of *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, which won the National Book Award for Nonfiction, making him the youngest author to win that award. He also authored the international bestseller, *How to Be an Antiracist*, which was described in the *New York Times* as "the most courageous book to date on the problem of race in the Western mind." Dr. Kendi's other bestsellers include *How to Raise an Antiracist*; *Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619-2019*, co-edited with Keisha Blain; *How to Be a (Young) Antiracist*, co-authored with Nic Stone; *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*, co-authored with Jason Reynolds; and *Antiracist Baby*, illustrated by Ashley Lukashevsky. In 2020, *Time* magazine named Dr. Kendi one of the 100 Most Influential People in the world. He was awarded a 2021 MacArthur Fellowship, popularly known as the Genius Grant.

https://www.ibramxkendi.com/bio

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Jason Reynolds

Jason Reynolds is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of many award-winning books, including *Look Both Ways: A Tale Told in Ten Blocks*, *All American Boys* (with Brendan Kiely), *Long Way Down*, *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* (with Ibram X. Kendi), *Stuntboy, in the Meantime* (illustrated by Raúl the Third), and *Ain't Burned All the Bright* (with artwork by Jason

Griffin). The recipient of a Newbery Honor, a Printz Honor, an NAACP Image Award, and multiple Coretta Scott King honors, Reynolds is also the 2020-2022 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. He has appeared on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*, *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, *CBS Sunday Morning, Good Morning America*, and various media outlets. He is on faculty at Lesley University, for the Writing for Young People MFA Program and lives in Washington, DC.

https://www.jasonwritesbooks.com/

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Ta-Nehisi Coates

Ta-Nehisi Coates is one of the most original and perceptive black voices today—"the single best writer on the subject of race in the United States" (New York Observer). Coates is the author, most recently, of Between the World and Me, the #1 New York Times bestseller that "will be hailed as a classic of our time" (Publishers Weekly) and which Toni Morrison calls "required reading."

Between the World and Me is written by Ta-Nehisi Coates in the form of a letter to his teenage son, Samori. In 160 pages, it moves from Baltimore to Howard University to New York City to Paris, France, addressing what it means to be black in America. Slate calls it, "a book destined to remain on store shelves, bedside tables, and high school and college syllabi long after its author or any of us have left this Earth." It won the National Book Award, was a National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist, and won the PEN/Diamonstein-Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay.

An Atlantic National Correspondent, Coates has written many influential articles, including "The Case for Reparations," which reignited the long-dormant conversation of how to repay African-Americans for a system of institutional racism that's robbed them of wealth and success for generations. New York called the George Polk Award-winning cover story "probably the most discussed magazine piece of the Obama era."

Coates's debut book, The Beautiful Struggle, is a tough and touching memoir of growing up in Baltimore during the age of crack. In 2012, Coates was awarded the Hillman Prize for Opinion and Analysis Journalism. Judge Hendrik Hertzberg, of The New Yorker, wrote, "Coates is one of the most elegant and sharp observers of race in America. He is an upholder of universal values, a brave and compassionate writer who challenges his readers to transcend narrow self-definitions and focus on shared humanity."

A former Village Voice writer, Coates has previously served as the Journalist in Residence at the School of Journalism at CUNY and the Martin Luther King Visiting Associate Professor at MIT. He has been awarded the Hillman Prize for Opinion and Analysis Journalism. He is the winner of a 2015 MacArthur Fellowship, and was named of one TIME Magazine's 100 Most Influential People.

https://www.pbs.org/weta/finding-your-roots/about/meet-our-guests/ta-nehisi-coates

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Lorraine Hansberry

In 1959, Lorraine Hansberry made history as the first African American woman to have a show produced on Broadway—A Raisin in the Sun. As a playwright, feminist, and racial justice activist, Hansberry never shied away from tough topics during her short and extraordinary life. Lorraine Hansberry was born on May 19, 1930 at Provident Hospital on the South Side of Chicago. She was raised in a strong family, the youngest of three children born to Nannie Perry Hansberry and Carl Augustus Hansberry. Her father, Carl, founded Lake Street Bank, one of the first banks for African Americans in Chicago and also ran a successful real estate business. Her mother, Nannie, was a school teacher. Hansberry had other African American leaders in her family: her uncle William Leo Hansberry was a Professor of History at Howard University; her cousin, Shauneille Perry, was one of the first African American women to direct off-Broadway. Hansberry's father died of a cerebral hemorrhage when she was 15.

Growing up on the South Side of Chicago, Hansberry and her family were involved in the racial justice movements of the era. Her parents were prominent members of the African American community and her father worked for the NAACP. When prominent African American community members and leaders came through Chicago, they went to the Hansberry's home. The family hosted W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes, Duke Ellington, and Jesse Owens.

In 1937, Hansberry's parents challenged Chicago's restrictive housing covenants by moving into an all-white neighborhood. Their new white neighbors did not welcome the move and a mob gathered around the house. Someone threw a brick through the window, barely missing eight-year-old Hansberry's head. Years later, Hansberry recalled her mother "patrolling the house all night with a loaded German luger." When the Supreme Court of Illinois upheld the legality of the neighborhood's restrictive covenant and forced the Hansberrys to leave the house, her parents sued. They took their case all the way to the Supreme Court. They won. Hansberry v. Lee (1940) helped outlaw legal housing discrimination across the United States.

Hansberry graduated from Englewood High School in 1948 and enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. While studying, Hansberry became interested in theater, politics, and the global anti-colonial movement. She worked on the 1948 presidential campaign for the Progressive Party, wrote in support of the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, and covered the case of an African American man executed after an all-white jury deliberated his case for three minutes. Hansberry left university before completing her degree. She studied painting in Chicago and Mexico before moving to New York in 1950 to take courses at the New School. By 1951, she was writing for Paul Robeson's Freedom, a progressive publication that put her in touch with other literary and political mentors. She also studied with W.E.B. DuBois. Many of her mentors were attacked for being Communists, but Hansberry escaped this persecution because she was relatively unknown.

During a protest against racial discrimination at New York University, Hansberry met Robert Nemiroff on the picket line. Nemiroff, a white, Jewish writer, shared many of Hansberry's

political views. Shortly after meeting, the two married on June 20, 1953 at the Hansberry's home in Chicago. When Hansberry married, interracial marriage was still illegal in many states. Malcolm X rebuked Hansberry publicly for her interracial marriage. He later apologized for the attack. Hansberry and Nemiroff ended their romantic relationship after nine years, but he remained her best friend and closest confidant for the rest of her life. Despite her marriage to a man, Hansberry identified as a lesbian but she was not "out" in the traditional sense, as homosexuality was illegal in New York City at the time.

In 1956, Nemiroff co-wrote a hit song, "Cindy, Oh Cindy." The profits allowed Hansberry to quit working at Freedom and devote her time exclusively to writing on her own. Inspired by her childhood and her love of theater, she started writing a play. Initially called The Crystal Stair, she later retitled it A Raisin in the Sun, a phrase taken from Langston Hughes's poem, "Harlem: A Dream Deferred." Raisin drew upon the lives of working-class African Americans who rented houses from her father and who Hansberry went to school with on the South Side. She turned to family members for inspiration for other characters.

Many expected A Raisin in the Sun to flop when it came to Broadway. Instead, it ran for 19 months, was made into a 1961 movie starring Sidney Poitier, and is now considered a classic theater piece. The play was nominated for four Tony Awards and won the New York Drama Critics' Circle award for best play in 1959. Most importantly, Raisin brought African Americans to the theater as audiences and gave them representation on the stage.

Hansberry was not done. She wrote another play, The Sign in Sidney Brunstein's Window, inspired by her marriage to Nemiroff. The play ran for 101 performances and dealt with themes of race, gender, and sexuality. The Sign would be the second and final Hansberry play produced during her lifetime. On January 12, 1965, Hansberry died of pancreatic cancer at 34. The Sign closed the same day.

At her funeral, held at the Church of the Master near Harlem's Morningside Park, some 700 mourners filled the church. It was standing room only. Posthumously, another of Hansberry's plays, Les Blancs, received their Broadway debut in 1970. Nemiroff also put the finishing

touches on some of Hansberry's incomplete plays, including The Drinking Gourd and What Use Are Flowers?

Raisin made the theater a place where African American stories and presence were welcome. Hansberry's success opened the doors for and inspired generations of African American artists. Her commitment to racial justice inspired countless more.

https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/lorraine-hansberry

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Chuck Berry

Chuck Berry's music has transcended generations. He earns respect to this day because he was truly an entertainer. Berry, also known as "The Father of Rock & Roll," gained success by watching the audience's reaction and playing accordingly, putting his listeners' amusement above all else. For this reason, tunes like "Johnny B. Goode," "Maybellene" and "Memphis" have become anthems to an integrated American youth and popular culture. Berry is a musical icon who established rock and roll as a musical form and brought the worlds of black and white together in song. Born in St. Louis on October 18, 1926 Berry had many influences on his life that shaped his musical style. He emulated the smooth vocal clarity of his idol, Nat King Cole, while playing blues songs from bands like Muddy Waters. For his first stage performance, Berry chose to sing a Jay McShann song called "Confessin' the Blues." It was at his high school's student musical performance, when the blues was well-liked but not considered appropriate for such an event. He got a thunderous applause for his daring choice, and from then on, Berry had to be onstage.

https://www.chuckberry.com/about

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Tina Turner

Turner was the first woman, as well as the first Black artist, to appear on the cover of *Rolling Stone*. Known as the "queen of rock 'n' roll," she is among the roughly two dozen artists to be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame twice—once as a duo with her ex-husband, Ike Turner, in 1991, and then again as a solo act in 2021. ("If they're still giving me awards at 81, I must have done something right," said Turner in a speech following the 2021 induction.)
Anna Mae Bullock was born in Brownsville, Tennessee, in 1939. She got her musical start—and her stage name—in St. Louis, Missouri, from Ike Turner, who led a rhythm-and-blues band that she joined. The pair rebranded as Ike & Tina Turner and married in 1962.

Throughout the '60s and '70s, they released a number of hits and endured a grueling tour schedule. Per the Associated Press' Hillel Italie, Turner was forced to perform while ill or injured on many occasions.

During those years, Ike subjected his wife to violent abuse. Tina escaped in 1976, "fleeing a Texas hotel room with nothing more that 36 cents and a Mobil credit card in her pocket," writes the *Washington Post*'s Chris Richards. Following that fateful day, she began to speak publicly about her husband's actions, and her openness served as an inspiration to many.

"People still underestimate the cultural importance of Turner telling that story," writes Rob Sheffield in *Rolling Stone*. "Strange as it might seem today, she was the first star to talk aloud about domestic violence, to insist on it as part of the story, not to gloss over it or act coy. Until she came along, the idiom 'domestic violence' wasn't even part of the language."

Turner's comeback in the 1980s is the stuff of legends; Sheffield contends that she "invented the whole concept of the comeback as we know it."

An integral part of that comeback was how she took charge of her identity and marketed her sound, as Maureen Mahon, author of *Black Diamond Queens: African American Women and*

Rock and Roll, detailed in a 2021 discussion hosted by NPR's Ann Powers and the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Mahon explained that Turner made a conscious choice to stop marketing herself as R&B, instead presenting herself as a rocker. Her clothing and hairstyles reflected this shift and became part of her iconic look.

Compared to her musical contemporaries, Turner was an older artist with an older sound—a combination that worked in her favor.

"Rock culture was still so stuck on the mythos of youth and newness that her '70s-retro concept was kinda ahead of her time," writes Sheffield. "In a way, it's an underrated Tina innovation: the Black grandma who invented dad rock."

The second phase of Turner's career allowed her to present herself to the world on her own terms. The hits from this era—including "What's Love Got to Do With It," which became the title of the 1993 film—cemented her superstardom.

Turner retired from performing in 2009, citing her age. But she remained a giant of the music world, and her influence shined through in artists such as Janet Jackson and Janelle Monáe. Her story of astonishing resilience and her ability to forge her own path continue to resonate.

Turner herself struggled with that story late into her life. She never watched *What's Love Got to Do With It*, she revealed in a 2019 essay for *Rolling Stone.* "I was too close to those painful memories at the time, and I was afraid it would be upsetting, like watching a documentary," she wrote.

But when a musical about her life debuted in London in 2018, she found that she was ready to face those memories.

“What happens on that stage has lost the power to hurt me,” she wrote. “I can sit back and enjoy the show.”

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/tina-turner-career-legacy-180982246/

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Aretha Franklin

Franklin’s roots, which she never abandoned, were in gospel music. As a girl, she began singing in the choir of her father’s church, the New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit. The Reverend C.L. Franklin, a noted figure in black America in the 1950s and 60s, was one of the first ministers to have his own nationally-broadcast radio show. Because of his stature, many famous black musicians, including Sam Cooke, Clara Ward, Mahalia Jackson and Jackie Wilson, visited the Franklin home.

In the early 1960s, legendary talent scout and record producer John Hammond signed Franklin to her first recording contract with Columbia Records. Hammond said Franklin was the greatest voice since Billie Holiday. Unfortunately, her advisors had different ideas about the direction her career should take. Occupying a space between Rock and Roll and Gospel, Franklin could not find her niche. Those years at Columbia gave her experience and exposure, but no big hits.
In 1967, however, Franklin moved to Atlantic records, where she finally achieved a commercial breakthrough with “I Never Loved a Man.” She had found her style with a new blend of gospel vocals with inventive piano playing in passionate secular love songs. For Franklin, soul music combined a personal and emotional voice with the drive of the 1960’s black pride movement. In the late 60s and early 70s, it was the rare Franklin recording that did not become a soul classic.

In these early years Franklin was viewed as a potent symbol of black advancement. She often lent her talents to the civil rights cause, and performed publicly in support of Martin Luther King, Jr., a family friend. But by the mid-1970s, soul music had lost much of its political and social significance. The musical trends of the time reflected new values, and Franklin lost

momentum and direction. She again switched record companies, and began to record a wide variety of music.

Throughout the eighties, Franklin had major hits such as “Who’s Zoomin’ Who” and “Freeway of Love,” but her biggest songs were collaborations. She recorded duets with Annie Lenox, James Brown, Whitney Houston, and had a number one hit, “I Knew You Were Waiting (for Me),” with George Michael. Always trying to expand her range, Franklin sang and performed in the movie THE BLUES BROTHERS, worked with Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones, and recorded an amazing gospel album in 1987, “One Lord One Faith One Baptism.”

Franklin continued to make exciting, vibrant, and personal music. The range of her achievements and of her commitment continue to be an inspiration to young musicians everywhere. It is clear however, that with such songs as “Do Right Woman—Do Right Man,” “Chain of Fools,” and “Respect,” it is those great early hits that will remain the defining work of “the Queen of Soul.”

https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/aretha-franklin-about-aretha-franklin/598/